TARTU UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

NARVA COLLEGE

STUDY PROGRAM "HUMANITIES IN MULTILINGUAL SCHOOL"

Merle Pahkla

TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN ELECTIVE SUBJECT TO CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE ON THE BASIS OF IDA-VIRU COUNTY KINDERGARTENS

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Asst. Žanna Rootsi, MA

NARVA 2021

Olen koostanud töö iseseisvalt. Kõik töö koostamisel kasutatud teiste autorite tööd, põhimõttelised seisukohad, kirjandusallikatest ja mujalt pärinevad andmed on viidatud.

17.05.2021

....

Töö autori allkiri ja kuupäev

PREFACE

The English language has become a widely used language in many countries of the world. Not only adult people, but also children of the young ages study the English language, and Estonia is not an exception. English is one of the most popular foreign languages in Estonia, and kindergartens suggest it as an elective subject for young children, as it can be seen from the development programme at randomly selected kindergartens' homepages. The pre-school period involves different kind of disciplines which are the foundation of the future knowledge. The process of preparation for school has a significant role for successful knowledge assimilation. Competent approach in teaching has a beneficial effect on the students' further learning functionality.

The main purpose of the present thesis is to explore the opportunities for learning English which kindergartens of Ida-Viru county supply to their learners. The thesis inquires what methods and approaches are applied in kindergartens and what factors may have a significant influence on the process of the English language acquisition.

The thesis consists of the Introduction, Chapter I, Chapter II and the Conclusion. The introductory part provides the overview of the research subject, issues that have negative effect on the learning process, National Curriculum for Estonian Pre-School Institutions in terms of foreign languages and advantages of foreign languages early learning. The Introduction also includes the justification of the topic choice and presents the hypothesis. Chapter I "Teaching English to Young Learners" is aimed to review features of teaching language to children, to describe learning styles according to channels for perception of information and according to environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological and psychological preferences. This chapter also reveals approaches for successful language acquisition by young learners. Chapter II "Opportunities for Learning English in Ida-Viru County Kindergartens" explains the sample for research, describes research instruments and procedure, explores the existing practices of teaching English in kindergartens of Estonia, analyses the received data, and includes comments and recommendations. The conclusive part summaries the main points of the work and gives general comments on the hypothesis.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language

According to Jayasri (2018), English as a Foreign Language implies the English language in those countries where this language is not the primary one. Jayasri (ibid.) distinguishes traditional, communicative and innovative approaches in teaching English. The present paragraph describes the dimensions of those approaches.

"Traditional foreign language teaching:

1) Grammar Translation Method

2) Direct Method

3) Audio-Lingual Method". (Jayasri 2018: 189)

Ebong (2004) characterizes the first method as a study of language with a focus on rules of grammar, structures of syntax and vocabulary memorization. This method is oriented not to oral communication but to reading experience through translation to the target language by applying given grammar rules practically. On the contrary, the Direct Method is not intended to use grammatical rules or to translate target text to the native language of a learner. It is based on interaction and immediacy. Brown (2008: 49) presents one of the exercises in this branch of traditional approach, and it consists of the following 15 sentences:

> I walk toward the door. I draw near to the door. I draw nearer to the door. I get to the door. I stop at the door. I stretch out my arm. I take hold of the handle. I turn the handle. I open the door. I pull the door. The door moves. The door turns on its hinges. The door turns and turns. I open the door wide. I let go of the handle.

Despite the variety of grammatical structures and vocabulary, Brown (2008) explains the success of perception the text by its close relation to reality. Grammar is also an element of the third method from the list above. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000: 35), this approach "drills students in the use of grammatical sentence patterns" and "has a strong theoretical base in linguistics and psychology".

In addition to traditional direction of teaching foreign language, communicative teaching also exists and it involves four methods.

"Communicative language teaching:

1) Communicative Approach

2) Total Physical Response

3) Natural Approach

4) Competency-Based Approach". (Jayasri 2018: 189)

The Communicative Approach includes "authentic communication, active student interaction, role plays" (Alemi, Tavakoli 2016: 3) and "mind-engaging activities" (Jayasri 2018: 190). As Asher (1968) explains, that the application of the strategy of the Total Physical Response provides a foreign language learning through the physical activity. Students hear commands of a teacher and instantly obey them. The Natural Approach is focused on development of students' communicational skills and vocabulary enrichment through visual illustrations and additional words in the native language of students, thus learners begin to speak when their language competence is sufficient enough (Larsen-Freeman 2000). Competency-Based Approach means "acquiring life coping skills while developing the language to perform these skills" (Jayasri 2018: 191), in other words, students "need to know that the lessons they are studying will improve their lives" (ibid.).

Finally, we begin by taking a closer look at innovative direction of teaching foreign language. "Innovative language teaching:

1) Silent Way

2) Community Language Learning

3) Suggestopedia". (Jayasri 2018: 189)

Larsen-Freeman (2000) consider the first of the listed methods as an opportunity for students to increase their independence in discovering the rules of target language. A teacher does not have a primary role, but supports students if this kind of necessity occurs.

> Students should be able to use the language for self-expression – to express their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. In order to do this, they need to develop independence from the teacher, to develop their own inner criteria for correctness. The teacher, therefore, should give them only what they absolutely need to promote their learning (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 64).

The Community Language Learning method's main aim is "to involve the learner's whole personality. Affective and intellectual well-being are given equal weight" (Jayasri 2018: 191). Larsen-Freeman (2000) depicts the class as a community where students exchange their knowledge and experience and increase language competence by learning from each other. Richards and Rodgers (2001) characterize Suggestopedia as a method which enables to achieve better results in learning through reducing the level of stress, fear, suspense and other psychological challenges.

6

Issues in Process of Learning Foreign Languages

It is reasonable to affirm that neither approach would be successful in teaching foreign languages if it is inappropriately applied. There is a great amount of factors which could impede the process of learning. The teacher should envisage challenges which could arise in particular group of learners and consider individual features of this group to select the most appropriate method for successful language teaching. The following subchapter provides an overview of the main issues in process of learning foreign languages.

"Reading, writing, speaking and listening – the four foundational skills of language learning. You can't build a house without a strong foundation" (Lewis para 1). Sokip (2020) reveals issues in each of these four areas that negatively affect the results of foreign language learning. According to Sokip (ibid.), four main problems can be identified in the area of listening skills:

1) quality of recording equipment

2) different culture

3) accent

4) unfamiliar vocabulary.

It is a well-known fact that the role of recording equipment is significant in perception of information, in other words, it is problematic for students to extract concrete information from series of noise. Sokip (2020: 725) presents the following explanation for the next item, namely different culture:

> Students belong to recognize language culture that has an important impact on their understanding of learning. If this task capability involves different cultural lessons entirely then what will occur is that students will face critical problems in understanding.

Equally important in listening is accent. According to Buck (2001: 35) (as cited by Ratanapruks (2015: 16)), "an unfamiliar accent can make comprehension almost impossible for the listener." In addition to named factors, Sokip (2020) states that unfamiliar vocabulary also brings issues to foreign language learning while listening. The quality of learning is degraded if text contains such figures of speech like ambiguity, idioms, slang.

Focusing on speaking skills, Sokip (2020: 725) examines the following psychological factors: "1) fear, 2) shy, 3) anxiety, 4) less motivation." According to Sokip (ibid.), the first three feelings share similar characteristics, for instance, the student should perform in public

and he or she feels uncomfortable being under intense scrutiny, or the student is not sure in his or her answer and prefers to remain passive during conversation. According to Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (2020: para 1), the term motivation is defined as "something that arouses action or activity." Thus, "lack of self-confidence" (Mezrigui 2011: 240) sufficiently decreases results in the area of speaking skills. Sokip (2020) informs that the inappropriate activities, in the same way, notably reduce students' interest.

Furthermore, Sokip (ibid.) states that the following factors cause significant informational losses in the area of reading skills: 1) physical health, 2) preparation. The first one includes mental, spiritual and physical health (particularly eyesight) of the student. The second factor implies the level of preparation for reading, in other words, the students' knowledge of the alphabet and the rules of pronunciation, experience in reading, and ability to concentrate on exercises.

To answer the question what factors negatively affect the writing skills, we begin by taking a closer look at scholarly work of Mezrigui (2011), in which he (ibid.: 128) points to "lack of practice", "linguistic difficulties" and "psychological difficulties" (ibid.: 122) as the factors that generate concerns in writing. The second and the third items have already been described in the thesis previously. The term lack of practice is explained along the following lines:

> the teacher does not have enough time to correct all the learners' pieces of writing if the class is made up of more than ten students, and when [he or she] corrects the writing for just some of them, the other students cannot recognize their own mistakes. Without correction, the mistakes may be repeated many times and become bad habits which are hard to adjust (ibid.: 129).

In addition to the listed issues, Mezrigui (2011) also acknowledges the influence of the mother tongue to the learning process. To illustrate this item, it is reasonable to mention the difference between two languages, in other words, students apply their mother tongue's structures to the target language.

Finally, the level of proficiency in English for significant amount of teachers is insufficient. According to Young *et al.* (2014: 1) (as cited by Richards (2017: 7)), "access to teachers who have the necessary professional knowledge and functional English language skills to teach

English effectively is critical", in other words, students frequently have no access to the professional teaching.

National Curriculum for Estonian Pre-School Institutions

Since the research area of the thesis is teaching English in kindergartens of Estonia, the following subchapter is devoted to Estonian national curriculum for pre-school institutions. It is reasonable to focus on described in curriculum subject fields and anticipated outcomes to evaluate the level of preparedness for the first stage of study, namely 1st-3rd grades of basic school, in terms of learning the English language.

The national curriculum for pre-school institutions (KLRÕ 2008) outlines seven basic subject fields, for which describes required goals in detail in the following paragraphs. According to § 16 of chapter 5 (ibid.) these subject fields are:

1) Mathematics

2) Me and environment

3) Arts

4) Music

5) Movement

6) Language and speech

7) Estonian as second language.

In order to clarify the item Language and speech, reference should be made to the mother tongue of the learner.

The list of subject fields illustrates that the teaching of foreign languages is not specified by the official regulation. Thus, the administration of pre-school institutions establishes individual regulation, in other words, each kindergarten separately develops curriculum in terms of English or any other foreign language. The absence of the English language among obligatory disciplines in Estonian national curriculum indicates the absence of explicit and uniform guidance on teaching English. As a consequence, English is taught without a centralized programme, that is to say the choice of teaching methods proceeds from the personal initiatives of the teachers and based on personal experience, knowledge and preferences.

According to § 19 of chapter 5 of the national curriculum (KLRÕ 2008), the main purposes of teaching Estonian as second language to children of 6-7 years old are:

1) motivation in exploring the Estonian language and culture

2) communication in Estonian with peers and adults

3) recognition and understanding of simple words and phrases in Estonian

4) application of simple words and expressions in routine communication.

Besides that, the national curriculum (ibid.) highlights that the child of 6-7 years old:

1) understands simple questions and is able to answer them

2) knows Estonian poems and songs and is able to reproduce from memory

3) apply appropriate expressions of courtesy in speech

4) names famous Estonian people and well-known places.

Despite the fact that English is not a part of the national curriculum and its learning outcomes are not determined, some of the learning outcomes in Estonian as a second language are fairly appropriate to be applied for English, for example, to be motivated in exploring language and culture, to know simple words in English from routine communication, to know some English-speaking famous people and well-known places. It is understandable that the existence of Estonian as a second language in the national curriculum provides for the scheduled time to teaching it. On the contrary, there is no a guidance on teaching English in kindergartens of Estonia, but the English language teaching is not prohibited, thus, kindergartens decide on their own whether and how the language acquisition is provided.

Advantages of Early Foreign Language Learning

As it was mentioned above, English is not among the obligatory disciplines for teaching in pre-school institutions of Estonia. Despite its absence in learning programme, kindergartens could take the initiative and allocate time for organising different kind of activities which are intended to acquire language by young learners. There is a great number of evidences which justify the early foreign language acquisition, for example, Krashen *et al.* (1979) state that the results in the long term of those learners, who start the foreign language acquisition earlier, are considerably higher than the results of those learners who delay it till a much later age. Moreover, Lynn (2008: 1) claims that global research revealed "increased cognitive

abilities with second language learning, once generally referred to as intelligence. This leads to many positive effects for the young person in his or her first language, including enhanced verbal skills". In addition to pronunciation, young learners achieve higher results in area of morphology and syntax, as Harley and Wang (1997) report. Rizki (2016: 19) states that the young learners are "good at mimicking new sounds and adopting pronunciation. The brain is open to new sounds and patterns." Besides, according to Stewart (2005), the foreign language learning facilitates the understanding of the mother tongue structures. Uylings (2006) explains that the increased ability for successful language learning is caused by the active brain growth and development which proceeds in the age of 2-4. Landry (1974), Marcos (2001), Rizki (2016) and Stewart (ibid.) indicate also the development of creativity and higher capacity in problem solving, in addition to the fact that early foreign language learning leads to higher achievement in other disciplines.

The foreign language learning in pre-school period has not only biological but also psychological advantages, for instance, Johnstone (2002) (as cited by Lynn (2008: 2)) notes that

> children are used to making mistakes and are not as likely to be embarrassed or deterred by errors as either adults or adolescents. Younger learners are likely to be less 'language anxious' than many older learners and hence may be more able to absorb language rather than block it out.

It can be assumed that young children participate in learning process more actively, they feel more comfortable and do not afraid to express their thoughts, so, the active vocabulary of learners is enriched faster.

The language is not only an instrument for communication, but also a part of the whole culture. Baker (2006) and Wierzbicka (1997) assert that the foreign language acquisition leads to comprehension of other cultures, other modes of thinking and another kind of relation to the world. It is reasonable to add that the early language learning support children in development "an attitude of tolerance towards other different cultures." (Chanifa *et al*. 2020) Rizki (2016) emphasizes the benefit in a form of unlimited access to resources, in other words, foreign language learners have opportunity to explore other cultures by reading and listening in the target language.

As it can be seen, the foreign language early learning provides a great number of benefits, however, English is not included into the obligatory disciplines for pre-school institutions by the Ministry of Education and Research. As a result of the absence of explicit and unified guidance on teaching English, the kindergartens have the authority to establish their own learning programme for the English language acquisition or not to include English into the programme at all. Since this decision depends on a number of factors, it is impossible to speculate on the situation of teaching English in general, so, the study is focusing on one county. The hypothesis of the thesis is the following: The provision of activities for the English language acquisition in kindergartens of Ida-Viru county is insufficient.

CHAPTER I TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

1.1 Features of Teaching Foreign Language to Children

According to Lenneberg (1967) (as cited by Hu (2016: 2164)), "Some adolescents or adults who start to learn second language would fail to achieve language fluency, while children who were exposed to second language at their early age seem to be proficient like native speaker", in other words, young learners are capable to achieve better results in acquisition of language which is not native for them. Tavıl and Söylemez (2008) explain that the term young learner refers to child whose compulsory schooling has not been started and whose writing and reading skills have not been sufficiently developed. The topic of teaching languages to children has been attracting scientists for decades. Penfield and Roberts (1959) hypothesized that capabilities for learning languages start to decrease after the period which is named the critical period, it means that increasing age is in inverse proportion to the successful language learning. Moreover, Ellis (1986) states that there is a certain period of time when language acquisition proceeds productively and effortlessly, but after that period the cognitive functions of brain start to decelerate. Finally, Scovel (1988: 214) depicts the hypothesis of the critical period as "the notion that language is the best learned during the early years of the childhood" and states that "after about the first dozen years of life, everyone faces certain constraints in the ability to pick up a new language". In addition, Singleton and Ryan (1989) claim that learning foreign language in childhood allows to avoid a specific accent.

In considering such items as cognitive processes and speech development, supportive language learning materials, class environment, and finally, teaching methods, we hope to produce a more complete understanding principles of teaching English to young learners.

1.1.1 Cognitive and Language Development

We begin by taking a closer look at cognitive processes as well as speech development of a child. López and Méndez (2004) provide classification for body coordination, language acquisition and individual features and intelligence according to age of a child.

Table 1. *Basic Aspects of the 0-6 Year Old Child Development*

Age	Body Coordination	Language Acquisition	Individual Features and Intelligence
0-1	– They start to focus their sight on objects and people. – They can sit up without help. – They can grab objects with their fingers (9 months). – They can stand on their feet with help. – They can walk with help (12 months).	– They start using their vocal cords and organs by crying and shouting (0-6 months). – They produce single syllables without sense (6-8 months). – They produce single syllables with sense (8-12 months).	– They feel insecure. – They need the constant presence of their mothers or known people. – They start learning and discovering the world through all their senses. – They like to play alone. (12 months).
1-2	– They can walk without help (12-15 m). – They can scribble with a pencil (15-18 m). – They can climb stairs with help (15-18 months). – They have difficulty with turning or stopping suddenly (16-19 m) – They can go down the stairs with help (18-24 months). – They can use their feet to kick an object (ball, etc.). – They can go up and down stairs without help (24 m). – They can draw vertical lines (24 m).	– They can understand most of their parent's speech. – They can utter some simple meaningful words. – They start producing grammatically incorrect sentences.	– They cannot tell the difference between reality and fiction. – They start using their memory. – They are impatient and they all want the things they like at once. – They start taking on hygienic habits. – They are very stubborn. – They are selfish. – They like to play alone. – They are very enthusiastic. – They like learning. – They do not have a sense of time or space (right, left, etc.).
2-3	– They can jump 30 cm high (2 & 1/2 years). – They can skip (2 years and 2 months). – They can stand on one foot for a short period of time (2 years and 6 months). – They can draw horizontal lines and crosses (2 years and 6 months). – They can tip-toe. – They can catch a ball with open arms.	– They understand practically everything they hear. – They learn new vocabulary very fast. – They can orally express what they like. – If they do not know the words, they invent new words. – They make many grammar mistakes. – They can start with activities which prepare them for reading and writing.	– They start thinking in a symbolic way. – They feel both very self-sufficient and helpless. – Their character is very unstable. – They love playing. – They learn very fast but they forget very quickly. – They understand in / out / in front / behind. – They can tell the difference between day and night.
3-4	– They can draw circles. – Jump down from a certain height with feet together. – They can hop. – They can clothe and unclothe themselves with help. – They can walk sideways and backwards (3 and 1/2 years). – They can kick a ball more than 10 m.	– They can understand almost everything in their mother tongue, and are able to figure out the meaning of words and expressions in a second or foreign language.	– They accept more and more social rules. – They like playing with other children. – They start having their own personality. – They can feel fear, and nightmares.

	– They can catch a big ball bending their arms.		
4-5	– They can clothe and unclothe themselves without help. – They can button and unbutton things. – They can stand on one foot for more than 10 seconds. – They can catch a smaller ball bending their arms. – They can draw simple geometrical figures. – They can kick a ball with strength and precision. – They can run and jump (more than 1 metre) at the same time (4 years and 8 months).	– They understand everything. – They can still have some pronunciation problems, but are able to correct them. – They are curious about new words, and they learn very fast from their parents or teachers, media, etc.	– They start being able to control their feelings and behaviours. – They can express their own feelings. – They start feeling that they belong to a group.
5-6	– They can catch a bounced ball at waist level. – They can run 30 m in 10 seconds. – They can catch a ball with elbows tucked in.	– They use grammar almost correctly. – They start reading and writing.	– Children imitate adult's behaviors. – Relationships with classmates and friends are more and more important.
6-7	– They can draw squares, rectangles, triangles, oblongs, diamonds. – They can walk in a straight line.	– They do not make any mistakes with grammar. – They can read and write.	– They admire teachers and parents. – They can work very well in groups.

Source: López, Méndez (2004: 167-168).

On the basis of the following table, it can be seen that conditions for successful start of learning foreign languages arise at the age of 3. Children are sufficiently experienced in understanding their mother tongue, and capable to clarify the meaning of words and simple expressions in foreign language. Besides language background, psychosocial intelligences are constantly being enhanced and improved, for instance, children of that age are ready to accept more social norms and to interact with other children. It is reasonable to mention that linguistic and psychosocial background of children in age up to 3 years is insufficient for learning foreign languages. Despite the fact that children in this age start thinking with a help of symbols, learn new words enough quickly and are capable to express their thoughts, the process of forgetting is also rapid. In addition, the emotional condition is unstable, which can negatively affect the quality of language acquisition. Between 4 and 7 years, the curiosity of children towards new words and expressions is increasing. The speech is to a great extent grammatically correct, children possess such competencies as reading and writing. Children perceive the belonging to a group and express readiness to work together in groups.

Emotional state becomes more stable, children can better control their emotions and behaviour.

A Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, designed one of the first models for cognitive development. According to Piaget (1964), cognitive development of children includes the following four stages: 1) sensory-motor, 2) pre-operational, 3) operational, 4) hypothetic-deductive (formal). Since the theme of the thesis is concentrated on pre-school age of children, we begin by taking a closer look at pre-operational stage of development, which includes age from 2 to 7. Simatwa (2010: 367) depicts this stage as a period when "intuitive mode of thought prevails characterized by free association, fantasy and unique illogical meaning" and explains that "the child learns to associate words and symbols with objects". What we see is that symbolic way of thinking figures in both of these lists, in other words, this item is likely to be the one of the most important characteristics of pre-school age. So, this feature with high probability should be used for planning activities to study English in pre-school institutions.

1.1.2 Learning Environment

The teacher's role in learning process cannot be underestimated. Kurt (2020) states that the teacher does not only help to acquire foreign language but also creates this kind of climate in class which facilitates the process of learning and allows to achieve better results. According to Kudryashova *et al*. (2016), the modern teacher assumes seven roles which provide effectiveness of language acquisition. These roles are: 1) motivator, 2) authority, 3) controller, 4) trainer, 5) moderator, 6) facilitator, 7) leader. Kudryashova *et al.* (ibid.) explain that motivator encourages to participate in learning process, controller monitors results and achievements, trainer instructs how to apply knowledge, skills and experience, moderator guides the process of learning, facilitator contributes to better use of knowledge, skills and experience, leader supports reflection on learning process and achievements. The roll of authority is to "provide students with ready-made concepts" (Kudryashova *et al*. 2016: 463), in other words, to use programmes which are approved by official body. However, due to the absence of unified recommendations for the English language teaching in pre-school institutions, the kindergartens apply programmes which are based on the opportunities and

perspectives of the particular institution, as Sert (2004) reveals (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (2011: 36)). As a direct consequence of this,

> A number of teachers who teach English to young learners have difficulty in finding appropriate materials for their students. As a result, they either spend too much time for choosing suitable instructional materials or prefer to develop their own materials for their classes (Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36).

The choice of materials and activities should be thorough for achievement the goals that had been set. The features of child development should be taken into account in order for the learning difficulties to be noticeably decreased. According to Cameron (2005) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (2011: 36)), "kindergarten learners have varying attention span and easily get bored", thus, the teacher should diversify the materials for the purpose of raising the interest for learning process. Drake (1990), Sert (2004), Pinter (2006) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (ibid.)) state that such materials as "cartoons, realias, songs, flashcards and games" are appropriate for children of pre-school age because these tools stimulate and develop imagination. Besides that, Damar (2009) and Ekşi (2009) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (ibid.)) believe that the use of such activities as "tongue twisters, riddles and storytelling" is an efficient way for increasing children's attention and interest towards the learning process, and colourful books, posters, cards with pictures and words effectively support this kind of activities. Moreover, Linse (2005) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (ibid.)) reveals that "brightly coloured visuals, toys and puppets are quite effective for keeping them engaged in activities". Finally, the learning process in the age of technological innovations is inseparable from the use of computer and the Internet resources. Arıkan (2010) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (ibid.)) asserts that teachers should also use such materials as "podcasts, digital storytelling, online games" and another appropriate software as one of the opportunities for language acquisition.

It is reasonable to mention that equally important is the room for lessons. The room should possess some characteristic features, for instance, Harmer (2007) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (2011: 37)) maintains that the classroom for pre-school learners should be "bright and colourful with windows the children can see out of" because children are inquisitive in their nature, and the windows can be also used in class activities for training familiar words. The classroom should also be "spacious enough for different activities" (Harmer 2007) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (ibid.)), including physical exercises, artistic activity and workshops.

1.1.3 Activities for Language Acquisition

What we usually have in mind when we talk about language acquisition in kindergarten is some kind of activity that provides acquiring new language as natural as possible. López and Méndez (2004) distinguish two main techniques for foreign language learning: 1) direct (conscious), 2) indirect (subconscious). The first one is characterized by the learning of grammatical rules and sentence formation. The main feature of second method is "innate instinct" (López, Méndez 2004: 170) which is oriented on problem solving. While the thoughts are concentrated on particular task, the language is processed actively on a subconscious level. Two brief examples might illustrate this method. Firstly, riddles, charades and mind-teasers, which aim is to guess a particular term, allow not to learn new words and constructions purposely, but to guess the right words and explain them by using the existing vocabulary and hidden reserves. During this process, the teacher directs the flow of thoughts and adjusts discrepancies in formulation. López and Méndez (2004: 170) explain that "after carrying out this kind of activity, the child retains words and expressions that had only been introduced before and not fully learned. They become permanently recorded in their minds and their pronunciation may have even improved as well". Secondly, different kind of games provide "endless amounts of unpredictable situations" (López, Méndez 2004: 169), which motivates to participate in this activity. Games cover a diversity of life areas, as a result, the vocabulary is being constantly replenished by expressions which can be used in everyday life. According to Halliwell (1993: 6) (as cited by López, Méndez (2004: 170)),

> Games should not be disregarded as a waste of time. They also shouldn't be considered as something that can be introduced as a time filler at the end of class or as a prize for doing "real" work; they are real work. Games make up a central part of the process of language acquisition, which is wonderful because children have such a strong sense of fun and games.

Zorba and Tosun (2011) present one more activity which is appropriate for kindergarten learners. The language portfolio is a collection of materials which demonstrates the progress in language acquisition. Despite the fact that children of pre-school age are not qualified enough for self-examination, and writing skills are not sufficiently developed for comprehensive description, however, this kind of activity can be attractive for kids. Little (2005) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (2011: 38)) reveals that "language portfolios give children a real sense of pride and achievement by providing a means of showing off their language competence to others", in other words, demonstration of collection of pictures, short poems and stories, small books, postcards and other materials, which were made by children in their own, stimulates an interest towards the subject through the feeling of success. In addition to

foreign language acquisition, this activity enhances independence in decision making. Zorba and Tosun (2011) explain that the teacher controls the filling of the language portfolio at an early stage, but after the comprehension of the principles of this activity, the young learners start to decide independently which materials should be placed in portfolio. Moreover, the young learners have an access to portfolio and are able to review, revise and add new materials to their collection, thus, the creation of the language portfolio "increased the learners' capacity for reflection" (Zorba, Tosun 2011: 41). As Zorba and Tosun (2011) mention, in addition to independence and reflection, the language portfolio improves attention, resulting in use of new language not only in class but also in ordinary situations in order to fill the language portfolio.

To sum up, between 4 and 7 years, the curiosity of children towards the language is increasing, new words and expressions become more interesting for them. Children possess such competencies as reading and writing, their speech is correct enough. Children perceive the belonging to a group and express readiness to work together. Emotional state becomes more stable, children can better control their behaviour. This age is appropriate to start the foreign language acquisition. The learning environment has a significant function in a process of language acquisition. The results of students depend on such factors as conscientious fulfilling the main roles of a teacher, an appropriate choice of materials and activities, and motivating setting of a room.

1.2 Psychological Types through Channels of Information Perception

1.2.1 The Dunns' Learning Style Model

A great deal is being written and said about the way people acquire knowledge. Different theories and their dimensions were introduced and described. Different methods, activities and materials were developed to support the significant part of these theories for making the knowledge acquisition more successful. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1972) designed their model of learning style which states that the knowledge acquisition is an individual process that depends on environmental, emotional, sociological, psychological and physiological stimuli, which consist of few elements each.

Sound, light, temperature and design are the elements of environmental preferences. To illustrate the influence of this group of stimuli, we take a look at two examples. One student prefers to study in absolute quiet for concentration and any noise distracts from learning process, another student does not notice the background noise or even prefers loud music while completing tasks. The second example is connected to the physical environment the children study in. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1979: 239) state that some of the young learners "achieve better in an informal physical environment (carpeting, lounge chairs, couch, or bed) whereas others learn more easily in a formal setting (desks, library tables, "hard" chairs)".

Motivation, persistence, responsibility and structure are the components of the emotional stimuli. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1979) explain that some students are more motivated, persistent, or responsible, and those ones strive to achieve the higher results in learning and to demonstrate their achievements to others. Less motivated, persistent, or responsible students are relegated to lower achievements, superficial knowledge, or simplistic assignments, but require more recognition and approval for their work. More structured tasks hold interest of those students who prefer to work alone, meanwhile, less structured challenges are suited for students who are oriented on work in pairs or teams.

According to Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (ibid.), relationship with peers and adults determines the method of work in terms of the sociological preferences. For instance, one student is separated from peers and communication with them, as a result, this student feels more comfortable with completing assignments alone. Other students achieve notable results when working in pairs, small groups, or teams. For these kind of students, brainstorming is one of the most suitable method of completing their tasks. The third group includes students who require interaction with teacher in form of lectures, discussions and feedback.

The psychological group of elements consists of such learning styles as global, analytic, impulsive and reflective. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1972) revealed that students with global learning style perceive the conception in a whole and then focus on details. Other students, by contrast, prefer to receive information in instalments, gradually increasing the area of knowledge for understanding the whole concept. Impulsive model of learning results

in completing as much tasks as it is possible. Students with reflective style prefer to complete few tasks, but more scrupulously.

Finally, our focus is on physiological group of factors which influence the learning process. According to Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1979), this group of stimuli consists of the following elements: 1) intake, 2) time, 3) mobility, 4) perceptual. There is a difference between students, which is expressed through their wish to eat, or drink while studying, the most suitable for leaning time of the day, the wish to stay stationary, or to move through the class, or complete tasks outdoors. The importance of perceptual element could never be overemphasized. It is a well-known fact that people perceive information from surrounding environment through their sense organs, after which the brain analyses and comprehends this information. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2021: para 1), the term sense is defined as "an ability to understand, recognize, value, or react to something, especially any of the five physical abilities to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel." According to Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1979), the amount of those young learners who perceive information phonetically is between 20 and 30 percent, roughly 40 percent have the visual form of perception, the rest are tactual-kinesthetic, visual-tactual, or express any other combination of the main senses.

1.2.2 The VAK Concept

The following paragraph presents an overview on one of the wide-spread learning models which is known as VAK. This model is based on the perception channels which determine the style of learning as a whole. According to Huda (2015:289) (as cited by Hardiana, Suyata (2018: 44)), "visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles (VAK) are multi-sensory learning styles that involve three elements of learning style: sight, hearing, and movement. This model seeks to combine these three components in developing students' skills in learning activities."

Western Governors University (2020a: para 5) explains that "the visual learning style is fairly self-explanatory. It's all about seeing things in order to learn them." According to Western Governors University (2020a: para 9), students, whose learning style is visual, possess the following characteristics:
"1) able to visualize objects

2) feel balance and alignment

3) well organized

4) color-oriented

5) able to picture words from a book in their mind

6) identify similarities and differences in things

7) use imagery for learning

8) use visual aids for explanations".

Agape *et al.* (n.d.) state that, in addition, students with this learning style prefer to use computer-supported interactive learning aids. Furthermore, the attention of students with visual preferences can be easily diverted from the main object by other sounds and actions around them, that is why the teacher should organize the activity in a manner which does not allow to disperse the attention of these students.

Among the recommendations which Western Governors University (2020a) suggests to apply for teaching to this type of students there are the following:

1) applying visual aids (pictures, symbols, charts, schemes, diagrams, videos, etc.)

2) uniting these students together for group works

3) providing reflection time

4) allowing color stickers and markers for notes

5) applying colors in presentations

6) providing written instructions, plans, agendas

7) providing in-class reading time

9) applying vocabulary flashcards and teaching to create them

10) providing written feedback

Next, the audial learning style is defined by Western Governors University (2020b: para 6) as a learning which is "focused on listening instead of seeing, reading, or physically trying in order to learn", thus, the student with audial learning preferences would better listen to instructions for assignment instead of read them or see an example of this kind of work. The features of learners with audial type of information perception are the following:

1) participate in discussions and dialogs

2) express their ideas to others easily

3) acquire subject better while discussing it

4) solve problems while talking out loud

5) prefer music background while learning

6) possess good memory about what they say and what other people say

7) learn better through verbal rehearsal

8) require verbal explanations for assignments. (Agape *et al*. n.d.)

Western Governors University (2020b: para 9-10) states that the following elements are appropriate for students with auditory learning style: 1) repetition, 2) verbal discourse, 3) social elements, 4) podcasts, 5) lecture recordings, 6) Q&A sessions, 7) background music, 8) reading aloud. In other words, for higher results of learners with auditory style, the teacher should repeat and review the material; organize discussions and conversations; apply such method as group work for information verbal sharing; suggest audio materials to students, for example, podcasts; record lectures instead of reading printed materials for independent work; provide opportunity to ask the questions and get the answers for elimination of information gap; create comfortable atmosphere in class using background music in relevant situation; apply reading aloud to support simultaneously visual learners who read to themselves and audial learners with their necessity to spell information out loud.

Finally, the kinesthetic learning style is described by De Porter (1999) (as cited by Syofyan, Siwi (2018: 643)) as a study which "accesses all types of motion and emotion created nor remembered". This learning style includes such components as "movement, coordination, rhythm, emotional response and physical comfort". (ibid.) According to Agape *et al.* (n.d.), kinesthetic learning style students possess the following features in learning:

1) require manuals for unknown tasks

2) possess good memory about what they do

3) prefer movement while learning

4) prefer role games

5) use their hands while explaining

6) cannot be focused on something for a long time

7) prefer handcraft activities.

Western Governors University (2020c) presents the list of methods which are appropriate for learners with kinesthetic preferences:

1) providing movement

2) involvement of additional practical aids

3) encourage to routine work

4) applying activities which involve handcraft

5) organization of learning trips

6) conducting experiments.

In other words, the teacher supports this type of learners if suggests assignments which involve movement around the class connecting other students, or apply pauses in learning process for exercises. The learning process becomes more successful if the teacher provides additional worksheets, schemes, maps, diagrams and other aids to fill or to colour while studying new material. Students with kinesthetic learning style can be involved in such routine work as distribution of worksheets, writing keywords, completion of charts on the blackboard, monitoring the time etc. Activities which engage practical skills are also appropriate for kinesthetic learners, for instance, project work which requires creation of different items, or extraordinary usage of familiar things. Learning trips might be relevant to students with kinesthetic perception because they provide the opportunity to apply knowledge practically, to see everything in their own eyes and to acquire new experience. Experiments support the learning process of these kind of students, thus, kinesthetic learners realize fundamental laws of nature and scientific principles.

As mentioned below, Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn (1979) revealed that the ratio of those young learners, who tend to combine two or more main senses while acquiring information, to those, who express only one learning style, is sufficiently high. This fact allows to define the VAK model as one of the beneficial studies because it simultaneously covers the needs of all students. According to Russell (2011: 47) (as cited by Hardiana, Suyata (2018: 45)), the VAK model has a disadvantage in terms of teaching to those students who "understand the material only if one focused learnings style is dominantly used", that is to say, students with only one learning style are not fully involved in learning process. In spite of that, the VAK model possesses numerous advantages, which are the following:

1) combines all of three learning styles

2) trains and develops the potential of students

3) provides a hands-on learning experience

4) involves students maximally in finding and understanding a concept through physical activity. (ibid.)

All in all, environmental, emotional, sociological, psychological and physiological stimuli substantially impact on process of learning. The elements of stimuli form different learning styles which are based on the preferences of each student. People perceive information from surrounding environment through their sense organs, after which the brain analyses and comprehends this information. The perception channels determine the style of learning as a whole. The VAK model describes the features of these three learning styles, characterizes the students who possess a certain learning style, and recommends appropriate materials, activities and methods for each of these learning group.

1.3 Other Strategies for Teaching English

Along with aforementioned methods, there are other strategies which are applied for teaching to the young learners. The following subchapter provides an overview to some of approaches which are considered appropriate for children of pre-school age. To develop the listening skills of young learners, Rost (1991: 7) (as cited by Mezrigui (2011: 65)) suggests face-to-face interaction because: "the listener is prompted to play an active role sometimes even against his or her own will; and this is what efficient listening necessitates", thus, this kind of interaction "provides stimulation for development of listening for meaning". (ibid.) As Rost (1991) (as cited by Mezrigui (2011: 66)) states, focusing on meaning enriches vocabulary, this, in turn, provides an opportunity to contribute to the accuracy and clarity in use of language. According to Rost (ibid.) (as cited by Mezrigui (ibid.)), the next strategy to encourage listening capacity is to ascertain what topics might be relevant to the students, and to consider interests of each learner. And, finally, it is necessary to review systematically all covered material for its consolidation in memory and to provide feedback on learners' work.

Thornbury (2005: 25) (as cited by Mezrigui (2011: 75)) identifies three categories of factors which play a significant role in development of speaking skills, and these factors are the following: 1) cognitive, 2) affective, 3) performance. According to Thornbury (2005: 25) (as

cited by Mezrigui (2011: 76)), cognitive factors include such elements as familiarity with the topic, familiarity with the genre, familiarity with the interlocutors and processing demands. It means that students have more intention to talk about things which are familiar to them, for example, about family, pets and hobbies. The learners should understand what they discuss, is it a fairy tale, or poetry, or informational leaflet, because each genre has different grammatical forms, vocabulary choice, style and other characteristics. For young learners, it is important to know the interlocutors of discussion. The more confidence student has towards the participant of discussion, the more effective interaction is carried out. And, finally, the teacher should choose the discussion level of complexity appropriately to encourage active participation. As Thornbury (ibid.) (as cited by Mezrigui (ibid.)) states, affective factors contain feelings towards the topic and the participants, and self-consciousness. It means that the effectiveness of speaking skills development is proportionate to the learners' positive relation to participants and discussed subject, and reversely proportional to the degree of negative feelings and emotions, for instance, self-doubt, hesitation, anxiety etc. Thornbury (2005: 25) (as cited by Mezrigui (2011: 77)) lists such elements as mode, degree of collaboration, planning and rehearsal time, time pressure, and environmental conditions as a part of performance factors group. Thornbury (ibid.) (as cited by Mezrigui (ibid.)) explains that close interaction face-to-face with interlocutor facilitates the whole perception of speech because this kind of communication provides additional information in a form of tone of speech, gesture, pose, facial expression etc. Work in group supports each learner psychologically and linguistically, in other words, it is easier for young learners to participate in discussion if they are confident that other members of their group continue the conversation, if necessary. Talking about time, we face controversial conditions, namely, necessity of preparation, review, revision of covered material, but at the same time, a need of rigid timeline for teaching students to act in real-life situation, thus the teacher should find the best option. Thornbury (ibid.) (as cited by Mezrigui (ibid.)) emphasizes the importance of background: "speaking activities should always be performed in a suitably-acoustic environment", it means that some students are not able to concentrate on discussion if the background noise is too loud.

According to López, Méndez (2004), children start to read and write in their mother language in age of 5-6. Despite the distinction between reading in mother tongue and foreign language,

and the obvious complexity of the second one, nevertheless there are some recommendations which teachers can apply in their work to develop the reading skills of students and to increase their interest towards reading in a whole. Ono *et al*. (2004) suggest to choose books which are easy for comprehension by young learners, in other words, the books should include short phrases or sentences, simple structures, familiar vocabulary, and pictures for visual support of text. Unknown and difficult words should be ignored, attention should be focused on the general understanding. At the same time, the books which are exciting for children, motivate to read more, in contrast, books which are not interesting, refuse reading totally.

According to Parupalli (2019: 142),

> Among the four language skills of English, writing is considered the most complex skills for the English language learners to acquire because of its complexity in grammatical structure, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. Furthermore, there is no one to one relationship between the spelling and pronunciation system.

As already mentioned, the children of pre-school age only start to acquire the writing skills in their mother language, so, it implies impossibility of English writing input entirely. Despite that, teachers have some methods in their arsenal for development of students' writing skills. Crystal (1994: 178) (as cited by Parupalli (2019: 142)) mentioned the words of Bloomfield, who said that "Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks". Considering the insufficient writing skills of young learners, the text might be reproduced not in a form of words, but some other symbols which are comprehensible for the author of writing, in any event, writing activity improves the writing proficiency.

To summarize, the subchapter describes other strategies for successful language acquisition. Supportive approaches for development of skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing are presented and explained. These methods are designed for young learners of pre-school age who do not possess the proficiency in their mother language yet and only start to acquire the foreign language.

CHAPTER II OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING ENGLISH IN IDA-VIRU COUNTY KINDERGARTENS

As was noted in the Introduction, the teaching of foreign languages in pre-school institutions of Estonia is not specified by the official regulation, thus, the administration of each kindergarten possesses the right to develop individual curriculum for English or any other foreign language. Since pre-school institutions do not have explicit and uniform guidance on teaching English, the choice of teaching methods proceeds from the personal initiatives of the teachers and based on personal experience, knowledge and preferences. Moreover, the administration has a right to exclude the English language totally from kindergarten's training activities. The following chapter presents the data of research on the opportunities for learning English with which kindergartens of Ida-Viru county provide their young learners. So, the hypothesis of the paper will be confirmed or disproved. In addition, the following chapter includes recommendations on the potential activities which are based on the experts' teachings (Chapter I) and might be applied for young learners of English in local kindergartens.

2.1 Methodology of Research

2.1.1 Sample

Ida-Viru county was chosen as a starting point for further work on the topic of teaching English to young learners. This region was also chosen due to the personal interest and experience. The children of the author have been attending the kindergartens of Narva for years. All of these kindergartens had no English among their curricula. Despite that, one of the kindergartens offered English as an elective study for additional fee. Besides, the participation of this kindergarten in international projects provided children with communication in English by hearing the speech of their guests. Talking about the personal interest, it is reasonable to mention that the author is a future teacher of the English language at the primary and secondary school of Ida-Viru county, thus, the research will help to find out the young learners' level of knowledge in this area at the time of school enrolment.

2.1.2 Research instruments and Procedure

The instruments used by the research include two questionnaires which are the following:

1) questionnaire for the English language teachers of preschool institutions (Appendix 1.)

2) questionnaire for administration of preschool institutions (Appendix 2.).

The questionnaire for teachers consists of 17 open-ended questions which require respondents to write their answers into boxes in their own words. The questionnaire is divided into two groups of questions. The first group includes the questions about the methods which are applied in kindergartens of the region for teaching English, the materials which are used for language acquisition and the origin of these materials, and the teachers' competences in teaching English to young learners, in other words, theoretical knowledge which are based on the existing practices in this area and studies of experts. The second group of questions has a purpose to clarify what learning outcomes the teachers of English determine by the time the children leave kindergarten. Besides, this part is aimed to find out what problems arise because of the absence of official unified programme for teaching English in pre-school institutions, and what obstacles for teaching English as an independent study exist in kindergartens.

The second questionnaire is intended for administration of kindergartens in case of absence of the English language among the subjects for their learners. This questionnaire consists of two open-ended questions which are aimed to find out what factors impede the inclusion of the English language in the study programme of kindergartens. This questionnaire also reveals what other opportunities for the English language acquisition the young leaners have. The language of this questionnaire is Estonian because the competence in foreign languages is not among requirements for the position of a kindergarten director.

All questions were compiled by the author. Open-ended questions are appropriate for description of each specific situation since the circumstances of two the same replies cannot be identical, so, the respondents have an opportunity to elaborate on their answers. The choice of questions allows to find out what opportunities for learning English the kindergartens provide, in other words, to achieve the aim of the study. The questionnaire was chosen as an instrument for research since, in opinion of author, this is the most convenient way to collect data. It would be difficult to conduct personal interviews because of Covid restrictions and a

great number of kindergartens. Phone interviews could be also cumbersome since generally people participate reluctantly in different phone surveys, especially in such voluminous ones. Pretending to be busy is one of the frequent excuses for not participating in any survey. Despite the fact that experiments could be useful for collection data because they can reveal unexpected results, this kind of method would not give benefits in the survey. To illustrate, the author could pretend to be interested in searching kindergarten for her children with an opportunity to learn English. In this case the conversation would proceed with administration of kindergarten. As can be seen from the subchapter "Discussion and Results", the answers from administration of kindergartens in any case were received, but questionnaire allows to choose a propitious time for answering, and that was the main reason to choose this method. The letters with links to questionnaires were sent twice within a month to official e-mail addresses of Ida-Viru county kindergartens.

2.2 Discussion and Results

The following subchapter presents the received data of the study. According to the register of Estonian educational institutions, which is presented at Estonian state portal eesti.ee, there are 45 kindergartens in Ida-Viru county. Mail server could not deliver the letter to four of recipients due to the following reasons: the two of e-mail addresses were not found, which could mean the suspension of kindergartens' functioning or the change of contact details. The inbox folder of the third kindergarten's e-mail was completely full and could not receive more letters. And finally, the delivery of letter to the forth kindergarten failed because the letter was blocked by the security system of their e-mail. For the above reasons, the survey covered 41 of Ida-Viru county pre-school institutions.

The first chart demonstrates that only 51% of the target group participated in the survey, which is 21 of the whole amount of kindergartens. Moreover, there are no teachers of English among the respondents.

Chart 1. *Received answers.*
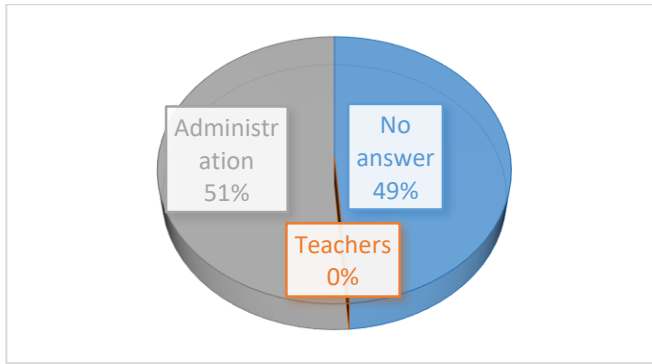
Source: compiled by the author.

Therefore, it is not possible to consider the methods which are applied in kindergartens by the teachers, the materials for language acquisition, and the teachers' knowledge of the existing practices in this area. Due to the absence of answers from the teachers of English, the focus of research is on data received from the administration of kindergartens.

The second chart reveals what factors, in opinion of the administration of kindergartens, impede the organisation of the English language class. The respondents could identify a number of challenges which exist in their kindergarten. The received answers are placed in decreasing order, starting from the most frequent ones. The numbers below correspond to a range of received answers.

Chart 2. *Factors which Impede the Organisation of the English Language Class.*
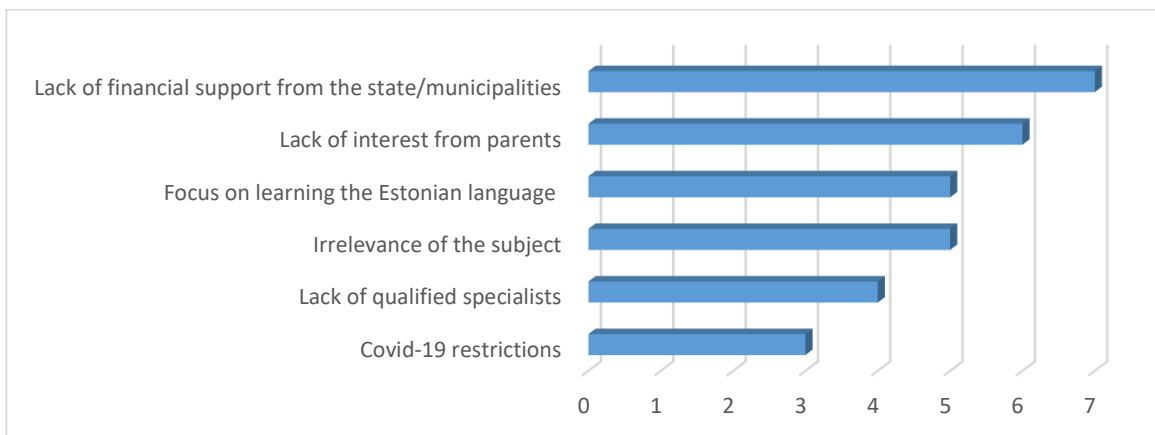
Source: compiled by the author.

From the figures it is apparent that a third of respondents, or 7 representatives of kindergartens, indicated a lack of financial support from the state or municipalities as a main obstacle to organisation of the English language lessons in their kindergartens. Moreover, the majority (5 out of 7) of those, who noted this issue, consider this reason as the only for absence of English as an independent subject.

The figures reveal that the lack of interest from parents is ranked second in this list. Two of the respondents explained that the low interest of parents towards the subject is connected to the fact that the state or municipalities do not support their kindergartens financially. These two kindergartens are unable to include these expenditures into their budget because it is self-financing. Thus, the organisation of lessons, which are not determined by the official organ, requires the additional spending from parents, but a large number of parents disagree with this additional fee.

One of the interviewees revealed that the absence of the interest is caused by the lack of time. The learning programme of their kindergarten is oriented on the Estonian language acquisition, so, the teaching time is dominated by the Estonian language study. Estonian is taught as an independent subject and also integrated with other disciplines. Almost a quarter, or five of the kindergartens' representatives, emphasized that the focus on learning the Estonian language is one of the factors which impede the organisation of the English language class. Most of those, who pointed out this factor, justify the special attention to the teaching of Estonian in a context of region. From their point of view, it is necessary to support the acquisition of the State language on behalf of children since the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of their young learners is Russian.

The irrelevance of the subject is also third in frequency among the received answers. In contrast to the previous factor, the choice of this one was not explained by the participants of the questionnaire. Only one person stated that the English language is not among the obligatory disciplines for teaching in pre-school institutions of Estonia. Thus, the necessity of the English language acquisition is not officially recognized.

The next factor which impedes the English language teaching is the lack of qualified specialists. This particular point was stressed by 19% of respondents, or 4 kindergartens' representatives. According to the received data, two of them acknowledge the relevance of teaching English and report that the interest towards this subject exists, but they regard the finding a specialist as a significant challenge. The kindergartens provide additional information to illustrate this. In autumn, it was decided to start teaching simple words, phrases and sentences to the learners in age of 3-4 by agreement between parents, administration and the class teacher. This activity had to proceed in particular day and time, but was terminated due to frequent periods of teacher's inability to work and incapability of substitute teacher to continue this effort. Another kindergarten had no teacher of English among their staff, but could reach a compromise with parents by renting out a room to a guest teacher for the purpose of creating the English language class on a regular basis. Because of the restrictions related to Covid-19, the class is not entitled to function. The activity of the permanent teacher would not be subjected to these restrictions, so, in addition to the issue in finding teacher, the responder pointed out the Covid-19 restrictions.

A few answers are connected to the Covid-19 restrictions. Besides the situation described above, two more kindergartens experience problems with the English language teaching. The isolation of kindergarten groups and elimination of all activities except activities with a class teacher are aimed to prevent contacts and contain the spread of infection. The kindergartens intend to restore cooperation with teachers after stabilisation of the situation.

To sum up, the respondents pointed out the six main factors which impede the organisation of the English language teaching in their kindergartens. The lack of financial support from the state or municipalities is ranked first in this list. A large number of the kindergartens' representatives consider the lack of interest from parents as a significant challenge for teaching English to young learners. In some cases, the lack of interest is caused by the absence of financial support from the state or municipalities and additional spending for parents. Parents are also oriented on the Estonian language acquisition since the mother tongue of children is Russian. Almost a quarter of respondents emphasized that it is necessary to support the acquisition of the State language on behalf of children, so, the teaching time is dominated by the Estonian language. The irrelevance of the subject is also third in frequency

among the received answers. The reason of that kind of answer is unknown because only one person commented that English is not among the obligatory disciplines for pre-school institutions, so, the necessity of teaching it is not officially recognized. A few answers are connected to the lack of qualified specialists and Covid-19 restrictions, and in some cases these two factors were mentioned together, for instance, there are no such teachers among the staff of kindergarten who are capable to teach English, at the same time, the activity of guest teachers are subjected to restrictions related to Covid-19.

The second question from the questionnaire for administration of kindergartens is aimed to find out what opportunities the children have for the English language acquisition, taking into account the absence of the English language in the learning programme of kindergarten. The received answers are placed in decreasing order, starting from the most frequent ones. The numbers below correspond to a range of received answers.

*Chart 3. Replacing Activities for the English Language Acquisition.*
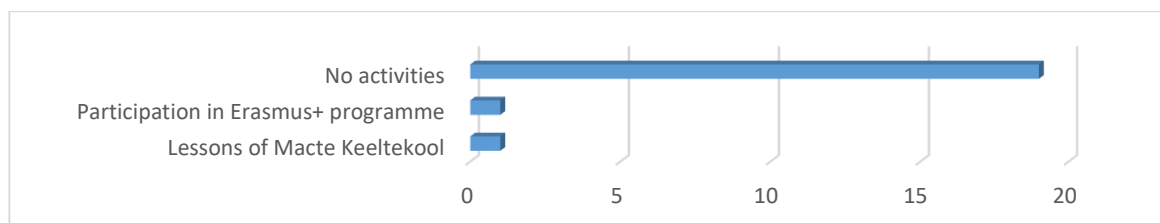
Source: compiled by the author.

According to the histogram, the vast majority of respondents informed that, in addition to not having English classes, their kindergartens do not have any other opportunities for teaching English at the moment. Their explanations will be presented later below. Only two of the whole number of kindergartens organise some activity for practice in English for their young learners. The first kindergarten is involved into three projects of Erasmus+ programme at the moment. Education is one of the areas which the programme is intended to support. Detailed information about this programme, its activities, opportunities and outcomes is available at the official website of the European Union (n.d.). The second kindergarten provides the English language teaching through the activity of Macte Keeltekool (2015) on its basis. The cooperation of the kindergarten and the school has been proceeding for five and a half years. Macte Keeltekool (ibid.) is a mobile school which organises activities for language

34

acquisition according to the features of the target group. Detailed information about this school and its opportunities is available at the official website of the school. In reviewing the data, the following fact was revealed. Both the kindergartens pointed out the lack of financial support from the state or municipalities as a main and the only obstacle to organisation of the English language lessons. Despite this, both the kindergartens managed to organise the language teaching. This fact might lead us to the conclusion that the lack of financial support is only an excuse.

The following chart illustrates explanations for negative answers from the Chart 3. It demonstrates why kindergartens have no any other replacing activities for the English language acquisition.

Chart 4. Explanations for the Negative Answer Mentioned above in Chart 3.
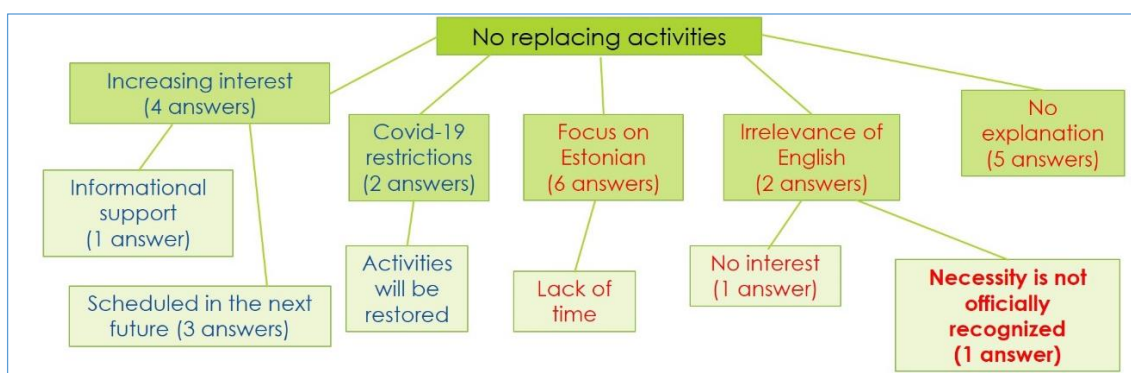
Source: compiled by the author.

All received answers can be divided into two large categories: positive tendencies and negative ones. The positive tendencies category includes such elements as increasing interest and Covid-19 restrictions. Although apparently negative, the last point is found not to be such. Both of respondents, who mentioned restrictions, are planning to restore their activities after stabilisation of this situation. Besides, four of kindergartens express an increasing interest towards English. Three of them are planning to start teaching English in the next future. The Russian language class is successfully operating in one of them, and parents are motivated not only in learning Russian, but English also. One respondent revealed that an information board is installed in the hall of their kindergarten. This board includes the contacts of organisations which engage in activities related to the English language

acquisition, and the description of their projects, so, despite the absence of teaching English, their kindergarten provides the informational support for those parents who are interested in learning English by their children.

The negative tendencies category falls into the following groups: answers without explanations, answers which note the irrelevance of English and answers which refer to the Estonian language acquisition as the main purpose of the learning process. Six respondents stated that English may not be of interest to parents because all efforts are aimed at the Estonian language acquisition, which causes the lack of time for other disciplines out of learning programme. Moreover, there is an opinion that the necessity of teaching English is not officially recognized because English is not among the obligatory disciplines for pre-school institutions. This respondent mentioned the same reason as a factor which impede the organisation of English class earlier. Answers without explanation would seem to suggest that the interviewees do not express interest towards this subject at all, thus, the attitude of administration might set the direction for the whole management strategy of kindergarten.

In summary, the vast majority of kindergartens do not have any replacing activities for the English language acquisition. The main reason for this is the focus on the Estonian language and the lack of interest from parents and administration. Meanwhile, some kindergartens acknowledge the relevance of the English language acquisition and the increasing interest towards this area. As can be seen from received data, a number of kindergartens have no opportunities for teaching English because of Covid-19 restrictions, but they are planning to restore the activity after stabilisation of the situation. Also, it should be noted that two of kindergartens cooperate with organisations which projects are intended to support the language acquisition, and that is an encouraging, albeit small, step.

2.3 Recommendations

The results of the present study demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of kindergartens do not arrange any replacing activities for the English language acquisition, except for two kindergartens. The problem of the lack of interest from parents might be solved by promotion of the English language and its relevance in the modern world by administration of kindergartens. The interest of parents in teaching English to their children cannot be

overstated since the establishment of elective subjects in kindergarten requires permission from parents. It is not possible to influence on the limited funds and the administration's reluctance to spend additional resources for the English language, but there are activities which application does not require much spending, so, the following recommendations are intended to support those kindergartens who are interested in English acquisition by their young learners, but have no opportunities for teaching because of limited funds, absence of English teacher among the permanent staff, Covid restrictions or any other reason.

First of all, it is important to provide the appropriate learning environment. As has been mentioned above, Harmer (2007) (as cited by Zorba, Tosun (2011: 37)) states that the classroom for young learners should be "bright and colourful with windows the children can see out of". Windows can be used in different activities for training familiar words, for example, during a five-minute conversation the teacher asks about weather. Children look through the window and answer in simple words, depending what they see (It is sunny/ It is cloudy/ It is snowy/ It is windy etc.). All necessary phrases the teacher provides in advance and repeats them from time to time. Posters with pictures of different items and their names, or stickers with words might be placed to different surfaces. For instance, a poster with pictures and names of food could be available in the dining room, pictures and words which are connected to hygiene (soap, brush, towel etc.) might be posted on the wall of bathroom. Stickers with words might be placed to the items which names are written on those stickers, for example, a sticker with the word "mirror" is on the mirror, a sticker with the word "board" is on the board. Whether children learn these words or not, the connection between pictures of items and their names is formed at the subconscious level, which would be helpful in further language learning. It is important that the class teachers have at least a minimum knowledge of English to be able to pronounce words and phrases correctly. If they do not have these competences, the solution could be found in organising short training course, in which the guest teacher of English shares the appropriate basic phrases, the rules of their use and pronunciation, and resources which could be useful. These kind of course does not require much spending, but can provide the necessary support to start teaching English.

Secondly, according to Drake (1990), Sert (2004), Pinter (2006), such materials as cartoons, songs and games are appropriate for children of pre-school age. Children might watch

cartoons with real-time subtitles in English or familiar cartoons which are translated in English. Both options function at the subconscious level, it means that the learners understand what is happening at the moment if they know the plot of the story, regardless of the video language, or they listen to their native language, but their eyes see the text in English and their brain forms meaningful connections. Songs might be also with subtitles, thus, children have capability to sing them. It is reasonable to mention that songs include rhymes and bars, resulting in quick memorizing. The choice of songs must be, obviously, adequate and made in accordance with learners' age. In the age of technological innovations, the learning process is inseparable from the use of computer and the Internet resources. A large number of authors suggest to apply online games as one of the activities for language acquisition, for example, Arıkan (2010). There is a great deal of Internet sites with simple educational games. To illustrate, a robot asks to collect all balls of green color into the first box and all balls of red color into the second box. Even short duration daily this activity might expand markedly vocabulary of children. Just as in the previous case, these activities require a minimum knowledge of English or participation in training course. Watching videos which were dubbed into English is an exception, there is no need in special competence for this activity

Next, it is possible to organise different events which are dedicated to the writers of English-speaking regions and the works of these writers. The process of acquaintance might include several stages, such as introduction of the writer, reading their books, discussion of the plot and heroes, creation toys for play, and participation in puppet play. According to Linse (2005), applying the toys and puppets is one of the successful methods to engage children in activities. Reading books even in the learners' mother tongue and discussion of these books is an efficient way for increasing children's interest towards the literature in general and the works of English-speaking authors in particular. However, language does not refer only to literature. Language is also a part of culture, customs, history etc., so, another option is to acquaint young learners with traditions of celebrating the holidays of the Great Britain, the USA and other English-speaking countries. The class teachers could arrange, for instance, the celebration of Halloween or St. Valentine's Day.

What is more, the events which are dedicated to some particular author or holiday are capable to cover the learners with visual, audial and kinesthetic learning style simultaneously. To

clarify, the learners with audial learning style percept information through listening the teacher's reading or audio recording of the story. As Agape *et al*. (n. d.) state, participation in discussions and dialogs is an appropriate method of learning for these students. Western Governors University (2020a: para 5) explains that the visual learning style is "all about seeing things in order to learn them." Thus, the watching videos of short stories or videos about some holiday are suitable for this type of learners. In addition, the watching of puppet play which is managed by other children is also a proper activity for these young learners. According to Agape *et al.* (n. d.), students with kinesthetic learning style prefer role games and handcraft activities. These features could be applied through engaging them in creation toys and decorations, and participation in puppet play. Since the reading, discussion and play proceeds in mother tongue of children, these activities do not require foreign language competence from teachers.

As can be seen, the absence of the English language teacher is not the reason not to practice the English language or to acquaint young learners with culture of the English-speaking countries. On the contrary, organisation of mentioned and other activities which are connected to the English language and culture may lead to the achievement of the goals set out in § 19 of chapter 5 of the national curriculum (KLRÕ 2008), but with the distinction that the curriculum establishes the main purposes for Estonian as second language. The vast majority of these purposes in terms of English are also achievable. These purposes are the following:

1) motivation in exploring the language and culture

2) recognition and understanding of simple words and phrases

3) application of simple words and expressions in routine communication

4) understanding simple questions and ability to answer them

5) awareness of poems and songs

6) awareness of famous people and well-known places.

CONCLUSION

The pre-school period involves the development of different kind of disciplines which are the foundation of the future knowledge. The process of preparation for school has a significant role for successful knowledge assimilation. Between 4 and 7 years, the curiosity of children towards the language is increasing, their speech is correct enough. Children perceive the belonging to a group and express readiness to work together. Emotional state becomes more stable. This age is appropriate to start learning the foreign language.

Despite the existence of numerous methods, approaches and techniques of teaching, the foreign language acquisition faces a large number of issues which could impede the process of learning. The factors which negatively affect development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are described in detail by a number of authors (Sokip 2020, Buck 2001, Mezrigui 2011, Young *et al*. 2014).

The national curriculum for pre-school institutions (KLRÕ 2008) outlines seven basic subject fields, and English is not included. Since the teaching English is not specified by the official regulation, administration of pre-school institutions establishes individual regulation, in other words, kindergartens decide on their own whether and how the language acquisition is provided.

The survey revealed the six main factors which impede the organisation of the English language teaching in the kindergartens of Ida-Viru county. The lack of financial support from the state or municipalities is ranked first in this list. A large number of kindergartens consider the lack of interest from parents as a significant challenge for teaching English. In some cases, the lack of interest is caused by the absence of financial support from the state or municipalities and additional spending for parents. A number of parents are oriented on the Estonian language acquisition since the mother tongue of children is Russian. The irrelevance of the subject is third in frequency among the received answers. The reason of that kind of answer is unknown because only one person commented that English is not among the obligatory disciplines for pre-school institutions, so, the necessity of teaching it is not officially recognized. A few answers are connected to the lack of qualified specialists and Covid-19 restrictions, and in some cases these two factors were mentioned together, for

instance, the staff of kindergarten are incapable to teach English, at the same time, the activity of guest teachers is subjected to restrictions related to Covid-19.

The vast majority of kindergartens do not have any other replacing activities for the English language acquisition. The main reason for this is the focus on the Estonian language and the lack of interest from parents and administration. Meanwhile, some kindergartens acknowledge the relevance of the English language acquisition and the increasing interest towards this area. A number of kindergartens have no opportunities for teaching English because of Covid-19 restrictions at the moment, but they are planning to restore the activities after stabilisation of the situation. Two of kindergartens cooperate with organisations which projects are intended to support the language acquisition.

The reason of the low activity of respondents is unknown. No answers from teachers of English were received and only a half of kindergartens' administration participated in this research. It can be assumed that due to Covid-19 some kindergartens were closed and the letters were not delivered, or the subject of research is irrelevant for respondents. In any case, even if those kindergartens, who did not participate in the survey, organise the English language teaching in their kindergartens and provide different kind of activities, this number is less than a half of the whole amount.

There is a great number of evidences which justify the early foreign language acquisition (Krashen *et al.* 1979, Lynn 2008, Harley & Wang 1997, Rizki 2016, Stewart 2005, Uylings 2006, Landry 1974, Marcos 2001, Johnstone 2002, Baker 2006, Wierzbicka 1997, Chanifa *et al.* 2020). Despite the numerous benefits of early language learning, the majority of kindergartens do not have activities for the English language acquisition. English is not included into the obligatory disciplines for pre-school institutions by the Ministry of Education and Research, but teaching it is not prohibited. Kindergartens could take the initiative and allocate time for organising activities intended to acquire language by young learners, but they do not do that, with few exceptions. The research revealed that the provision of activities for the English language acquisition in kindergartens of Ida-Viru county is insufficient, thus, the hypothesis of the present study is proved.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Inglise keel on tänapäeval paljudes riikides laialt kasutatav keel. Nii täiskasvanud kui ka lapsed õpivad inglise keelt kogu maailmas, sealhulgas Eestis. Inglise keel on üks populaarsemaid võõrkeeli Eestis. Juhuslikult valitud lasteaedade arenguprogrammidest nähtub, et mõned lasteaiad pakuvad inglise keelt valikainena oma kasvandikele. Koolieelne haridus hõlmab erinevaid teadusharusid, mis on tulevaste teadmiste aluseks. Kooliks ettevalmistamise protsessil on oluline roll teadmiste edukaks omandamiseks. Pädev lähenemine õppetöös mõjutab soodsalt õpilaste edasist õppimist.

Käesoleva lõputöö põhieesmärgiks on uurida võimalusi inglise keele õppimiseks, millega Ida-Virumaa koolieelsed lasteasutused tagavad lastele. Töö uurib milliseid meetodeid ja lähenemisviise rakendatakse lasteaedades ning millistel teguritel on märgatav mõju inglise keele omandamise protsessile.

Bakalaureusetöö "Inglise keele valikainena õpetamine eelkoolieaistele lastele Ida-Virumaa lasteaedade baasil" koosneb neljast osast. Sissejuhatuses antakse üldine ülevaade sellistest teemadest nagu tuntud meetodid inglise keele omandamiseks, probleemid, mis muutuvad keele omandamist raskemaks, koolieelse lasteasutuse riiklik õppekava ning võõrkeele varajase õppimise eelised. Sissejuhatus sisaldab ka teemavaliku põhjendust ja esitab hüpoteesi. Esimese peatüki "Inglise keele õpetamine väikestele õppijatele" eesmärk on esitada keele õpetamise eripärasid, kirjeldada õppimisstiile vastavalt teabe tajumise kanalitele ning keskkonna-, emotsionaalsetele, sotsioloogilistele, füsioloogilistele ja psühholoogilistele eelistustele. Selles peatükis tuuakse välja ka lähenemisviisid noorte õppijate edukaks keele omandamiseks. Teises peatükis „Võimalused inglise keele õppimiseks Ida-Virumaa lasteaedades" uuritakse olemasolevaid tegevusi inglise keele õppimiseks, analüüsitakse saadud andmeid, esitatakse tulemusi koos kommentaaridega. Teine peatükk sisaldab ka soovitusi koolieelsetele lasteasutustele. Kokkuvõte esitab põhitulemusi ja kommentaare käesoleva bakalaureusetöö hüpoteesi kohta.

REFERENCES

Agape, Ș.; Bănceanu, A.R. et al. *Visual Audial Kinesthetic Perception Type: Preschool Pedagogue Manual.* Erasmus+ Project "Inclusive Preschool for Kid – Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic Learners" (Pr.No. 2015-1-LV01-KA219-013400). Available at http://www.dc4f.lv/faili/VAK_Manual_Compiled_version_PDF.pdf, accessed March 27, 2021.

Alemi, M.; Tavakoli, E. (2016) Audio Lingual Method. *3rd International Conference on Applied Research in Language Studies.* January, 2016. Tehran: University of Tehran. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293731529_Audio_Lingual_Method, accessed December 23, 2020.

Asher, J.J. (1968) *The Total Physical Response Method for Second Language Learning.* San Jose, California: San Jose State College. Available at https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/674868.pdf, accessed December 23, 2020.

Auditory learning style explained (2020b) Western Governors University, August 10, 2020. Available at https://www.wgu.edu/blog/auditory-learning-style2008.html, accessed March 27, 2021.

Baker, C. (2006) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Brown, H.D. (2008) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* (5th ed.). White Plains, New York: Pearson Longman. Available at https://www.academia.edu/37654296/PRINCIPLES_of_LANGUAGE_LEARNING_AND _TEACHING, accessed December 21, 2020.

Buck, G. (2001) *Assessing Listening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 35, as cited by Ratanapruks 2015: 16.

Cambridge Dictionary (2021) Available at
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sense?q=senses, accessed March 5,
2021.

Cameron, L. (2005) *Teaching Languages to Young Learners.* United Kingdom: Cambridge
University Press, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Chanifa, A. M.; Redjeki, E. S.; Dayati, U. (2020) Benefits of Teaching Foreign Language
for Early Childhood. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol.
501(1): 112-115. Available at
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347424951_Benefits_of_Teaching_Foreign_Lang
uage_for_Early_Childhood, accessed May 16, 2021.

Crystal, D. (1994) The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, as cited by Parupalli (2019: 142).

Damar, M. (2009) Okul Öncesi Eğitimde Dil Etkinlikleri. *Milli Eğitim Dergisi*, 38(182):
96-105, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

De Porter, B.; Reardon, M.; Singer-Nourie, S. (2014). *Quantum Teaching*. Bandung: PT
Mizan Pustaka, as cited by Syofyan, Siwi 2018: 643.

Drake, S. V. (1990) Why not an Informal Reading Readiness Inventory. *Academic
Therapy*, 25(3): 315-319, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Dunn, R.S.; Dunn, K.J. (1972) *Practical Approaches to Individualizing Instruction:
Contracts and Other Effective Teaching Strategies*. West Nyack, NY: Parker.

Dunn, R.S.; Dunn, K.J. (1979) Learning Styles/Teaching Styles: Should They… Can
They… Be Matched? *Educational Leadership*, 1: 238-244. Available at
http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_197901_dunn.pdf, accessed March 11,
2021.

Ebong, B. (2004) *The Use of Indigenous Techniques of Communication in Language Learning: The Case of Cameroon.* Göttingen: Cuvillier.

Ekşi, G. (2009) Multiple Short Story Activities for Very Young Learners with Multiple Tastes. *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, 13(40): 51-68, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Ellis, R. (1986) *Understanding of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Europeaan Union (n.d.) Available at https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en, accessed May 14, 2021.

Halliwell, S. (1993) *La enseñanza del Inglés en Educación Primaria*. Essex: Longman, 6, as cited by López, Méndez 2004: 170.

Hardiana, M.; Suyata, P. (2018) The Effectiveness of VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic) Model in Learning of Summary Writing. *International Journal of Research & Review*, 5 (8): 43-49. Available at https://www.ijrrjournal.com/IJRR_Vol.5_Issue.8_Aug2018/IJRR008.pdf, accessed March 23, 2021.

Harley, B.; Wang, W. (1997) The Critical Period Hypothesis: Where are We Now? In A. M. B. de Groot; J. F. Kroll (ed.). *Tutorials in Bilingualism: Psycholinguistic Perspectives*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum: 26-31.

Harmer, J. (2007) *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London: Longman, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 37.

Hu, R. (2016) The Age Factor in Second Language Learning. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6: 11, 2164-2168. Available at https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/266995226.pdf, accessed January 18, 2021.

Huda, Miftahul (2015). *Model-model pengajaran dan pembelajaran: isu-isu metodis dan paradigmatis*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, as cited by Hardiana, Suyata 2018: 44.

Jayasri, K. (2018) Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language. *Language in India,* 18: 2, 187-192. Available at http://www.languageinindia.com/feb2018/vembu/jayasriefl.pdf, accessed December 20, 2020.

Johnstone, R. (2002) *Addressing 'The Age Factor': Some Implications for Language Policy: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe from Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*. Stirling: University of Stirling, as cited by Lynn 2008: 2.

Koolieelse lasteasutuse riiklik õppekava (2008) RT I, 2008, 23, 152. Available at https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/12970917, accessed December 28, 2020.

Krashen, S. D.; Long, M. A.; Scarcella, R. C. (1979) Age, Rate and Eventual Attainment in Second Language Acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 13: 573–582.

Kudryashova, A.; Gorbatova, T.; Rybushkina, S.; Ivanova, E. (2016) Teacher's Roles to Facilitate Active Learning. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7: 1, 460-466. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289365649_Teacher%27s_Roles_to_Facilitate_Active_Learning, accessed February 1, 2021.

Kurt, S. (2020) Lev Vygotsky – Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development. *Educational Technology*, July 11. Available at https://educationaltechnology.net/lev-vygotsky-sociocultural-theory-of-cognitive-development/, accessed January 29, 2021.

Landry, R. G. (1974) A Comparison of Second Language Learners and Monolinguals on Divergent Thinking Tasks at the Elementary School Level. *Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 58(1/2): 10-15.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000) *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at https://www.academia.edu/25428308/Techniques_and_Principles_in_Language_Teaching_2nd_Edition_Diane_Larsen_and_Freeman, accessed December 22, 2020.

Lenneberg, E.H. (1967) *Biological Foundations of Language*. New York: Wiley, as cited by Hu 2016: 2164.

Lewis, B. *Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening: The 4 Basic Language Skills, and How to Practise Them*. Available at https://www.fluentin3months.com/reading-writing-speaking-and-listening, accessed December 26, 2020.

Linse, C.T. (2005) *Practical English Language Teaching: Young Learners*. United States: McGraw-Hill Publishing, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Little, D. (2005) The Common European Framework and the European Language Portfolio: Involving Learners and Their Judgments in the Assessment Process. *Language Testing*, 22(3): 321-336, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 38.

López, B.R.; Méndez, R.V. (2004) Models of Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Children. *Didáctica Lengua y Literatura*, 16: 163-175.

Lynn, J. (2008) *Early Language Learning Research: White Paper Report*. Fairfield: Early Advantage.

Macte Keeltekool (2015) Available at http://www.macte.ee/lastekool/et/kool, accessed May 14, 2021.

Marcos, K. M. (2001) Second Language Learning: Everyone can Benefit. *The ERIC Review*, Vol. 6(1): 2-5.

Merriam-Webster Thesaurus (2020) Available at https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/motivation, accessed December 27, 2020.

Mezrigui, Y. (2011) *Communication Difficulties in Learners of English as a Foreign Language: Whys and Ways out*. Rennes: Université Rennes. Available at https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00681272/document, accessed April 5, 2021.

Ono, L.; Day, R.; Harsch, K. (2004) Tips for Reading Extensively. *English Teaching Forum,* 42 (4): 12-16, as cited by Mezrigui 2011: 109-110.

Parupalli, S.R. (2019) Teaching of Writing Skills to Foreign or Second Language Learners of English. ELT Vibes: International E-Journal for Research in ELT, 5(2): 136-152. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334283035_TEACHING_OF_WRITING_SKILLS_TO_FOREIGN_OR_SECOND_LANGUAGE_LEARNERS_OF_ENGLISH, accessed April 6, 2021.

Penfield, W.; Roberts, L. (1959) *Speech and brain mechanism*. New York: Atheneum.
Piaget, J. (1964) Cognitive Development in Children: Development and Learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 2: 176-186. Available at https://micpp.org/files/psychoanalysis/warren-on-development/Piaget-Cognitive-Development-in-Children.pdf, accessed January 23, 2021.

Pinter, A. (2006) *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Ratanapruks, A. (2015) *The Description and Evaluation of Listening on a Thai University Fundamental English Course: A Case Study*. Essex: University of Essex. Available at http://repository.essex.ac.uk/15507/1/The%20Description%20and%20Evaluation%20of%20Listening%20on%20a%20Thai%20University%20Fundamental%20English%20Course%20-%20A%20Case%20Study.pdf, accessed December 26, 2020.

Richards, J.C. (2017) Teaching English through English: Proficiency, Pedagogy and Performance. *RELC Journal*, 48: 1, 7-30. Available at https://www.professorjackrichards.com/wp-content/uploads/Teaching-English-through-English.pdf, accessed December 27, 2020.

Richards, J.C.; Rodgers, T.S. (2001) *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rizki, A. (2016) Benefits of Early Second Language Acquisition. *Indonesian Journal of Integrated English Language Teaching*, vol. 2 (1): 19-30.

Rost, M. (1991) *Listening in action*. London: Prentice-Hall International, 1991: 7, as cited by Mezrigui 2011: 65-66.

Russell, L. (2011). *The Accelerated Learning Fieldbook*. Bandung: Nusa Media, 2011: 47, as cited by Hardiana, Suyata 2018: 45.

Scovel, T. (1988) A Critical Review of the Critical Period Research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 20: 213–223.

Sert, N. (2004) Quality in Early Foreign Language Learning at Pre-school Level (English). *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 17: 14-30, as cited by Zorba, Tosun 2011: 36.

Simatwa, E.M.W. (2010) Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development and its Implication for Instructional Management at Presecondary School Level. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 5(7): 366-371. Available at https://academicjournals.org/article/article1379610138_Simatwa.pdf, accessed January 23, 2021.

Singleton, D.; Ryan, L. (2004) *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*. UK: Multilingual Matters.

Sokip, A. (2020) Overcoming the Problem of Learning Foreign Language Skills in the Classroom. *Universal Journal of Educational Research,* 8(2): 723-729. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339455463_Overcoming_the_Problem_of_Learning_Foreign_Language_Skills_in_the_Classroom, accessed December 25, 2020.

Stewart, J. H. (2005) Foreign Language Study in Elementary Schools: Benefits and Implications for Achievement in Reading and Math. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, Vol. 33(1): 11-16.

Syofyan, R.; Siwi, M.K. (2018) The Impact of Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic Learning Styles on Economics Education Teaching. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, vol. 57, 642-649.

Tavıl, Z. M.; Söylemez, A. S. (2008) Vocabulary Teaching through Storytelling to Very Young Learners in Kindergartens. *Ekev Academic Review*, 12: 35, 371-382.

Thornbury, S. (2005) *How to Teach Speaking*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2005: 25, as cited by Mezrigui 2011: 75-77.

Uylings, H. B. M. (2006) *Development of the Human Cortex and the Concept of Critical or Sensitive Periods: The Cognitive Neuroscience of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Visual Learning Style and Strategies for Teachers (2020a) Western Governors University, July 7, 2020. Available at https://www.wgu.edu/blog/visual-learning-style-strategies2007.html, accessed March 27, 2021.

Wierzbicka, A. (1997) *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words*. New York: Oxford University Press.

What is tactile learning? (2020c) Western Governors University, August 25, 2020. Available at https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-tactile-learning2008.html, accessed March 28, 2021.

Young, J.W.; Freeman, D.; Hauck M.C.; Gomez, P.G.; Papageorgiou, S. (2014) A Design Framework for the ELTeach Program Assessments. *ETS Research Report.* ISSN 2330-8516. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1, as cited by Richards 2017: 7. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1109274.pdf, accessed December 27, 2020.

Zorba, M.G.; Tosun, S. (2011) Enriching Kindergarten Learners' English by Using Language Portfolio and Additional Instructional Materials. *Contemporary Online Language Education Journal*, 1(2): 35-43. Available at https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED528240.pdf, accessed February 2, 2021.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for the English language teachers of preschool institutions

Opportunities for Learning English in Kindergartens of Ida-Viru County

1. How old are your English language learners?

2. In your opinion, is this age appropriate to start acquiring a foreign language? Explain your position.

3. In your kindergarten, is English taught as a separate study or is it integrated into other disciplines?

4. What type of work do you prefer: individual, in pairs, in small groups or with all children together? Why?

5. Do all the learners complete the same tasks or the level of difficulty of the tasks differs? If differs, explain why.

6. What teaching aids do you use for your learners in the kindergarten? (books, worksheets, pictures, maps, cards, toys, audio recordings, videos, etc.)

7. Where do these materials come from? (your previous experience, teacher books, individual preferences etc.)

8. What methods do you use for teaching English to the learners with auditory type of information perception? Explain your choice.

9. What methods do you use for teaching English to the learners with visual type of information perception? Explain your choice.

10. What methods do you use for teaching English to the learners with kinesthetic type of information perception? Explain your choice.

11. How do you motivate children for learning?

12. How is the process of language acquisition monitored?

13. What learning outcomes do you determine by the time the children leave kindergarten?

14. Do you follow the programme of the national curriculum for teaching Estonian as a second language in teaching English, taking into account that both of them are not the mother tongue of your learners? Explain your choice. (skip this question if the mother tongue of your learners is Estonian)

15. What obstacles to learn English as a foreign language exist in your kindergarten?

16. In your opinion, what other opportunities for learning English could be suggested in kindergarten?

17. In your opinion, is there a need for a unified programme for teaching English as an independent study in kindergartens? Explain your position.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for administration of preschool institutions

Küsimustik koolieelse lasteasutuse juhtkonnale

1. Mis faktorid takistavad inglise keele tundide korraldamist?

2. Mis võimalused inglise keele tundide asemel on lastel inglise keele õppimiseks Teie lasteaias?

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Merle Pahkla

(date of birth: 07.12.1979),

1. herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to:

1.1. reproduce, for the purpose of preservation and making available to the public, including for addition to the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright, and

1.2. make available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until expiry of the term of validity of the copyright,

TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN ELECTIVE SUBJECT TO CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE ON THE BASIS OF IDA-VIRU COUNTY KINDERGARTENS,

supervised by Asst. Žanna Rootsi, MA,

2. I am aware of the fact that the author retains these rights.

3. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe the intellectual property rights or rights arising from the Personal Data Protection Act.

Narva, **17.05.2021**