



**Content Analysis of the Pedagogical and Methodological
Framework of English Language Integration in
Kindergarten**

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The Teaching of English as A Foreign/International Language (AGG)

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree in whole or in part. The work presented is entirely my own except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment.

List of Abbreviations

EAN – Introduction of English Language in Kindergarten Programme

CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning

ELL – English Language Learning

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ELD – English Language Development

Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the "Introduction of English Language in Kindergarten" (EAN) program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in Greece, developed by an interdisciplinary EAN team of faculty members, special teaching staff, technical staff, researchers and external collaborators, with Professor Thomae Alexiou from the Department of English Language and Literature of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as the academic leader, project leader and project coordinator. The EAN project aims to provide early exposure to English for preschool children, utilizing contemporary pedagogical theories. The program emphasizes a child-centered approach, learning through play, social interaction and interactive teaching to enhance language skills.

The study discusses the theoretical framework of the implemented program and its effectiveness regarding the development of linguistic, social and cultural competence in children. Participants' information was gathered from structured observations, language assessment ([see Appendix A](#)) and questionnaires from the teachers ([see Appendix B](#)), and parents ([see Appendix C](#)). Research evidence indicates the child's English language enhancement, which includes; furthermore, the benefits made by the program were on the children's social development and the improvement of their emotional and cognitive status.

The study's implications are presented in light of the program's advantages, weaknesses and the possibilities for enhancement. Additional suggestions for enhancing the EAN program include teacher training, technology-promoting interaction, and feedback and assessment provisions. The evaluation shows how students benefit from learning a language from a tender age and how they can learn English while simultaneously enjoying their playtime.

Περίληψη

Αυτή η μελέτη αξιολογεί την αποτελεσματικότητα του προγράμματος "Εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας στο Νηπιαγωγείο" (EAN) που υλοποιήθηκε από το Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων στην Ελλάδα, αναπτυγμένο από μια διεπιστημονική ομάδα του EAN, που αποτελείται από μέλη ΔΕΠ, ειδικό διδακτικό προσωπικό, τεχνικό προσωπικό, ερευνητές και εξωτερικούς συνεργάτες με ακαδημαϊκά υπεύθυνη, επικεφαλής του έργου και συντονίστρια του προγράμματος την Καθηγήτρια Θωμάη Αλεξίου από το Τμήμα Αγγλικής Γλώσσας και Φιλολογίας του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης. Το πρόγραμμα EAN στοχεύει στην παροχή πρώιμης έκθεσης στην αγγλική γλώσσα για τα παιδιά προσχολικής ηλικίας, αξιοποιώντας σύγχρονες παιδαγωγικές θεωρίες. Το πρόγραμμα δίνει έμφαση σε μια προσέγγιση που επικεντρώνεται στο παιδί, στη μάθηση μέσω παιχνιδιού, στην κοινωνική αλληλεπίδραση και στη διαδραστική διδασκαλία για την ενίσχυση των γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων.

Η έρευνα αναλύει τις παιδαγωγικές αρχές και θεωρίες που υποστηρίζουν το πρόγραμμα, εστιάζοντας στην επίδρασή του στην ανάπτυξη γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων, κοινωνικών δεξιοτήτων και πολιτισμικής ευαισθητοποίησης στους μικρούς μαθητές. Τα δεδομένα συλλέχθηκαν μέσω συστηματικών παρατηρήσεων, τεστ γλωσσικής επάρκειας και ανατροφοδότησης από εκπαιδευτικούς, γονείς και παιδιά. Τα ευρήματα δείχνουν σημαντικές βελτιώσεις στις γλωσσικές δεξιότητες των παιδιών στην αγγλική γλώσσα, ιδιαίτερα στην απόκτηση λεξιλογίου, στην προφορά και στην κατανόηση. Επιπλέον, το πρόγραμμα είχε θετική επίδραση στις κοινωνικές δεξιότητες, στην συναισθηματική ευημερία και στην γνωστική ανάπτυξη των παιδιών.

Τα ευρήματα της μελέτης συζητούνται ως προς τα πλεονεκτήματα, τους περιορισμούς και τις προτάσεις για βελτίωση του προγράμματος. Οι συστάσεις για περαιτέρω ενίσχυση του προγράμματος EAN περιλαμβάνουν αυξημένη εκπαίδευση των εκπαιδευτικών, ενσωμάτωση περισσότερων διακρατικών τεχνολογιών και συνεχή αξιολόγηση και μηχανισμούς ανατροφοδότησης. Η αξιολόγηση αναδεικνύει τη σημασία της πρώιμης εκπαίδευσης στη γλώσσα και τα οφέλη της ενσωμάτωσης της εκμάθησης της αγγλικής γλώσσας με παιγνιώδεις και διαδραστικές δραστηριότητες.

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Introduction

Learning foreign languages beginning from the age of majority is an important factor discussed by educators, parents, and educational decision-makers worldwide. Basic education in the first language is one of the most valuable sources in children's learning and development of cognitive, psychosocial and socio-emotional profiles to enable them to grow to meet challenges in education and career. In this regard, "the Introduction of English Language in Kindergarten" (EAN) program, which is in initiation in Greece, is a laudable project through which youngsters receive early exposure to the English language (Alexiou, 2020; European Commission, 2014).

The EAN program was designed and implemented by a Multi-disciplinary team, which involved University academic staff, special teaching staff, technical staff, researchers and partner teams from other disciplines. The academically responsible leader, project head, and program coordinator is Professor Thomai Alexiou from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki Department of English Language and Literature. She has been primarily involved in influencing the philosophy of the program and how it is being managed (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022).

The EAN program was started based on the most advanced theories and practices of education as it follows principles. Its philosophy includes children's initiative, play, communication, and interaction, allowing children with any disability to improve their language in the frame of fun. The EAN program has been in use in Greece since 2022 due to the worry that there is early language acquisition in infancy. The main long-term outcome that concerns students is generating positive perceptions towards young students and learning languages, especially English. In the short term, the anticipated outcomes of the program include the toddlers' increased knowledge of basic English words and phrases, improved listening and speaking comprehension, positive attitudes, and motivation (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022; European Commission, 2014).

The EAN program adopted from the National Curriculum for Kindergarten is anchored on the following objectives and principles. In doing this, language skills, communication and

creativity are enhanced through well-programmed activities and strategies. It is aligned with the concept and principles of the National Curriculum (Alexiou, 2020; Penderi et al., 2021).

The assessment of the EAN program is required to assess the program's effectiveness in early childhood development and potential enhancements. The absence of the criteria for evaluating the material and the requirement of an active teacher seems to be the critical issue to guarantee the program's efficiency. Since current teachers work in the classrooms, they can offer much insight into how efficiently the program accomplishes its education objectives. It is useful in enhancing the fabrication of the techniques, resources, and strategies for teaching because it aligns with the student's needs (Alexiou and Penderi, 2022).

The purpose of this dissertation will be as follows: first, to identify the theoretical framework of the EAN program; second, to explain the activities carried out; and last, the outcomes and advantages derived from the application of the EAN program will be reflected. Further, it will also discuss the issues prevailing in the teachers' corner and how the program can be improved. The structure of the dissertation is as follows: The structure of the dissertation is as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Teaching English to Very Young Learners** - This chapter compares the theories of the educators, namely Bruner, Vygotsky, and Piaget, in conjunction with the criteria used to assess ELL, that is English Language Learning. Furthermore, it encompasses reviewing the theory, Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL.
- **Chapter 2: Presentation of the EAN** – This chapter describes the EAN program in its entirety, including the EAN platform, its various modules and the training given to teachers.
- **Chapter 3:** This chapter covers the following research questions: Organisation of the Study -This chapter explains the criteria used to analyse and evaluate the EAN program.

- **Chapter 4: EAN Criteria and Its Evaluation** – This conclusive chapter presents the EAN program's evaluation under those criteria.
- **Chapter 5: Discussion** - This chapter thoroughly addresses the research questions, discusses the study's limitations, and offers recommendations for improvement.
- **Conclusion** - The study is summarized, highlighting key findings and conclusions.

1 Chapter 1: Teaching English to Very Young Learners

1.1 Literature Review

Learning and acquiring foreign languages early has received immense attention among educators, parents, and policymakers worldwide because of its far-reaching outcomes on children's academic, social, and emotional aspects. However, it is amusing to note that the concern for teaching English in the preschool setting grew strong approximately two decades ago. This delay may be due to a certain level of criticism, which held that learning a foreign language early puts an extra load on the learners. The opponents erupted into the scene, chocking that using a foreign language might lead to learners getting conflicted over their language and, therefore, never being able to freely produce fluent English or the foreign language they have learned.

On the other hand, several studies have addressed the contribution of the English language in preschool education to provide research evidence about the validity of such criticisms. For example, a study by Alexiou and Penderi (2022) looked at the EAN program in Greece Program and the World, "Introduction of English Language in Kindergarten," whereby findings showed positive learning benefits of early integration of English without negative impact on the learners' First Language.

The EAN program developed for Greece offers the theoretical acclamation of early start language learning, which is thought to be a good idea to teach children English at preschool age. This program has been developed following the principles of contemporary educational theories and methods, which provide a rather emotionally warm and academically stimulating context that implements child development theory, the principles of play, social learning, and interactive learning.

Included in this literature review are the findings and theoretical framework relevant to early language learning, especially spearheaded by the EAN program. Here, the evaluative criteria of the learning and teaching program are explained and the subject explores the contribution of Soft CLIL theory in improving language learning. Thus, based on the

discussion of the literature presented in this work, this section is intended to identify the grounds for the given critiques and discuss the advantages and difficulties of early ELE.

1.2 Importance of Early Language Learning

Early language education has a tremendous impact on children's developmental processes. It prepares caretakers to face subsequent educational and career demands by improving cognitive, social, and emotional performance. Research indicates that the early introduction of a second language helps enhance memory, problem-solving and critical thinking. First, it can create a foundation for more effective communication with people of different cultures, thus ensuring tolerance and mutual understanding (European Commission, 2014).

The studies show that first language acquisition is closely connected with better educational achievement in further years. Children who initiate learning a second language perform better in their first language, particularly in reading and writing, in addition to being better placed in other academic fields like mathematics and science. This is because learning a new language engages skills well linked to other learning domains, as indicated by Bialystok, 2001.

Another area of development highlighted in early language acquisition is social, which is enabled by language acquisition to interact with a wider society, hence improving cultural relations. In this process, it is necessary to use such approaches as playful learning and social interaction because young children learn better if they are engaged and learn through play (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010).

1.3 The concepts of early language acquisition

1.3.1 Jerome Bruner: Constructivist Theory

Jerome Bruner's constructivist theory supports knowledge through participation and discovery. From Bruner's point of view, learning is an active process by which the learners build up new knowledge and concepts from what they already know and learn from present and past experiences. Bruner recognized the procedure of 'scaffolding,' whereby some help is given to the learners as they learn a particular skill, and this help is withdrawn as the learners progressively gain mastery of the skill (Bruner, 1960).

In implementing the above principles, Bruner's theory relies on the premise that learners should be encouraged to discover principles independently. He explained that building abilities to think and acquire knowledge are not the result of passive absorption of material but inner discovery. The view supports the notion that teaching should be scaffold in a manner that offers the learners chances to interact with the content proactively.

The components in Bruner's constructivist theory include active learning, scaffolding, discovery learning, spiral curriculum, and culture and learning. Thus, active learning presupposes learners' activities that build their understanding of the subject matter by engaging with materials, questioning, and seeking the answers independently. Scaffolding means that a teacher guides the learners in completing tasks they cannot do independently, and the support given is phased out as the learner masters the act.

Discovery learning focuses on discovery as the key aspect through which information is acquired without the teacher's involvement or direct guidance from an instructor. A spiral curriculum is a process of presenting complicated information in a less complex method, repeating it, and deepening it in further lessons and units so learners can apply their previous knowledge to the current idea of the curriculum. Moreover, the cultural and social aspect of learning was much emphasized by Bruner. The context in which learning takes place was fundamental to defining the nature of the knowledge acquisition process.

Nowadays, Bruner's ideas are widely applied in education with the stress on activity, exploration, and gradual construction of knowledge through scaffolding and time-on-task principles. These contributions have stressed establishing conditions that enable learners to embrace knowledge-seeking and critical thinking to function effectively in society.

1.3.2 Lev Vygotsky: Social Interaction and Cognitive Growth

This paper will focus on social development theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky and emphasize the part played by social interaction in cognitive development. Based on the sociocultural theory posted by Vygotsky, education is a social phenomenon; hence, cognitive activities are acquired through interactions with members of society, especially those with more knowledge. Thus, Vygotsky suggested the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which means the set of tasks children can handle when in the company of a more capable individual. ZPD highlights the possibility of cognitive development; thus, learning causes development because development is potential or emergent and is based on advanced socio-cognition (Vygotsky, 1978).

Most important concepts of the Learning-Activity Theory, formulated by Vygotsky. It presents the child's abilities to perform certain tasks independently without assistance and with assistance from a caregiver. This Zone is the most beneficial as the child must strive for more while having the resources to deliver the best (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky also stressed the function of language in the child's cognitive development. He understood language as the main means of intellectual adaptation in the world. According to the paradigm, children acquire language to think, plan, and solve problems of daily living encountered in social-interactional experiences. That is why the internalization of language is the fundamental development process of higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1986).

Vygotsky's elements of Social development theory include the social aspect, Zone of proximal development, scaffolding, language as a tool for thinking and cultural development aspect. In this theory, social interaction means that cognitive development is

embedded in social processes, with learning being an interpersonal process in which knowledge is assimilated via people's interaction with other people. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the distance between the level of the learners' independent performance and the level of performance possible with cues and guidance of a more capable learning partner or teacher within which work can be done perfectly (Vygotsky 1978).

Related to the previous principle is scaffolding, which means instructors and other experts must construct support systems to help students complete ZPD duties. Such support is offered to aid learning but is removed when students improve (Wood, Bruner & Ross 1976). Language as a tool for thought suggests that significant thinkers used language for more than just communication. Through shared talks, sociocultural thinking becomes operational, and subjects regulate language use (Vygotsky, 1986).

Culture claims that cognition depends on the culture through which it takes place. Some key notions of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory include the conception that social interactions are mediated by tools and activities unique to culture, influencing cognitive processes. The relevance of Vygotsky's theory to education is evident through the enhancement of social context and learners' cooperation. This calls for an effective learning environment that encourages the students to forge interaction, communication and controlled learning process (Cole, 1996).

1.3.3 Jean Piaget: Stages of Cognitive Development in Children

The cognitive theories by Jean Piaget are grouped into four major stages where the child is expected to develop and learn in known stages. These are the sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete, and formal operational stages. Each Stage of human development corresponds to a certain form of activity and appears to have a set of attributes and accomplishments.

It covers the Sensorimotor that ranges from the birth of a child up to the age of two years. In this Stage, the child evolves knowledge of objects, people, events and anything that can be found around them by making actions of their senses. During this period, object permanence is shown when the child can comprehend that an object is still there even when

it cannot be seen, heard, or grasped. At this Stage, infants learn about causality and develop efficient motor skills (Piaget, 1952).

1.3.4 Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years)

The preoperational Stage is the most appropriate for describing early childhood education. At this Stage, the child also starts to use symbols in the representation of objects and also starts to pretend to play. Their thinking is marked by egocentricity; they have much trouble perceiving things from other points of view, unlike the concrete operational thinker. In this Stage, children are also able to develop animism. They can give life-like characteristics to objects. Although their understandings are pre-logical and non-empirical, they learn languages quickly and begin perceiving basic ideas (Piaget, 1952).

1.3.5 The Concrete Operational Stage of development is between 7 to 11 years.

Mainly, the concrete operational Stage is characterized by logical thinking, although the kids can experience some difficulty coming across abstract and hyped notions. They can perform operations on objects necessary for concrete experimentation and acquire the notions of conservation, reversal and sorting. Conservation is the knowledge that an object's features, like volume and number, stay constant even if the object has physical transformations. The specific cognitive concept involved here is reversibility – the ability to conceptualize that something can be altered and restored to its prior form (Piaget, 1964).

1.3.6 The Formal Operational Stage of Development

The last Stage, known as the formal operational Stage, is characterized by hypothetical thinking. In this Stage, adolescents can think rationally about propositions and hypothesize systematically. They acquire traits of thinking inductively and gain knowledge of important concepts like justice. At times, it can be equality. The capacity for considering two things and the possible consequences of each is the development of this Stage (Piaget, 1970).

The important concepts of Piaget's theory are constructed adaption, the stages of development, schemes, assimilation and accommodation processes besides equilibration.

According to constructivism, children engage in the world through scientific methods and create their knowledge through experience. Education is viewed as the accumulation of knowledge through experiences that are taken by the child (Piaget, 1970).

Piaget's stage model, where each Stage is different in quality and builds on the preceding one, is famous. Children need mental frameworks to organize and process information. Because children spend so much time in their environment, they continually change and improve their systems through assimilation and adaptation. Assimilation implies incorporating new information into current schemes, while accommodation requires changing or creating new ones. These processes help children adapt to their surroundings and think better (Piaget, 1964).

Equilibration is the process that Piaget worked out to show how the child arrives at a state of stability after the assimilation and accommodation of experience. Children return their schemes to equilibrium when facing new information that cannot be incorporated into the current schemes (disequilibrium) (Piaget, 1970).

Piaget's model has greatly impacted education practices by stressing the aspects of the match between the child's development stage and the tasks they are given. His ideas compel teachers to offer practical tasks that allow students to engage more intensely and purposeful with the environment (Piaget, 1970).

1.4 The Standards that will be used to Evaluate the EAN Program

Several sociopolitical criteria of education refer to the sphere of pedagogical criteria to assess the efficacy of the EAN program. These criteria are based on educational theory that drives the learning process and focuses on the stages in the child's development to ensure developmental appropriateness in providing learning activities in the program.

1.4.1 Child-Centred Approach

It is noted that all the activities in the framework of the EAN program should be in a way and form that meets young learner's characteristics and development. The major advantage of this approach is that learners are active participants in many activities, meaning that children are active agents in their learning process. First, embracing the centrality of the child's observation encourages individual development and, second, promoting independence (Alexiou, 2020).

1.4.2 Playful Learning

Games, songs and playful sessions are essential to the EAN program's structure. These methods make learning fun and kindle the imagination and creativity of the learner. Playful learning not only captures the children's attention but also leads to improved retention of the content learned by the child. Because of this approach, the coursework is entertaining for kids but effective in teaching every concept, which is the goal (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022).

1.4.3 Social Interaction

The program contains numerous situations where learners can interact with their peers; it is very important for personality development and communication skills. In group activities and peer interactions, children are expected to socialize and share their ideas or assignments, determine leadership and other roles within the group or pair, and learn how to work with other kids. This social aspect of learning is significant for overall development and also aids children in acquiring certain interpersonal skills (Penderi et al., 2021).

1.4.4 Interactive Teaching

The incorporation of modern approaches, such as the use of multimedia along with other technological tools, is used to teach the students. These methods enrich lessons and facilitate children's learning according to their profile and learning styles. Explanatory

teaching makes children active in class and more attentive to what the teacher is teaching them (European Commission, 2014).

1.4.5 Scaffolding and Support

Learners' needs are met with the right support and encouragement as they are molded to be the best they can be. This support, which follows Bruner's concept of scaffolding, is then withdrawn as learners become more capable. This way, the children are provided the help they need to learn new things; at the same time, the scaffolding approach promotes detachment as the children get more confident in their capabilities (Bruner, 1960).

1.4.6 Cultural Awareness

Implementing cultural aspects also increases the learners' attitude towards language learning and enables the learners to recognize the different cultures of the world. It helps in the development of their language and the expansion of their outlook and perception of cultures other than their own. It is important to create awareness and compassion in young clients (Genesee & Hamayan, 2016).

1.5 Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Theory

Content and Language Integrated Learning is a strategy that enriches the content that is being taught and language instruction where the two are taught at once. The EAN program enshrines the implementation of CLIL to teach thematic units in English and experience the language in an appropriate setting, avoiding gimmicks or tricks (Coyle et al., 2010). This approach is supposed to enhance language learning for meaning and be effective in context with learning other study areas. The effectiveness of CLIL is enhanced by its four main elements: content, communication, cognition and culture.

1.5.1 Content

This approach is academic since content is transmitted in English and facilitates children's learning and use of English literacy in real-life contexts. This element helps ensure that while the students are learning English, they are also learning other subjects such as science, history, and geography. This way, the children can connect the meaning of the language learned to the subject content, making it easier for the language learned to be understood and retained since the children see the practical use of this English in various fields (Ball, Kelly & Clegg, 2015).

1.5.2 Communication

Decoding interactions with peers in the classroom, particularly the discussions and teamwork carried out in English, positively affects the development of speaking and listening ([see Appendix D](#)). During group work, debates, and presentations, students get to speak English as it is used locally and internationally in real-life situations. These practices are constant in supportive environments, thus making the learners confident and proficient in the language. Another benefit of focusing on communication is building useful interpersonal skills and teaching the students how to convey their thoughts and ideas concisely and clearly (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

1.5.3 Cognition

Soft CLIL promotes the critical approach, thinking, and problem-solving skills underlying all the reasoning and analyzing processes in English ([see Appendix E](#)). Due to the activities that encompass them in analyzing information, making conclusions and solving problems, the students develop higher-order thinking skills. This cognitive improvement is further made as students apply critical thinking skills in analyzing the content to be studied while at the same time processing it in another language. Thus, it enhances their knowledge of the matters discussed and the proper cognitive development of their abilities to be elastic and adaptive in the process (Meyer, 2010).

1.5.4 Culture

Intercultural understanding and global dimension are some of the aims of Soft CLIL activities. From learning about various ethnical backgrounds and their holidays, the students expand their views and become more perceptive citizens of the world ([see Appendix F](#)). Learning about other cultures opens children's hearts to diverse people, which is essential for the contemporary world. This element of SoftCLIL in culture assists students in realizing the value of other cultures and increases their ability to communicate with different offices and persons (Genesee & Hamayan, 2016).

1.6 Benefits of Soft CLIL

The Soft CLIL approach improves academic performance and language learning since learning becomes meaningful and effective. Integrating content and language learning makes education exciting, whereby all the students gain something from it.

1.6.1 Enhanced Academic Achievement

The analysis of experiences proves that Soft CLIL enhances the learners' comprehension of different topics within a subject area. For instance, a geography unit focusing on continents and oceans includes learning these features' names in English, climate conditions, and regional animals. Besides developing awareness of geography, the method also helps language development because students speak English in real-life circumstances (Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 2014). Academic content passed on through English improves the comprehension of the content of the subject in question, thus enhancing academic performance.

1.6.2 Improved Language Skills

Soft CLIL leads to a significant improvement in language proficiency due to developing the students' English language learning environment. English Medium helps students use English for the subject matter transmissions, which helps them improve their vocabulary, grammar and Standard English language. Several subjects' incorporation in English enables the habit's creation to reduce language overheads by increasing fluency and confidence. Due to the communicative aspect of Soft CLIL and stressing communication and cooperation, it also helps develop speaking and listening skills (Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

1.6.3 Cognitive Benefits

Soft CLIL enhances the critical aspects of learning, such as reasoning abilities and problem-solving skills. Soft CLIL implies using a second language when learning content for students, making them innovative in thinking to compare, reason, and judge in their new language.

1.6.4 The Aspects of Culture and Cultural Intelligence

Soft CLIL also has strong advantages, including the enhancement of cultural sensitivity and intercultural understanding. Thus, by selecting thematic units of a certain culture or tradition, the learner acquires a wider vision and respect towards the variety in society. This aspect of culture within Soft CLIL contributes to the development of empathy and diversity to facilitate students in a global society (Genesee & Hamayan, 2016). For instance, in the EAN program, the students can analyze cultural festivals of different countries to gain further insight into culture and cultural events in different parts of the world (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022).

1.6.5 Motivation and Engagement

Thus, Soft CLIL, students' motivation rises, and they get more willingness to engage in the learning process as the classes are interesting and appealing. Combining interesting

material with a foreign language enhances its tried-and-true lessons' effectiveness. Students learn when their teacher shows the correlation between what they study in class and the real-life scenarios in different disciplines. Another advantage of the presented approaches is that, together with the use of such methods as role-play, experimentation, and multimedia tools, students' engagement and motivation increase (European Commission, 2014).

1.7 Implementation of Soft CLIL in EAN

In the framework of the EAN program, Soft CLIL is employed purposefully as a medium for teaching young learners through subjects while focusing on learning the English language in the context of the thematic units. It also carries out exclusively planned developmental activities, which correlate with preschool children's developmental level. For example, a child can plant different seeds and discuss the different stages in English, and teaching beyond biology helps them learn English and vocabulary (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022).

The EAN program's implementation of the Soft CLIL method incorporates multimedia tools, storytelling, and RPGs. The sustainability of the activities for the learning experiences is in line with the child's development and fun to carry out. This paper has made it clear that by teaching English alongside familiar and interesting topics, children would have the desire to learn as well as retain the English learned in class.

1.8 Conclusion

As demonstrated by the EAN program in Greece, the introduction of the English language in early childhood education averment to the substantial advantages and prospects of early foreign language acquisition. Based on the analysis of theory and practice in second language acquisition, this paper confirms the belief that young learners benefit from early

exposure to a second language in cognitive, social, and emotional development. Utilizing principles from Jerome Bruner's constructivism learning theory, Lev Vygotsky's social development theory, and stages of cognitive development by Jean Piaget enhance the EAN program through Active and Social and appropriate developmental learning activities.

The support of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) within the framework of the EAN program proves that the methods that combine content and language can be efficient. Soft CLIL increases the levels of academically relevant content and/or second language proficiency and facilitates the development of critical thinking, intercultural competencies, and students' interests. Applying thematic units and interaction leads to children's actual and joyful language learning experience and eventual lifetime affection for languages.

Thus, the EAN program proves that early language education is possible and feasible in preschool and positively impacts children's premature development. The program enhances the children's education based on current theories and best practices by integrating enriching language comprehension and use. The studies identified in this literature review show that early language programs should remain funded and extended since they improve the quality of future generations.

2 Chapter 2: Presentation of the EAN

2.1 The EAN program

The program called “Teacher Training for the Introduction of English in Preschool Education (EAN),” implemented under special identification number 5093563, falls under the Operational Program “Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning 2014-2020”. The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki manages this program in collaboration with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Institute of Educational Policy. The purpose of this initiative is to incorporate.

The intrinsic purpose of the EAN program is to supplement the content and styles of the methodological and thematic approach in kindergarten to recognize and enrich facets contributing to children’s linguistic and general growth. Implementation of the program aims to raise students’ multilingual sensitivity, intercultural communicative competence, and active citizenship relevant to the modern multicultural world (Alexiou & Penderi, 2020). Among them, the most important is the creation of educational and quick-wit materials and activities to introduce English, ensuring an appropriate learning environment; observational and overseeing of the program implementation process; and systematic supporting, which aims at steady enhancement.

The EAN program is headed by a team of dedicated departments of the faculty members of the respective universities, special teachers, technical staff, researchers, and some external partners. Professor Thomai Alexiou of the School of English Language and Literature in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki scientifically supervises the program.

To achieve the above objectives, the EAN program is still composed of 25 CLIL educational scenarios of different topics integrating English language learning. These activities, for example, sowing seeds and describing different stages in English, make children acquire more knowledge about different scientific facts and increase their vocabulary level within the English language (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022). The program is focused on cooperation between teachers of English language and preschool teachers to

promote a supportive educational context comprehended by every school member and management.

An English educational portal includes and supplements the methods and tutorials and the interactive and receptive tools ([see Appendix G](#)). This website, open to all stakeholders, gives information about the EAN program, educational resources, digital resources, Web Links and any possible activity that can be done inside a classroom for young children. It also envisages publications, learning and photographic materials for seminars and conferences in the scenarios under the EAN project. A systematic supervision of the EAN project entails traveling to schools and gathering data from preschools within Greece. Concerning the qualitative data, the EAN AUTH team watched the classroom practices and collected information about children's involvement, teachers utilizing educational scripts, and the coordination between the English and preschool teachers. Concerning children's learning, the studies focused on their linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional development through tools like Piclex and YLAT (Alexiou, 2020; Alexiou, 2005).

There is also significant interaction with several stakeholders in the project, such as the teachers, parents and the Education Advisors. Stakeholders' survey results revealed positive attitudes toward the program, and the main issues were minor and practical in nature and required constant support and refinement. As for focus group interviews, these gave an additional amount of substantiated information. All participants emphasized the advantages of introducing English in preschool and the assistance and instructions received from the training sessions and the educational material provided in the EAN Educational Portal.

Whereas a mode of applying and teaching of English language in the EAN program has the mascot, Kiki the Koala, an Australian puppet, making a fun and formal introduction to English. Kiki knows only English and assists children with how aspects learned in a classroom can be applied in the real-world use of the language. The polling of Kiki, out of several recommended catchy names by the children, impacts a stress-free and fun learning environment hence enhancing communication and creativity. Whenever necessary, Kiki offers new options for the thematic areas of the lesson, topics or activities in English and

supports children's multicultural approaches to the learning process and foreign language acquisition.

The EAN program's design and sequential process guarantee the contemporaneity of English in Greek preschools while introducing it in a developmentally pedagogically correct manner. Thus, concerning the New Preschool Curriculum, the program fits the role of preschool education for improving children's development. Being the author of numerous works for children and teachers, the EAN Educational Portal and other materials created by the several years team of the organization continue to enlighten and motivate teachers worldwide, specifying the concept of learning a foreign language in the early years. EAN

2.2 Educational Platform

The EAN Educational Platform, developed in the framework of the “Teacher Training for the Implementation of English in Preschool Education (EAN)” program, is a multifaceted complementary educational environment aiming at the introduction of the teaching of English in preschool education in Greece. This platform is one of the modules of the EAN project implemented by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) in cooperation with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (EKPA) and the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP). The platform integrates various technologies and resources to enhance learning ([see Appendix H](#)).

2.3 Purpose and Objectives

The primary goal of the EAN Educational Platform is to become the most-wanted go-to platform for any teacher, parent or another individual working with EAN. It is to be a user-friendly resource that will easily present different pieces of lesson, materials, training and interactive tools for integrating English into existing curriculum of preschool institutions.

They align with the EAN program's main objectives, which include raising awareness about multilingualism, developing intercultural communication competence and practices, and encouraging responsible models of citizenship in a multilingual context.

2.4 Characteristics of the EAN Educational Platform

2.4.1 Comprehensive Educational Material

Teaching and learning resources that is in harmony with the developmental youngster age of preschool. Such materials consist of over 30 CLIL educational scenarios, each containing more than 150 educational activities ([see Appendix I](#)). The mentioned scenarios include the following thematic units: “Myself and others,” “autumn,” “Winter,” “Spring,” and “Summer,” which corresponds to the structure of preschool curricula (Alexiou & Penderi, 2022).

2.4.2 Multimodal Resources

The humanitarian scenarios, the different multimodal resources available on the platform are 15 songs ([see Appendix J](#)), 19 games ([see Appendix K](#)), and 185 flashcards ([see Appendix L](#)). These resources are as follows: They call for interactivity and use the fact that children of such age are always learning through games. The presented site also provides more suggestions for further activities, stories and songs under each identified topic.

2.4.3 Digital Tools and Online Resources

The EAN Educational Platform integrates different technologies and sources of online resources to enhance the learner's activity. It contains tips like TPR (Total Physical Response) ([see Appendix M](#)) and games that are good for teaching young students. It also offers links to sites and other numerous online resources that help support the learning content.

2.4.4 Supportive Community and Interactive Features

It creates social interest for educators as they enable mega social platforms to support interactive features, including forums, discussion boards, and other collaboration tools. These features let the teachers share experiences and discuss or co-create the new teaching/learning experience. It also has an open access area in which baseline details about the EAN are published.

2.4.5 Systematic Monitoring and Feedback

The EAN Educational Platform plays a crucial role in the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the program. It hosts data collected from school visits, classroom observations, and stakeholder feedback, which are used to assess the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. This ongoing evaluation ensures that the educational materials and teaching methods remain relevant and effective (Alexiou, 2020; Alexiou, 2005).

2.4.6 Accessibility and User-Friendliness

The platform is designed to be user-friendly and easily navigable, ensuring that educators, parents, and other stakeholders can easily access the resources they need. It is available in Greek and English, catering to a diverse audience and promoting inclusivity.

2.5 Impact and Reach

According to Alexiou T. (2023), the EAN Educational platform recorded many visitors after it started; the viewership stands at 365,713 with 38,134 users. Most are from Greece, although the platform is also used internationally; people from the USA, Netherlands, Cyprus, and Brazil have visited its pages. Scholars' engagement shows the platform's utility to the EAN program objectives and the effort's global, precedent value.

The EAN Educational Platform is not only a useful source of information for the participants of the current educational programs but also would like to become a source of ideas for further educational initiatives and cooperation. This way, the EAN team guarantees the sustainability of this educational reform beyond the funded research program and their platform's improvement after the program's completion.

2.6 Modules of the EAN Program

All the resources provided by the platform are aimed at supporting further development and implementation of the EAN program and incorporating English language learning into the preschool curriculum. The platform contains several sections, each of which is aimed at the peculiarities of the educational process, from preparing teachers to entertaining modules for students. These modules are designed with a balanced scope to enable the child to effectively be exposed to early language education with a teacher's manual and other learning aids to help the teacher carry out the teaching effectively.

2.7 Asynchronous Training for Teachers

The asynchronous training component of the EAN program is a crucial part of the professional development provided to educators. This training aims to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively introduce English language learning in kindergarten settings. The asynchronous training is meticulously designed to be flexible, allowing educators to engage with the material at their own pace and convenience.

2.7.1 Structure and Delivery

The asynchronous training is delivered through a dedicated online platform, leveraging modern e-learning tools to enhance the training experience. This platform, developed and managed by the team at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in collaboration with the

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Institute of Educational Policy, provides a comprehensive digital environment for continuous professional development.

Participants in the asynchronous training program include coordinators of educational work and teachers of English (PE06) and kindergarten (PE60). The training is structured to cover two main phases, each phase comprising 24 hours of training that includes both synchronous and asynchronous sessions.

2.7.2 Content and Objectives

The asynchronous training sessions focus on several key areas to ensure a holistic understanding and practical application of the EAN program's principles. The primary objectives include:

1. **Philosophy and Principles of the EAN Program:** Educators are introduced to the core philosophy and principles underpinning the EAN program, which integrates English language learning into the broader kindergarten curriculum through a child-centered, playful, and interactive approach.
2. **Developmental Characteristics of Preschool Children:** The training covers the developmental stages of preschool children and how these stages influence learning processes. This helps educators tailor their teaching strategies to the developmental needs of their students.
3. **Kindergarten Curriculum Integration:** Teachers learn how to effectively integrate English language learning into the existing kindergarten curriculum, ensuring a seamless and supportive learning environment.
4. **Creative Activity Design and Implementation:** The training provides practical guidance on designing and implementing creative activities in English. This includes the use of games, songs, and interactive storytelling to make learning engaging and fun.
5. **Teacher Collaboration:** Emphasis is placed on fostering collaboration between English teachers and kindergarten teachers. This collaborative approach ensures

that both sets of educators work together to create a cohesive and supportive learning experience for the children.

2.7.3 Training Activities and Support

The asynchronous training includes a variety of activities designed to reinforce learning and provide practical experience ([see Appendix N](#)). These activities include:

- **Discussion Forums:** Participants engage in online discussions to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. This fosters a community of practice where educators can support each other.
- **Interactive Assignments:** Teachers complete assignments that require them to apply the principles and techniques learned during the training to real-world scenarios.
- **Resource Libraries:** The platform provides access to a wide range of resources, including lesson plans, activity guides, and multimedia materials that teachers can use in their classrooms.

2.7.4 Asynchronous Training Team

The success of the asynchronous training component is supported by a dedicated team of experts who contribute their knowledge and experience to the program:

- Thomai Alexiou: Professor at AUTH, Scientific Coordinator - Coordination
- Eleni Agathopoulou: Professor at AUTH
- Konstantina Iliopoulou: EDI Professor at AUTH
- Domna Kakana: Professor at AUTH
- Ioannis Karras: Associate Professor at Ionian University
- Marina Matthaoudaki: Professor at AUTH
- Anastasios Paschalis: ETEP at AUTH

- Efthymia Penderi: Assistant Professor at Democritus University of Thrace
- Areti-Maria Sougari: Associate Professor at AUTH
- Leonidas Fragkidis: Assistant Professor at University of the Aegean
- George Psathas: PhD Candidate at AUTH

This team ensures that the training is comprehensive, engaging and tailored to meet the needs of all participants, providing continuous support and guidance throughout the program.

2.7.5 Conclusion

The asynchronous training for teachers in the EAN program is a comprehensive and flexible approach to professional development. By providing educators with the tools and knowledge they need to integrate English language learning into kindergarten settings, the program ensures that young learners receive a high-quality, engaging, and supportive education. This training model not only enhances the skills of individual teachers but also fosters a collaborative and innovative educational environment that benefits both educators and students.

2.8 Synchronous Training for Teachers in the EAN Program

The synchronous training component of the EAN program is designed to provide real-time, interactive professional development for educators. This training is essential for equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement English language learning in kindergarten settings. The synchronous training sessions are conducted through online platforms, allowing for live interaction between trainers and participants, which enhances the learning experience.

2.8.1 Structure and Delivery

The synchronous training sessions are organized into two main phases, each comprising 24 hours of training that includes both synchronous and asynchronous elements (see [Appendix O](#)). These sessions are facilitated through a dedicated online platform, developed and managed by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in collaboration with the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Institute of Educational Policy. This platform provides a robust environment for interactive and engaging training experiences.

2.8.2 Content and Objectives

The synchronous training sessions focus on several key areas to ensure that educators are well-prepared to integrate English language learning into their classrooms. The primary objectives include:

1. **Understanding the Philosophy and Principles of the EAN Program:** Educators are introduced to the core philosophy and principles that underpin the EAN program. This includes integrating English language learning into the broader kindergarten curriculum through a child-centered, playful, and interactive approach.
2. **Developmental Characteristics of Preschool Children:** The training covers the developmental stages of preschool children and how these stages influence learning processes. This helps educators tailor their teaching strategies to the developmental needs of their students.
3. **Integration of English into the Kindergarten Curriculum:** Teachers learn how to effectively integrate English language learning into the existing kindergarten curriculum, ensuring a seamless and supportive learning environment.
4. **Design and Implementation of Creative Activities in English:** The training provides practical guidance on designing and implementing creative activities in English. This includes the use of games, songs, and interactive storytelling to make learning engaging and fun.

5. **Fostering Teacher Collaboration:** Emphasis is placed on fostering collaboration between English teachers and kindergarten teachers. This collaborative approach ensures that both sets of educators work together to create a cohesive and supportive learning experience for the children.

2.8.3 Training Activities and Support

The synchronous training sessions include a variety of activities designed to reinforce learning and provide practical experience. These activities are tailored to ensure that educators can effectively apply the principles and techniques learned during the training to real-world classroom settings. The primary activities include:

- **Live Discussions:** Participants engage in live discussions to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. This fosters a community of practice where educators can support each other.
- **Interactive Workshops:** Teachers participate in workshops that require them to apply the principles and techniques learned during the training to real-world scenarios.
- **Resource Sharing:** The platform provides access to a wide range of resources, including lesson plans, activity guides, and multimedia materials that teachers can use in their classrooms.

2.8.4 Organization of Training Content by NKUA

The training for coordinators by NKUA lasts 48 hours and is conducted in two phases:

- **Phase A:** September-October 2021 (24 hours: 12 synchronous and 12 asynchronous)
- **Phase B:** February-March 2022 (24 hours: 12 synchronous and 12 asynchronous)

Asynchronous training for coordinators is based on educational activities designed by the project team. Coordinators, divided into groups, will complete these activities remotely and then present their collective work results in synchronous sessions.

Each phase of training consists of four thematic units, with each unit comprising 6 hours of training: 3 hours asynchronous and 3 hours synchronous.

2.8.5 Synchronous Training for PE60 and PE06 Teachers

The synchronous training for PE60 and PE06 teachers includes two online seminars organized by NKUA. The first seminar, titled "Working Together, Learning Together," was held on Wednesday, December 15, 2021. The second seminar, titled "English in Pre-school Education: Building Bridges," took place on Thursday, June 16, 2022.

2.8.6 Synchronous Training Team

The success of the synchronous training component is supported by a dedicated team of experts who contribute their knowledge and experience to the program:

- **Eudokia Karava:** Scientific Coordinator
- **Vasiliki Mitsikopoulou:** Trainer
- **Nikos Sifakis:** Trainer
- **Marina Tzakosta:** Trainer
- **Kosmas Vlachos:** Trainer
- **Georgia Gyftoula:** Trainer
- **Niki Skopeliti:** Trainer
- **Areti Chalkiadaki:** Trainer
- **Theodoros Thomas:** Technical Support

2.8.7 Conclusion

The synchronous training component of the EAN program plays a vital role in preparing educators to effectively integrate English language learning into kindergarten settings. Through a structured and interactive approach, the training provides educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to implement the program's principles and

techniques. The combination of live discussions, interactive workshops, and resource sharing ensures that teachers are not only informed but also actively engaged in the learning process.

The phased training provided by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, supplemented by the comprehensive support from the dedicated training team, ensures a high-quality professional development experience. This thorough preparation allows educators to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment, fostering collaboration and innovative teaching methods.

Ultimately, the synchronous training sessions contribute significantly to the success of the EAN program by enhancing the capabilities of educators. This, in turn, leads to a more effective and enriching English language learning experience for young children in Greece, laying a strong foundation for their future educational and professional success.

2.9 Conclusion

The EAN Educational Platform constitutes one of the main elements of the EAN program as it provides extensive information and assistance regarding including English as a foreign language in Greek preschool education. The platform enriches early learning through high-quality educational content and creative tools and gathers a friendly and helpful community that is an important resource for young children and educators' development. The layout and structure demonstrate the program's focus on multilingualism, intercultural education, and civics education; thus, the program is useful for teaching and other parties interested in the early years education sector.

3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to elucidate the evaluation method for the "Teacher Training for the Introduction of English in Preschool Education" program. The goal of this chapter is to articulate the study's research questions and explain the research paradigms, participants, data collection techniques, data analysis and measurement, ethical concerns, and limitations. The research structure follows this logic: The researchers use the methodology to maintain a consistent and coherent approach to assessing the effectiveness of the EAN program throughout the study, ensuring the credibility and accuracy of their conclusions regarding the advancement of multilingual awareness and intercultural communicative competence among young learners in the preschool years, as well as teachers' impressions and attitudes towards the program's outcomes.

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

- What impact does the EAN program have on children's linguistic development in preschool?
- How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of the EAN program's educational materials and support?
- What challenges do teachers and administrators face in implementing the EAN program?
- How does the EAN program influence multilingual awareness and intercultural communication among preschool children?

3.3 Research Design

This study aims to design the research approach for the “Teacher Training for the Introduction of English in Preschool Education (EAN)” program. We employ both

qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in equal proportion. We employed this design to safeguard not only the program's evaluation but also the details participants might have experienced during the process.

Mixed-Method Approach

The research study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This approach allowed for triangulation, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings by cross-verifying data collected from different sources.

3.4 Participants

The study involved a total of 12 participants, comprising 3 teachers and 9 parents from a kindergarten in Alexandroupolis. The selection of participants was purposive, aiming to include individuals who could provide in-depth insights into the research questions. To enhance the generalizability of the sample, we will apply purposeful and random sampling techniques to the participating individuals.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

To gather a diverse range of data, the study utilized three primary data collection methods: questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Participants: Both parents and teachers were asked to complete questionnaires.

Process:

- **Development:** The questionnaires were carefully designed to include both closed and open-ended questions. This design enabled the collection of quantitative data for statistical analysis and qualitative data for thematic analysis.
- **Distribution:** The questionnaires were distributed to the participants at the kindergarten. Parents received the questionnaires through their children, while teachers were given the questionnaires directly.
- **Content:** The questions covered various aspects of the participants' experiences and perceptions related to the educational environment, teaching practices, and parental involvement.

3.5.2 Interviews

Process:

- **Preparation:** An interview guide was prepared, consisting of semi-structured questions. This guide ensured that key topics were covered while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions based on the teachers' responses.
- **Execution:** The interviews were conducted in the kindergarten setting, providing a comfortable and familiar environment for the teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour.
- **Recording and Transcription:** With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for detailed analysis.

3.5.3 Classroom Observations

Observations Conducted: Four classroom observations were carried out.

Process:

- **Planning:** A structured observation checklist was developed to ensure consistency across the observations. The checklist focused on various elements such as teacher-student interactions, teaching methods, classroom management, and student engagement.

- **Implementation:** The researcher observed the classrooms in action during different times of the day to capture a holistic view of the teaching and learning processes. Each observation session lasted for about one hour.
- **Documentation:** Detailed field notes were taken during the observations, noting specific instances, interactions, and behaviors relevant to the research questions.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The assessment tools used in gathering information regarding the effectiveness of the EAN program involve various tools and techniques that have been considered appropriate in capturing different dimensions of the program. The data required for the identification and assessment of the perceived benefits of the program, participant satisfaction, and attitudes have been diligently explored through surveys and questionnaires. Such an instrument is subjected to reliability and validity checks to affirm their admissibility before being defined as research instruments in educational evaluation, analogous to accepted research principles within the education evaluation field.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data is analyzed from the evaluation of the EAN program using both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide further insights into its functionality and efficiency. Categorization and analysis of the data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and/or open-ended questionnaires fall under qualitative data and thematic analysis. Conversely, data obtained from surveys, questionnaires, or any other form of assessment is statistically analyzed. Researchers would also use them to quantitatively compare the demographic data, level of satisfaction, and learning impact of the EAN program.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

There are several concerns that have to be considered in the ethical aspects of the research related to the EAN program to protect participants' rights and guarantee their safety. We will clearly present the participants' information and consent, adhering to Shah and others' (2023) guidelines for obtaining informed consent from preschool children, teachers, administrators, parents, and other interested parties.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

To maintain the accuracy as well as credibility of the research assessing the impact of the EAN program the following measures are observed. By collecting data from surveys, interviews as well as classroom observations, different results and findings will be obtained and compared to one another making the study all the more comprehensive.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

One of the primary limitations of this study evaluating the EAN program may be related to the sample size and its representativeness, given the diverse contexts of preschools across Greece. While efforts will be made to include a varied participant pool, generalizing findings to all preschools nationwide may be constrained.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have described the research methods to be used to assess the EAN program regarding its formal research questions, study design, selection of participants, data collection techniques, analysis strategies, and ethical considerations, along with measures to ensure reliability, validity, and possible sources of bias. Every component is deliberately designed to offer a systematic analysis that would help in achieving the

objectives of the study which is to examine the effects of the program on emulation of early English learning in Greek preschools. The specifics of the methods used will be explained in the next chapter which systematically analyses the findings obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data that provide an understanding of the program's efficacy and its applicability for educational activities and policies.

4 Chapter 4: The evaluation of the EAN

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the detailed methodology used to evaluate the EAN program. This includes outlining the evaluation criteria established in Chapter 1 and providing a brief overview of the research design, data collection methods, and analysis Procedures. By explaining the systematic approach taken to assess the program, this chapter aims to ensure a clear understanding of how the study's findings, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters, were derived.

4.2 Implementation of Educational Materials

The process of introducing the EAN educational materials presupposes the inclusion of the CLIL learning-teaching scenarios and the thematically unitized curricula of preschool institutions. This approach is effective as it means that learning English language is done in the context of other subjects and activities, which are much more interesting to the learners. Teachers are taught how to apply these materials in their classes which enhances more uptake of improved teaching techniques than books. The drawbacks involve difficulty in integrating the new materials in the course curriculum, as well as in training all the required teachers, while the strengths encompass the practical learning from the program through improving the students' engagement, as well as enhancing their language learning skills in the early years of education.

4.3 Impact on Children's Linguistic Development

Language usage of young learners is considered to assess the results of the EAN program based on the difference between pre- and post-intervention tests. This comparison of language skills measures gains in ways of size and quality of vocabulary, comprehension and issues of expression (Riad et al., 2023). Achievements in language development are described by examples of individual children and their progression from having a limited

number of words with which to understand and use English to the ability to understand and use more complete and common English in real-world scenarios when they finish the program. Such examples cannot go unnoticed in explaining that the program indeed helped to boost young children's early language skills.

4.4 Development of Multilingual Awareness

The extent of children's multilingual learning is examined by various Language Awareness Intensity (LAI) metrics, including the intensity of valuing other languages and cultures (Vaahtoranta et al., 2020). Various initiatives to support multilingualism like games, demonstrating other people's culture around the globe through the stories can be pointed as integral to the program. Some of the signs that children use multiple languages in the classroom include how they readily engage in all these activities, become more interested in learning other words from a different language, and their ability to carry out comparison between their parents' language and English. These principles' strengths support the program in helping learners develop an early appreciation of languages' variability.

4.5 Enhancement of Intercultural Communication

Inter-cultural communication improvement is assessed based on the ability of children in terms of embracing or playing with peers from other cultures (Sow, 2022). Interaction with other children, sharing their own culture as well as listening to the stories of other kids, and even everyday practices like role-playing assignments are aimed at inter-culturalism. These activities afford children with chances with which they can gain knowledge about other traditions, languages and cultures apart from their own, hence preventing them from having a narrow cultural outlook and encouraging them to embrace the culture of accepting number one, other people and number two, their ways of doing things.

Class teachers monitor and record 'cultural learning encounters' where children are exhibiting signs of increased cultural competence when relating to peers. Successful intercultural communication carried out by children can be observed in the usage of how

they greet, using other languages and words/ phrases, their contribution during the discussions on the cultural practices and their curiosity as well as respect in learning from other cultures (Sow, 2022). Comparing these findings to the objectives of the program, it is possible to note that it effectively fosters a supportive environment for children's development, targeting essential skills in intercultural communication and thereby promoting their general social and emotional well-being.

4.6 Fostering Active Citizenship

In fitting the EAN program, it is very important to support the children in exercising their active citizenship and civility by incorporating civil responsibility activities. Through the contextualized discussions and activities like discussions and practical tasks, students learn about community participation, environmental protection, and following the guidelines of democracy. Some of the activities that might be carried out include charity exercises, role playing exercises, exercises where students are taught on their rights and responsibilities as citizens among others. These provide children with the platform to have the acceptable feeling that they have a place in the larger society and that they are able to contribute towards the growth of their society.

This study established that teachers and educators noticed significant positive changes in children's acquisition and modelling of citizenship concepts throughout the program period. They record cases where a child demonstrates improvement of the desire toward his fellows, respect for other kids, sharing, and willingness to assume responsibilities during group projects that are meant for change or support of a particular course within their society. Apart from that such experiences widen the children's perception on social issues and it also improves their social and emotional development because of the strong sense of teamwork, decision making, and understanding of others' feelings. In sum, the EAN program contributes to not only the development of linguistic and cognitive perspectives but also such moral values as tolerance that is vital for an active citizen in the multicultural society.

4.7 Teacher and Stakeholder Engagement

The analysis of active performance by teachers themselves, as well as stakeholders involved in the delivery of the EAN program, shows considerable interest and favorable response. Pre-service and in-service teachers receive many training activities and group supports to enhance the skills and the self-confidence when applying the English language learning during preschool years. From these sources, they express a high level of satisfaction with the educational influence of the program especially the CLIL scenarios and thematic units as appealing and in a position to balance their developmental requirements. Parents, in particular education advisors, participate in the consultations, focus-group discussions and feed backing mechanisms that provide timely feedbacks' that assists in enhancing the program to considering the societal expectations. In total, the highly positive attitudes of the teachers and stakeholders clearly indicate the practical implementation of the program in enhancing the infusion of English language education into context of Greek preschools.

4.8 Educational Portal Utilization

The study of the EAN Educational Portal highlights the fact that there is intensive usage among teachers and other players in the system, demonstrating the importance of the portal in fulfilling the goals of the program being spearheaded. Teachers can use it as a tool to obtain teaching materials, complete training activities and use such as an interactive facility inculcated in teaching English in pre-school institutions. This evidence from the user base shows that the efficiency of a number of features in fulfilling the goal of giving a complete reference source according to the curriculum context and encouraging the adoption of fresh teaching methods. Both users like and highly value elements such as the interface, the choice of topics, and a combination of materials that help to enhance students' interest and effectiveness of classes. In conclusion, the role of the portal leans toward being a central source for social, professional, and academic growth of any participant in the EAN program, as well as a nurturing ground for educators and young learners to grow together.

4.9 Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The administration, implementation, and evaluation of the EAN program have revealed various challenges that directly impact the program's practicality for teachers and other stakeholders. Some of these practical challenges affect the effective implementation of English language activities in preschool curricula, including: imperfect fit, where teachers struggle to harmonize English language teaching and learning with the rest of the preschool syllabi; preparedness challenges, where not all teachers are adequately prepared to support Soft CLIL methodologies at their schools; and access and navigation challenges, where teachers sometimes struggle to access or use the EAN Educational Portal optimally. However, due to other responsibilities and resource availability, ensuring sustained commitment and support for any activity or approach throughout the program's duration has proven to be crucial and occasionally challenging. In summary, strategies such as enhancing initial teacher training, implementing postage-paid teacher development needs for initial teachers, and achieving improvements in portal usage could be helpful in overcoming the aforementioned challenges. Moreover, enhancing the understanding of what constitutes effective communication and promoting enhanced cooperation among all the actors involved in launching, managing, and implementing the program will prove crucial in fine-tuning the learning program design and operationalization in subsequent versions of the EAN campaign.

4.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the assessment of the EAN program has unearthed substantial findings in terms of seven dimensions, as stated above. Children's language skills, understanding of multiple languages, cultural competence, and communication and citizenship management have all improved as a result of the program. The students' readiness levels varied, as did the level of engagement from teachers and stakeholders, but overall, the results can be considered positive. In conclusion, we can draw conclusions about the efficiency of the EAN program based on its implementation experience and its contribution to enhancing preschool education through its innovative approach to language acquisition. In light of the limitations, future research should focus on the program's long-term effects and their potential sustainability for future young learners. The need for better training, ongoing

support for the implementation of the program, and the utility of educational materials, which hold a key to the program's effectiveness in different school settings, should also gain prominence in future program development.

5 Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the major emphasis is made on the integration and analysis of the study findings towards reference with the goals of the EAN program. The first and foremost aim is to answer the research questions presented at the beginning of the study, focusing on the effects of the EAN program in different aspects of elite early language education. More particularly, this discussion endeavours to assess the program for its purposes of improving the children's language skills, raising awareness about multiple languages, intercultural communication and active citizens among the pre-school children. As such, in analyzing these outcomes, it is the hope of this chapter to offer an appreciation as to whether EAN program is responsive to the intended aim formulated and its effects on education practices geared towards early childhood learners.

5.2 Answering Research Questions

To answer all the research questions of this study, it is necessary to assess the EAN program's impact, including qualitative and quantitative factors related to the insurance company. First, an analysis of the measure changes in language skills based on standard test of language development is used to determine the impact of the program in the linguistic development of the children before and after engaging in the EAN activities. The research paper shows the increase in the use of the vocabulary among preschool children exposed to Soft CLIL scenario and thematic unit involved in the process of teaching learning activities. This improvement further supports the attestations relating to the advantages of early language learning with the help of the proposed program that structures the process and provides the child with opportunities for activities.

Moreover, the multiple language learning and intercultural communication is discussed in terms of the result of the qualitative study which involved interviews with the educators and parents as well as focus groups with the stakeholders. Findings show that improvements in cross cultural and language awareness could be attributed to the EAN

program, where children show considerable interest in learning more about the world. This aspect covers the aspect of the program in terms of multiculturalism and global orientation of the young learner to enable them to embrace the prevailing complex global society. After that, the role of the program in promoting the formation of an active citizenship is described with reference to the effectiveness of the projects dealing with the children's interaction with the community and with the focus on the environmental issues, which help inculcate the sense of responsibility in the young generation from the start.

Another significant aspect of the discussion is the participation of teachers and stakeholders in outlining their concerns about the implementation of the corresponding program and possible supported mechanisms via the educational portal. Feedback highlights the need for continued education and training, as well as joint learning experiences provided through the usage of the portal, to guarantee the program's continued effectiveness and impact on the participants' instructional practices. So, to sum up the synthesis of the results of the study revealed thus bringing more profound understanding of the EAN program compatibility with its aims and purposes and how it meets major educational concerns related to education in language development in early childhood.

5.3 Comparison of the Findings with the Literature Review

This paper research results are compared with the previous research in the domain of early language education and program implementation to highlight the outcomes of the study in the wider context of education research. The enhancements in the children's language acquisition process and their multilingualism converge with previous findings stressing the advantages of early language learning through contextual realization and activity (Alexiou and Penderi, 2020). In addition, the improvement of intercultural communication competence and effective citizenship to the context of this work confirms the provisions of CLIL and Vygotsky's sociocultural approach that emphasizes the significance of social interaction and cultural context in language acquisition. These comparisons help to further legitimize the EAN program's educational method and accomplishments and prove its compatibility with extant theoretical foundations.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, the following limitations are noted: Although a number of benefits are found in this study, there are still some limitations noted of it. It is the limitation of the sample size which raises some doubt regarding the ability of generalizing the results to all preschools in Greece or other educational settings. Issues in data gathering and assessment including: variation in the level of participation and ‘endorsement’ of some response options respectively presented some challenges especially in the labeling and coding process. There are limitations to this study. The surveys are self-completed and subjective in nature some observations made are ‘colored’ by the opinions of the researchers. The evidence presented above implies that there are some restrictions and it is necessary to be critical while analyzing the results and discuss the prospects for their development in subsequent studies.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The results and emerging limitations outline several recommendations for future research. Future research should employ a larger and more diverse population sample to overcome the implementation limitations and enhance generalizability. Moreover, the adoption of measures that enable control of participants’ interests and a better plan for their exercise can enable better results to be accrued through consistent data collection. Ideally, more research needs to be conducted with respect to the sustainable positive effects of the EAN program on children after English language instruction, focusing on their linguistic and socio-emotional development. Improving research methods, like using quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously, and implementing more effective kinds of research, like longitudinal ones, will provide a more profound understanding of the efficiency of early language education programs.

5.6 Conclusion

The findings shown in this study are quite profound and seem to affirm the broad effectiveness of the EAN program on early language learning. The main objectives demonstrate positive changes in language skills of the children themselves and their awareness of multiple languages and cultures, as well as work on citizenship and immense teacher and other stakeholders' involvement. From the following observations, there is a clear implication that the EAN program improves preschool education, in addition to providing a model for similar programs concerning the remainder of the world. This extends the knowledge of the field, especially as it highlights several key points about early language education, provides suggestions for improved practice and policy that can be adopted in the future, and underlines the importance of ongoing support and development of such programs.

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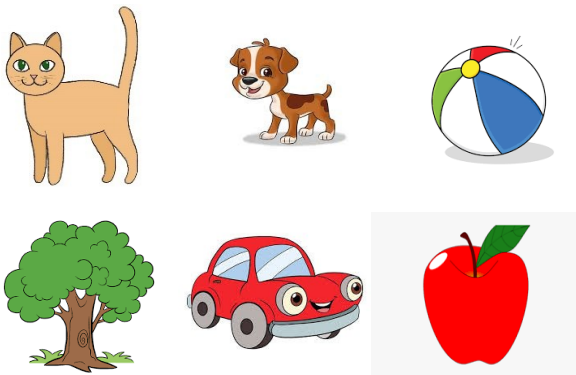
7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Language Assessment

EAN Program Language Assessment for Preschool Children

Section 1: Vocabulary Assessment

Name the pictures



Section 2: Listening Comprehension

Listen to the story and answer

John has a big ball. He likes to play the ball in the park. He has got a brown cat and a black dog. He likes to eat apples.

- What colour is John's cat?
- What colour is John's dog?
- Does he like eating apples?

Section 3: Speaking Assessment

Answer the questions

- a. What is your favourite colour?
- b. Have you got a dog?
- c. Have you got a cat?
- d. What is your favourite toy?

7.2 Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers

EAN Program Teacher Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to gather feedback of the teachers on various aspects of the EAN Program.

1. Years of Teaching Experience

- ☐ 0-2
☐ 3-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 10+

2. Grade Levels Taught

- ☐ Kindergarten
☐ Other (please specify)

3. Educational Qualifications

- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Master's Degree
☐ PhD
☐ Other

4. How well do you feel the EAN program has been implemented in your school?

1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Well

5. How satisfied are you with the training provided for the EAN program?

1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very satisfied

6. How effective do you find the training materials and resources provided?

1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very effective

7. How would you rate the support provided by the program coordinators?

1 2 3 4 5
 Poor ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Excellent

8. How engaging do you find the activities and materials provided by the EAN program?

1 2 3 4 5

Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very engaging

9. How appropriate are the activities for the developmental levels of your students?

1 2 3 4 5

Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very appropriate

10. How effective are the EAN program's strategies in improving students' English language skills?

1 2 3 4 5

Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very effective

11. How well do the EAN program activities integrate with the existing kindergarten curriculum?

1 2 3 4 5

Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very well

12. How motivated are your students to participate in the EAN program activities?

1 2 3 4 5

Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very motivated

13. How would you rate the overall progress of your students in English language skills since the implementation of the EAN program?

1 2 3 4 5

Poor ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Excellent

14. What challenges have you encountered while implementing the EAN program? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Lack of resources
- ☐ Parental support
- ☐ Student engagement
- ☐ Time constraints
- ☐ Insufficient training

15. What aspects of the EAN program do you find most beneficial?

16. What changes or improvements would you suggest for the EAN program?

7.3 Appendix C: Questionnaire for Parents

EAN Program Parent Questionnaire

This is a structured questionnaire designed for parents to evaluate the EAN program. This questionnaire aims to gather feedback on their children's experiences, the program's effectiveness, and areas for improvement.

1. Child's Age

- ☐ 3-4 years
☐ 4-5 years
☐ 5-6 years

2. How did you first hear about the EAN program?

- ☐ School communication
☐ Other parents
☐ Social media

3. How well do you understand the objectives and goals of the EAN program?

- 1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very well

4. How often does your child talk about the activities they do in the EAN program?

- 1 2 3 4 5
 New ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very often

5. How engaging do you find the activities and materials provided by the EAN program for your child?

- 1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very engaging

6. How appropriate are the activities for your child's developmental level?

- 1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very appropriate

7. How effective do you find the EAN program in improving your child's English language skills?

- 1 2 3 4 5
 Very ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very effective

8. How would you rate the overall progress of your child in English language skills since the implementation of the EAN program?

1 2 3 4 5

Poor ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Excellent


9. What improvements have you noticed in your child's social and communication skills?


1 2 3 4 5


No improvement ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Significant improvement


10. What aspects of the EAN program do you find most beneficial for your child?

7.4 Appendix D: Communication



Suggestions for formative assessment
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 The children can play a game in groups. They use material from their costume and when they hear the appropriate word in the song (e.g., “**witch**”) they dress up, making the appropriate movements.

 They can also play the game “I spy...” with a piece of cardboard/coloured card covered in pictures. We invite the children to observe the pictures. Each time they notice a picture relevant to Halloween, they have to repeat the phrase “I spy...” along with the word/colour that corresponds. In this way, vocabulary related to colours, as well as other words, is recycled for consolidation.


 EAN Digital game “Trick or treat!” where Kiki tells the children what sweets to give to

the ones dressed up for Halloween.

 The children make a pumpkin pie in class with the help of their parents/guardians. They cut the pie into pieces to treat everyone while using the vocabulary they have learned.




7.5 Appendix E: CLIL


EAN Educational Scenarios' approach
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Content and Language Integrated Learning - CLIL has been adopted, meaning that

- emphasis is placed on both language and other thematic areas/fields while following the interdisciplinary approach applied in preschool

Therefore, **all the suggested scenarios are CLIL educational scenarios.**








7.6 Appendix F: Culture



Let's learn about Halloween!





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-  **(PT-LT)** We ask the children if they know what and how we celebrate Halloween, as well as how they know this information. We encourage the children to ask Kiki and learn more about this celebration.
-  **(LT-PT)** We show the children flashcards and/or a video (see the additional suggested material on the website) and Kiki briefly explains what we celebrate on Halloween. **(PT-LT)** Then, we ask the children if Halloween reminds them of another celebration (Carnival) and discuss their similarities and differences.
-  **(LT-PT)** We invite the children to use the world map to search for and guess which other countries celebrate Halloween. Every time a child points to one of those countries, we place a sticker or a small piece of paper with a drawing on it (e.g., a pumpkin).
-  Kiki announces that Halloween is her favourite celebration because she loves dressing up and she wants to show the children a video about Halloween costumes. **(LT-PT)** We watch the video and pause every time a new costume appears so that they can repeat the words (e.g., **“witch, cowboy, pirate, monster”**) and make the appropriate movement.
-  **(PT-LT)** We replay the video and start dancing all together. We encourage the children to improvise, when it comes to the movements, and suggest different moves. **(LT-PT)** Every time a new costume appears, Kiki says the corresponding word and asks the children to repeat it.



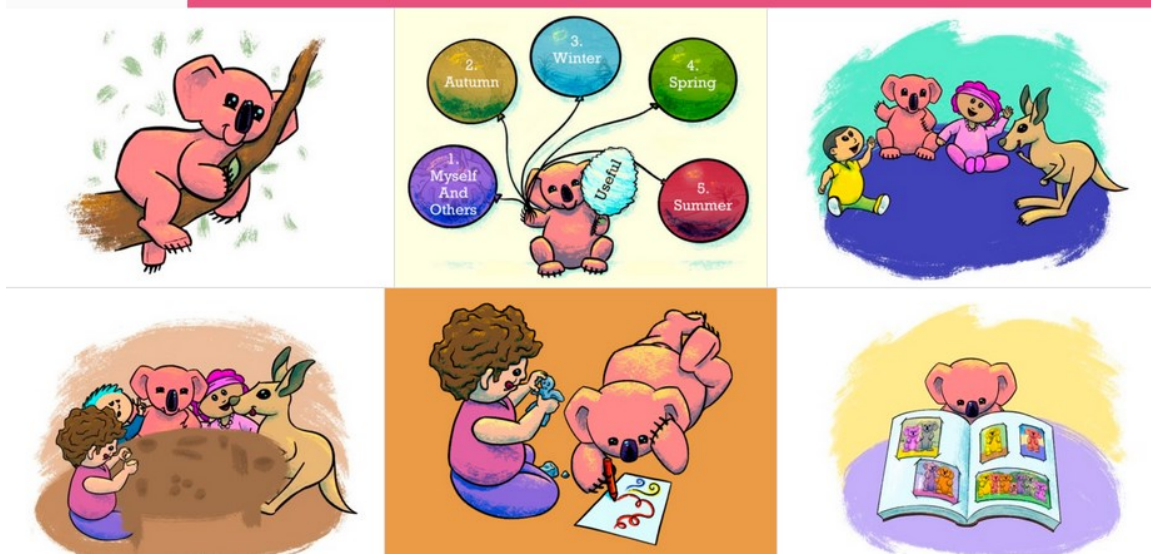
Christmas pudding or New Year's Eve cake?

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-  **(LT-PT)** We suggest that the children ask Kiki about the Christmas pudding (e.g., what ingredients are there in it, why they add a penny, when they cut it up, etc.). Using flashcards, Kiki shows the children the ingredients of the Christmas pudding and says the words in English (**milk, flour, sugar etc.**).
-  **(PT-LT)** We encourage the children to think about a similar Greek custom (New Year's Eve cake - Vasilopita) and to share the ingredients they think it is made of. If the children have relevant experiences, they discuss the ingredients, otherwise they search on the internet or in pastry books that have been added to the library.
-  **(LT-PT)** The children compare the ingredients of the two sweets by making two lists and find similarities and differences by repeating the vocabulary. We help the children by pointing to the ingredients and using questions and miming (**“Which are the same/different? – Flour/Milk is the same-raisins in the pudding? Yes-raisins in vasilopita? No!”**), etc.
-  **(LT-PT)** Kiki is very curious to learn how to make the Greek New Year's Eve cake and asks the children, if possible, to prepare it in their classroom and share it with each other. Alternatively, they can share a store-bought New Year's Eve cake or consult with parents/guardians and invite them to class to make it together.



7.7 Appendix G: Educational Portal



7.8 Appendix H: Educational Platform




7.9 Appendix I: CLIL Scenarios



7.10 Appendix J: Songs

Τραγούδι "Hello!" ean.auth.gr



Hello, Hello! How are you? (x4)

I'm fine thank you! How are you? (x2)

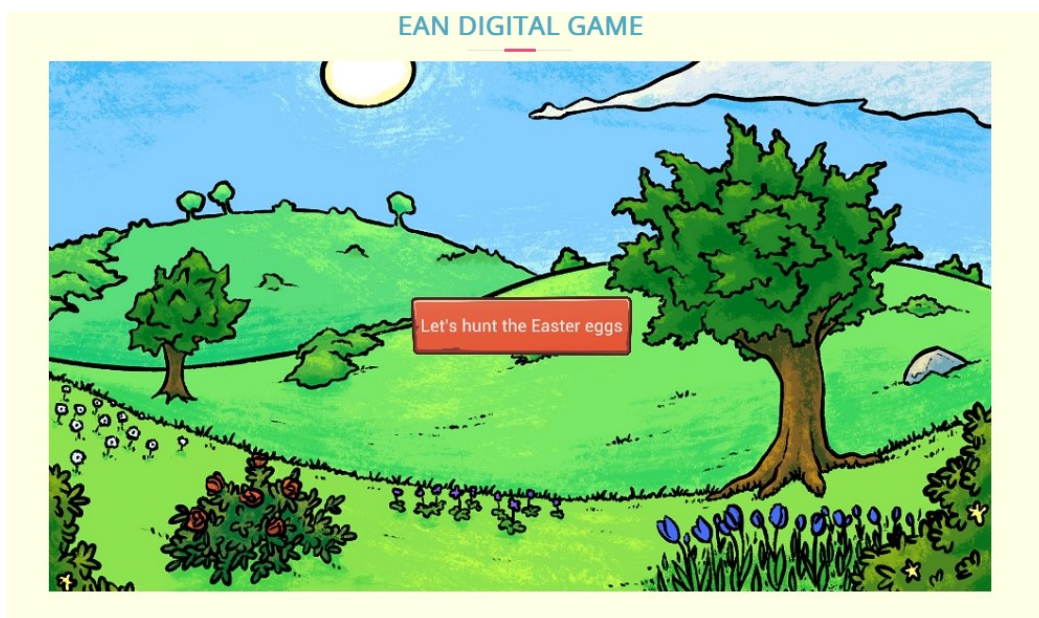
Hello, Hello! How are you? (x4)

Hello, Hello, welcome to our school

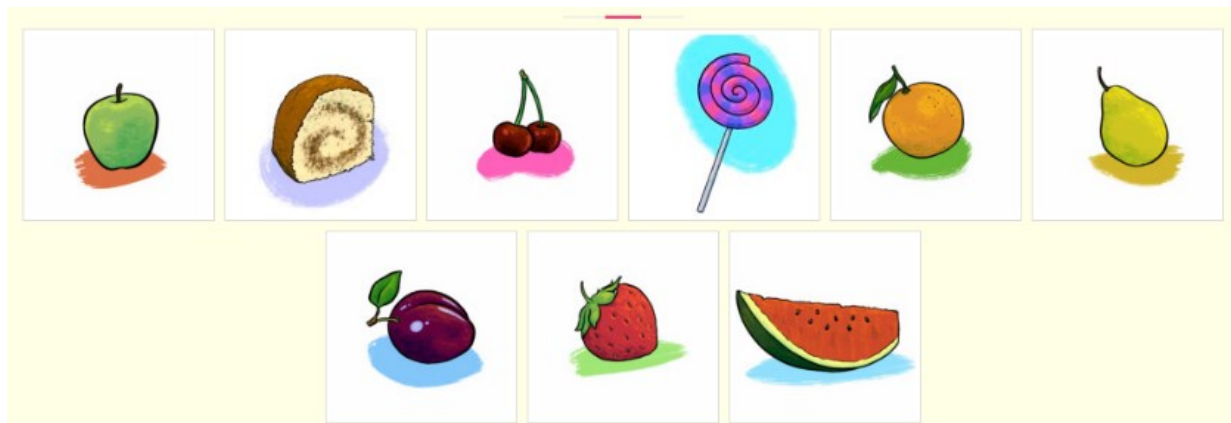
Oh! Hello, Hello to you




7.11 Appendix K: Games




7.12 Appendix L: Flashcards



7.13 Appendix M: Digital Tool




εισαγωγή της
αγγλικής γλώσσας
στο νηπιαγωγείο



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10 popular TPR (Total Physical Response) activities and games in the classroom for the introduction of English in preschools



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7.14 Appendix N: Asynchronous Training



εισαγωγή της
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στο νηπιαγωγείο

**Επιμορφωτικό Υλικό για την Εισαγωγή
Αγγλικής Γλώσσας στο Νηπιαγωγείο (EAN)**

Αλεξίου Θωμά (Επιμελήτρια) (2022)



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Πράξη
«ΕΠΙΜΟΡΦΩΣΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗΣ
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Το έργο συγχρηματοδοτείται από την Ελλάδα και την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση (Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο) μέσω του Επιχειρησιακού Προγράμματος «Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού, Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση»



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ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ
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ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ




Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση
Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινωνικό Ταμείο

Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα
Ανάπτυξη Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού,
Εκπαίδευση και Διά Βίου Μάθηση
Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση της Ελλάδας και της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



ΕΣΠΑ
2014-2020
ανάπτυξη - εργασία - αλληλεγγύη

7.15 Appendix O: Synchronous Training

