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Postgraduate Dissertation

Greek EFL teachers' beliefs about and practices of developmentally
appropriate practices in early childhood education

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Patras, Greece, June 2022

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' beliefs and practices on educating learners of the preschool age in order to investigate the effectiveness of the implementation of the programme. According to the most recent version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Linguistics (Council of Europe, 2020), the importance of early foreign language learning cannot be overstated. As a result, this research adds to our understanding of the opinions and the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices utilized by EFL Kindergarten teachers of the public and private sector, as well as the challenges they faced during their employment.

In order for the research to be conducted, focus groups of EFL teachers in Kindergartens were formed, and they were asked to participate in interviews with a view to answer certain research questions. A total of eleven EFL teachers took part in the interviews.

The research indicates that EFL teachers in Kindergarten are well aware of the developmentally appropriate practices they need to implement in their classroom and use such methods effectively in most cases.

EFL teachers in Kindergarten have faced a number of challenges in their job, such as long distances, hours of planning and limited resources. Some of them also mentioned a lack of collaboration between them and the Greek Kindergarten teachers. As is evident, an array of the challenges EFL teachers face can be attributed to the state's general attitude towards education and language learning.

Keywords

EFL, attitudes, Kindergarten, preschoolers, teachers, very young learners.

Οι Πεποιθήσεις και οι Πρακτικές των Ελλήνων εκπαιδευτικών EFL Σχετικά με τις Αναπτυξιακά Κατάλληλες Πρακτικές στην Προσχολική Εκπαίδευση

Άννα Μαρία Χατζηδημητρίου

Περίληψη

Στόχος αυτής της μελέτης είναι να διερευνήσει τις πεποιθήσεις και τις πρακτικές των εκπαιδευτικών του EFL (Αγγλικά ως Ξένη Γλώσσα) σχετικά με την εκπαίδευση των μαθητών της προσχολικής ηλικίας, προκειμένου να διερευνηθεί η αποτελεσματικότητα της εφαρμογής του προγράμματος. Σύμφωνα με την πιο πρόσφατη έκδοση του Κοινού Ευρωπαϊκού Πλαισίου Αναφοράς για τη Γλωσσολογία (Συμβούλιο της Ευρώπης, 2020), η σημασία της πρώιμης εκμάθησης ξένων γλωσσών δεν μπορεί να υπερεκτιμηθεί. Ως αποτέλεσμα, η έρευνα αυτή ενισχύει την κατανόηση των απόψεων και την εφαρμογή αναπτυξιακά κατάλληλων πρακτικών που χρησιμοποιούν οι νηπιαγωγοί του δημόσιου και του ιδιωτικού τομέα, καθώς και τις προκλήσεις που αντιμετώπισαν κατά τη διάρκεια της απασχόλησής τους.

Προκειμένου να διεξαχθεί η έρευνα, δημιουργήθηκαν ομάδες εστίασης των εκπαιδευτικών του EFL στα Νηπιαγωγεία και τους ζητήθηκε να συμμετάσχουν σε συνεντεύξεις με σκοπό να απαντήσουν σε ορισμένα ερευνητικά ερωτήματα. Συνολικά έντεκα εκπαιδευτικοί του EFL συμμετείχαν στις συνεντεύξεις.

Η έρευνα δείχνει ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί του EFL στο Νηπιαγωγείο γνωρίζουν καλά τις αναπτυξιακά κατάλληλες πρακτικές που πρέπει να εφαρμόσουν στην τάξη τους και να χρησιμοποιήσουν αποτελεσματικά τέτοιες μεθόδους στις περισσότερες περιπτώσεις.

Οι εκπαιδευτικοί του EFL στο Νηπιαγωγείο έχουν αντιμετωπίσει μια σειρά προκλήσεων στη δουλειά τους, όπως μεγάλες αποστάσεις, ώρες σχεδιασμού και περιορισμένους πόρους. Μερικοί από αυτούς ανέφεραν επίσης έλλειψη συνεργασίας μεταξύ αυτών και των Ελλήνων δασκάλων του Νηπιαγωγείου. Όπως είναι προφανές, μια σειρά από προκλήσεις που αντιμετωπίζουν οι εκπαιδευτικοί του EFL μπορούν να αποδοθούν στη γενική στάση του κράτους απέναντι στην εκπαίδευση και την εκμάθηση γλωσσών.

Λέξεις – Κλειδιά

EFL, απόψεις, Νηπιαγωγείο, νηπιαγωγεία, δάσκαλοι, πολύ νέοι μαθητές.

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Introduction

1. Rationale of the study

The integration of an EFL teaching in the kindergarten contributes to the comprehensive development of preschoolers, promotes a positive attitude towards learning and facilitates their awareness and respect towards linguistic and cultural diversity in the long run. EFL teachers' beliefs regarding developmentally appropriate teaching practices in preschools are of pivotal importance for these goals to be achieved. Findings from relevant works have shown that teachers' self-reported beliefs significantly influence their practices in real classroom settings and that there is a close relationship between beliefs and practices (). Relevant research however within the Greek primary education context is limited due to the fact that in Greece, the introduction of English in preschools was fully implemented at a national level during the school year 2021-2022. The few studies that have explored EFL introduction in Greek preschools have mostly employed quantitative designs using questionnaires (Georgiou, 2021) which however may not be able to explore in depth teachers' beliefs, perceptions and self-reported practices and more fine grained information regarding challenges and difficulties implementing these practices. Additionally, these studies were conducted with EFL teachers from the piloting phase of the Introduction of EFL in preschools during the Covid-19 pandemic and as a result they inevitably captured aspects of online teaching and learning rather than regular face to face instruction.

The present work aims in filling the aforementioned gaps and provide a rich account of Greek EFL teachers' voices regarding their views on developmentally appropriate teaching practices for a student population which is relatively unknown to them. Additionally, it aims to shed light on the difficulties and challenges Greek EFL teachers encounter in realistic classroom settings in terms of co-teaching and implementing these practices on a daily basis. This information can contribute in adjusting EFL teacher training programs for preschools to the real needs of Greek EFL teachers and the peculiarities of the Greek sociocultural context.

Another expected outcome is to document the progress of the programme and evaluate the needs of teachers of English in Kindergarten as they arise during their employment in the introduction of English. It is also worth mentioning that the distinct characteristics of very

young learners in combination with the short-term presence of English language teachers in Greek preschools as well as the insufficient and optional introduction of courses related to introducing EFL to kindergarten students, constitute factors which may indicate a lack of knowledge and qualifications on the part of the English language teachers. As this may result in insufficiencies in the educators' work, it is crucial that their need be identified, assessed and addressed.

Through the investigation and the recording of English language teachers' views in terms of their opinions and practices when introducing English in kindergarten, it is expected that teachers will take an active role in promoting their own training and try to improve their work as much as possible. In addition, publishing this sample will cultivate the conditions to design and integrate courses related to EFL teaching to very young learners in Greece, as well as help design programmes that are better suited and accommodating to both the educators' and the learners' needs.

2. Layout of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical background of children's cognitive development as well as the importance of starting the introduction of the foreign language in such a young age. Chapter 2 presents ways that very young learners can effectively acquire a foreign language. In Chapter 3 the methodology that was followed is presented and the results are described in chapter 4.

Finally, the findings of the research are analyzed in chapter 5, while suggestions for further research and the limitations of the research are presented.

Chapter 1. Literature Review

1.1 The cognitive characteristics of Very Young Learners.

The term "Very Young Learners" (VYL) can be given several definitions. According to Mooney (2000), it covers the first six years of a person's life, when children learn unconsciously and gradually evolves to the conscious level. Reilly and Ward (Reilly & Ward, 2003) proposed a definition in which VYL refers to children who are illiterate

because they have not yet begun to read and write. The capacities of very young students are continually changing.

Due to their unique traits, teaching English to VYL can be a challenging task to accomplish (Cameron, 2003). Very Young Learners' inability to grasp abstract concepts, as well as their short attention span and lack of focus, are examples of such qualities (Asmali, 2017). Preschoolers' age influences their behavior, attention, motivation, and language acquisition abilities in the classroom. Their primary traits are eagerness and enthusiasm, which lead to spontaneous acts and a lack of control over their emotions and actions. Very Young Learners are driven by the need to gain control and develop autonomy (Donaldson, 1978).

Preschoolers aged from four to six years are eager to learn and to participate, while they also demonstrate great curiosity to learn things about everything around them. Furthermore, children at this age have a huge amount of energy, which is something that language teachers could take advantage of by including physical activities in English classes (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). Instead of expecting preschoolers to sit and pay attention to class like older children, preschool teachers should provide hands-on activities that engage their imagination and interests. Furthermore, since very young learners use all of their senses to perceive and experience the world, classes should aim in engaging them in activities related to their immediate environment can be rather effective (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990)

The characteristics that very young learners demonstrate are distinct from those of adolescents and adults, as well as from those of young learners (Harmer, 2007). Their enthusiasm can pose an obstacle, and for this reason teaching them requires constant repetition and revision. Their fine motor skills, for example handling pencils and scissors, are restricted, but their kinesthetic abilities are stronger (Er, 2014).

Language teachers can take advantage of their natural desire to learn and experiment with new concepts. Children enjoy experimenting with new activities that are strange and exciting to them. Furthermore, they can easily lose their focus, and their linguistic skills and talents are still developing as they are at a developmental stage (Alexiou, 2015). The flexibility of very young learners' brains allows them to retain more information and acquire languages more quickly (Harley, 1986).

1.2 EFL and VYL: benefits and drawbacks

Teaching English as a foreign language in Kindergarten is not yet very widespread in Europe; nonetheless, there is an effort to improve the skills of preschool language teachers so that they can use appropriate foreign language teaching methodology (Fojkar & Skubic, 2017).

Views regarding the introduction of a foreign language in preschool education are still controversial (Alexiou 2020). Proponents suggest that early foreign language teaching facilitates children's awareness of their mother tongue (Kocaman & Kocaman, 2012) due to the fact that at this age they have heightened metalinguistic awareness (Bournot, Trites & Tellowitz 2002). Alexiou (2020) further presents findings from relevant studies that indicate that early EFL benefits affective and socio-cultural facets of children's development such as motivation, self-confidence, the development of awareness of cultural diversity, multicultural and intercultural awareness.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that foreign language learning at such a young age jeopardizes children's first language acquisition and the development of their cognitive abilities (Demircan, 2006).

1.3. Introducing EFL in preschool: criteria for choosing teaching strategies and methodologies

As far as teaching is concerned, it is the educator's task to take each individual's learning style and learning strategies into consideration. A teacher also needs to provide their learners with topics which are age-appropriate and purposeful while prioritizing understanding the language over producing it (Alexiou 2020). Regarding methodology, as well as psycholinguistics issues, a more holistic approach in language learning is suggested, which includes multi-sensory involvement on the part of the students, which will be closely related to their age and will fully utilize their predisposition in learning (Alexiou, 2020). Namely, in language learning during preschool age more emphasis should be put in language comprehension rather than language production, in providing the very young learners with ample positive motivation to learn, and in the introduction of correct pronunciation (Alexiou 2020)

Children at this early age develop a range of talents, including language, reasoning, fine motor skills, emotional, and interpersonal skills (Tarakçolu & Tunçarslan, 2014). They have an intrinsic desire to learn, explore, and try out new things. Their ability to acquire a

foreign language is influenced by a variety of activities that are centered around the target language and positively influences their learning capacity (Çakır, 2004). Teachers can use a variety of exercises, singing, chants, rhymes and games to assist children improve their pronunciation and strengthen their speaking skills while increasing their linguistic awareness (Klancar, 2006).

Previous works in exploring developmentally appropriate methodologies for introducing VYL to EFL suggest that teachers must be very selective and make conscious, metacognitive and informed decisions on choosing appropriate teaching strategies as at this age children are only exposed to spoken language (Cheatham & Ro, 2010, Ellis 2008) When teaching preschoolers, a challenge is not only to master the input provided in the target language, but also to mastering learning methods for such a young age, taking into account the various demands, as well as the children's limited speaking and listening skills (Uktamova & Mirzaahmedov, 2018).

When acquiring a new language, very young learners demonstrate a long silent period before they communicate something, trying to absorb information about the new language they are exposed to (Reille & Ward, 2003). Any teaching methods and tactics should be tailored to their short attention span, ease in expressing their feelings and preferences, and needs. Furthermore, preschoolers enjoy activities that engage and intrigue all of their five senses

Chapter 2 Developmentally appropriate EFL teaching methods in preschool education.

2.1 Task-based language teaching

With the term Task-based language teaching we refer to a method that is mainly based in the use of activities as the core cluster of language teaching. Task-based teaching has evolved directly from communicative approaches in language teaching, as many of its main principles have been based on it. Task-based language education is an approach in language teaching which incorporates activities concerning authentic communicative situations which are deemed crucial in foreign language learning. The main focus of task based language education is put on real life activities, which facilitate the children's learning. As

mentioned in Richards and Rodgers (2001), the activities involve real life situations, thus emphasizing on lexical sense and the connection to real life situations. Such activities are mainly centered on processes rather than results and can include problem solving, role play and simulate other situations which require language use.

2.2 Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response, which was evolved by Asher (1966) has been proven to be extremely useful in acquiring the target language as it allows the students to learn through movement while passing through their silent period, during which time little language is produced. Total Physical Response allows very young learners to feel safe in the language learning environment until they feel ready to express themselves verbally. Total Physical Response focuses on teaching through movement and coordinating speech and action. According to Asher (1966), foreign language acquisition should follow the milestones of first language acquisition, namely by following commands in which learners have to respond physically. As cited in Richards and Rodgers (2001) Asher mentions three processes in foreign language acquisition which are based on the assumption that the human brain is hard wired to acquire language in a certain series of events:

- Initially children develop their ability to hear and understand speech before they are able to speak. When first learning a language, children are able to grasp basic commands and respond to them.
- The understanding of oral speech is acquired as children respond physically to spoken stimuli
- Lastly, speech evolves effortlessly after the learners' having been exposed to spoken language and their having an "internalized map" of the target language.

Total physical response is a method that manages to teach oral fluency so that the pupils will ultimately be able to communicate with ease and make themselves understood by native speakers. The educator has an active role in the whole process of learning while their task is to expose the learners to ample language input. However, an educator is not encouraged to correct their learners' mistakes as such an action might end up discouraging the learners (Richards & Rogers, 2001). In this approach the young learners are taught by doing, responding and by being active in the classroom. The teacher gives commands which are then followed by the pupils while the educator carries out the commands as well, to ensure

that they have become understood by the children. Language acquisition can be monitored by how well the learners respond to the commands. One of the advantages of Total Physical Response is that it caters to the need very young learners have to stay active as well as accommodating to their short attention spans. The learners are encouraged to utilize body language, imitation games, gestures and pantomime.

As has been argued by Asher himself (1966) the effect of Total Physical Response is that the learners' listening skills are strengthened through dramatization while at the same time they can retain meaning more easily. Imitation games constitute a fun and creative way for the pupils to learn and practice new vocabulary and lexical chunks they have been taught. The process goes as follows: the pupils are asked to describe by using pantomime a concept they have recently been taught which has either been appointed by the teacher (in a more initial stage) or they have thought themselves while their classmates try to discover the word by using simple expressions. It is acceptable for the very young learners to either utter the word they have understood or to use a whole sentence like "You are a..." "It's a..." (citation needed) According to Tellier (2008) gestures are a crucial part of the learning process as they attract the learners' attention and therefore enhance understanding. By using gestures the lesson becomes more active and experiential. Reenactment-role play constitutes a prime example of hands on learning methods and can be utilized in foreign language teaching with encouraging results (Zafeiriadis & Darvosis, 2010). Dramatization constitutes a communicative approach which manages to bridge the gap between real life situations and in class teaching. By incorporating this method in our teaching fluency in the target language is enhanced and the students acquire the ability to respond in numerous cases of everyday life using the Target Language. An additional advantage is that it creates a learning concept which that every student, even the most introverted ones feel safe to participate in. This approach facilitates fluency in communication while encouraging learners to use the target language even outside the classroom. Correct pronunciation and intonation have been claimed to be used as well, attributes which are also crucial in conveying meaning. Total Physical Response is one of the most effective methods in teaching oral skills (Chiyembekezo et al., 2019, pp.12-21). Theatrical play contributes in connecting learning situations with real life experiences and encourages even the most introverted children to participate. Vygotsky has mentioned the importance of interaction activities and social realities as a means of accomplishing higher brain functions (Vygotsky, 1979).

2.3 Collaborative Learning

According to Cohen (1994), the Collaborative Learning Method requires learners to cooperate in small groups, where each of them can contribute in any way they can, in order to fulfill a task. In this method the learners realize that all members of the team will need to work together in order to carry out the task that was requested of them. The team and collaboration between the team members are centralized aspects of collaborative teaching, while the learners are aware that achieving their goal mainly relies on them and the communication among them. As Dewey mentions, collaborative teaching cultivates collaboration, team spirit and familiarizes the learners with a more democratic aspect of the classroom.

As the introduction of English in Kindergarten coincides with Krashen's (1987) termed silent period, collaborative learning is also advantageous in the introduction of English since children are given the opportunity and the time to listen to the target language until they feel confident to speak it (Alanis, 2018). As mentioned in Vygotsky (1978), when teachers create instructions that probe children to talk, they put their students in the position of being both the recipients and the producers of knowledge. This enhances interactions when the children work together in a unified task as they are encouraged to work together (Alanis, 2018). Lastly, when creating collaborative activities the educator has the opportunity to observe and assess their learners' progress (McAfee, Leong, & Bodrova, 2016), in an environment which is not only meaningful to the learners, but it also makes them feel safe and comfortable in it (Alanis, 2018).

2.4 CLIL

CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning is a teaching method that is highly recommended for foreign language teaching. CLIL is a method that aids all learners, but is especially helpful to weaker students and is ideal for learners of younger ages (Matheoudakis et al, 2014). This method has recently been widely implemented in Europe, while Greece is a country which has not yet adopted CLIL as widespread method of teaching (Euridice, 2018). When the CLIL approach is utilized in language teaching, emphasis is not put solely on language, rather than form, content and meaning (Coyle et al., 2010), in real life communicative situations which offer the learners the opportunity to use the language in these situations and thus enhances their motivation and confidence

(Matheoudakis et al., 2014). As mentioned in Coyle et al. (2010) a target language is used in order to teach both the target language as well as the content of a school subject. Simultaneously, CLIL offers the learners the opportunity to be exposed to the target language for longer periods of time, rather than being taught the language as a subject itself (Matheoudakis et al., 2014).

The relative importance of content or language in various CLIL implementations is one difference. A continuum from hard (or strong) CLIL to soft (or weak) CLIL has been proposed to capture this varied focus of content-led to language-led approaches (Ball et al. 2015; Met 1999). Hard CLIL "defines subject-based goals and objectives in which courses from the traditional curriculum are taught in a second or foreign language" (Ball et al. 2015, p. 27). Soft CLIL is "used to characterize the broad linguistic goals that a language teacher delivers to the classroom" (Ball et al. 2015, p. 27), and "content is a good tool for achieving the language curriculum's aims" (Ball et al. 2015, p. 27).

2.5 Project Based Learning

Project based learning constitutes another tool that can be utilized by the educator and follows the CLIL approach, especially towards preschool learners. As changes in education began taking part in the beginning of the 20th century, new educational approaches started to emerge, that would take into account active participation on the part of the learner. Great educators such as Dewey, Kilpatrick and Decroly discussed the importance of an education that would allow the young learner to prioritise on their own the topics, interests and activities, while making their own decisions and connecting learning with real life experiences and critical thinking (Helm & Katz, 2012). This mentality is widely adopted in preschool teaching, more specifically, a holistic approach towards knowledge acquisition, accompanied with the children's active participation in the learning process. Syllabi are organized around topics and not broken down to lessons, while the topic chosen is taught through activities that are interconnected with one another. Each topic is approached by enhancing linguistic expression, the use of technology and the learners' communicative skills.

In the preschool educational context, project based learning requires collaborative work in the part of both the teacher and the students (Kimsesiz & Konca, 2017). As is argued in Kimsesiz & Konca (2017) the goal of project based learning is to showcase the language,

content and skills that are necessary to carry out the project. In order for a project to be meaningful, a set of criteria need to be met, as they are mentioned in Thomas (2000). These criteria are centrality, how central the project is to the curriculum, driving question, the project is shaped around this driving question and motivates learners to investigate further, constructive investigation, the investigations that revolve around the project, autonomy, how student driven the project is and realism, how authentic the problems and solutions presented in the project are.

Another positive aspect of project based learning is that of motivation. Hilvonen & Ovaska (2010) assert that giving responsibility to the students while simultaneously supporting them and providing them with ample feedback will increase their motivation. Additionally, the students' motivation in project based learning is also increased due to the fact that the learners are encouraged to choose the topic themselves. Having chosen a topic that interests them and is immediately connected to the real world and real life experiences will make them more engaged to the lesson, while they will be more willing to actively participate in it (Dimaraki et al, 2013).

Implementing project based learning in Kindergarten undoubtedly showcases certain differentiations in comparison to learners of other ages, mainly due to the learners' cognitive development. Despite the fact that there is a plethora of real life situations that could be used in a project based lesson in Kindergarten, preschoolers are not yet able to plan and implement a project on their own, thus constituting the educator's help indispensable as far as communication and planning are concerned (Helm & Katz, 2012).

2.6 Multiple Intelligences

Based on Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 2003) learners can be divided into eight distinct categories depending on the way they learn most easily. According to Anastasiadou and Iliopoulou (2017) these intelligences include:

- Linguistic intelligence: learners who demonstrate linguistic intelligence are competent users of language in its both oral and written mode
- Logical mathematical intelligence: learners who have logical mathematical intelligence demonstrate great abilities to form deductions, exhibit abstract reasoning and can identify the relationship between various concepts.

- Bodily kinesthetic intelligence: bodily-kinesthetic learners can optimize their learning with hands-on activities, as they learn by doing. These learners can better absorb information when movement is incorporated in the lesson.
- Visual – spatial intelligence: a visual spatial learner is more likely to acquire information via images, shapes and pictures and then internalize this knowledge.
- Interpersonal intelligence: learners with interpersonal intelligence favor relating to their classmates and are eager to cooperate with other learners in class.
- Musical intelligence: learners who are characterized with musical intelligence utilize rhythm in order to acquire knowledge.
- Naturalistic intelligence: students with this type of intelligence can easily interact with nature and can empathize with all living beings. Learners who demonstrate this characteristic are also able to respect other cultures and be more sensitive to other people's emotions.

As stated in Gardner (1999) every child can demonstrate a variety of certain types of intelligences, however some of them are bound to be stronger in certain types of intelligence. Accordingly, learners and even more so young learners, need to be taught in ways that can cater to all kinds of intelligence, via differentiated, developmentally appropriate instruction. In fact, multiple-intelligence-based curriculums have been found effective in enhancing and facilitating preschoolers' cognitive development in terms of sequential thinking, problem solving skills, basic concepts acquisition, memory and observation skills (Delgoshaeia & Delavaria 2012).

2.7 Learning through songs

Music, songs, rhymes and lullabies play a pivotal role in acquiring our native language (Chen-Hafteck, 1997). Songs and rhymes provide babies and toddlers with a feeling of security and intimacy while they help them feel connected to their parents and caretakers. This feeling of intimacy and security enhances, influences and facilitates first language acquisition (Geyer, 2001).

Correspondingly, in second language acquisition teaching young learners through songs can contribute in simulating this familiar feeling of security and intimacy they have experienced during first language acquisition and encourage them to experiment with the target language

in a context into which they feel safe and comfortable (Fearn and Howard, 2012). What is more, music constitutes a very powerful form of stimulus and therefore enhances learners' engagement in the lesson as they can identify the music with their emotions. Another advantage of using songs with EFL/ESL preschoolers, is that they are effective in facilitating and prolonging students' engagement in the lesson for longer periods of time as due to their age they have a short attention span and tend to get bored easily (Leśniewska & Pichette 2016) Lastly, according to Bodden (2010) songs encourage EFL young learners to work together and build team-work skills whilst familiarizing themselves with the target language.

Choosing a song for EFL/ESL young learners is a complex process and teachers must take under consideration specific criteria. Firstly, it is important that the song chosen is simple and meaningful to learners. Another point to consider is the amount of repetition the song chosen includes. Moreover it is necessary for a song to incorporate movement and actions so that the children are able to acquire the meanings of the words through miming and imitation (Juan Rubio & Conesa, 2015, p. 93). Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) also suggest a set of criteria that can help teachers decide whether a song or a rhyme is suitable for very young learners, especially for introducing and reviewing vocabulary : i) it is crucial that the song contains limited vocabulary and that the language utilized is similar to the one being used in the classroom ii) the song should not be musically challenging and the rhythm should be straightforward and easy to explain iii) the topics should be closely related to the children's experiences and iv) , the song should be accompanied by actions.

2.8 Storytelling

As stories are naturally contextualized, they can be highly useful in language instruction, especially with young learners (Slatterly & Willis, 2001). Stories constitute a vital source of foreign language that provides the gist and helps children combining images in their mother tongue with new words in the target language. EFL teachers should try to engage students in speaking exercises in addition to listening to English stories. Storytelling is a similarly effective learning approach because it allows students to learn a new language through the use of a rich vocabulary, rhymes, and dialogues (Cameron, 2001). As a result, listening to stories while giving children illustrated books will help them learn and recall the target

vocabulary. Having meaningful interactions with children is also beneficial, since it encourages them to develop critical thinking skills and to express themselves using words. Labeling ideas with words is another useful strategy (Lomeo - Smrtic, 2008). Storytelling can be extremely motivating for VYL as it broadens their perspectives, increases their passion, expands their mastery of the English language. whilst it simultaneously facilitates their emotional and behavioral development (Mart, 2012). Furthermore, according to Mouro (2009) storytelling is a comprehensive EFL teaching strategy which triggers active student engagement through rich and authentic instances of a foreign language.

EFL teachers should critically reflect and evaluate their learners' contemporary environment and the context they grow up in and choose appropriate authentic literature and stories, adjusted to their needs. According to Ghosn (2002), authentic literature can offer youngsters a stimulating and meaningful framework for language development as listening to stories is something they will always find enjoyable and will be able to relate to.

Stories also help children develop emotionally and interculturally while improving their thinking skills. Through stories, young learners can explore different cultures, which in turn can benefit their intercultural awareness (Uktamova & Mirzaahmedov, 2018). In terms of language, stories contain a lot of repetition of new language, as well as the correct pronunciation and connotation (Slatterly & Willis, 2001). In fact, stories' recurrence helps students grasp the language more effectively and quickly (Mart, 2012). Repetition of stories further fosters involvement and helps children improve their speaking abilities (Ellis & Brewster, 2002). Children can create their own realms through storytelling and are enthralled by imagination and creativity (Halliwell, 1993). Finally, early childhood storytelling helps learners to improve their language and literacy skills. It is critical that teachers provide instructions on the proper use of letters and sounds during this storytelling (Howes et al., 2008). Another useful strategy that teachers might employ is to differentiate instructions based on the children's knowledge and ability (Ankrum, Genest, & Belcastro, 2014).

2.9 Games

Games appeal to children because they may play the part of someone else, develop their interpersonal and athletic qualities, and interact with one another using the foreign language all at once (Alexiou, 2020).

2.10 The hand puppet

Within preschool settings, puppets have been found rather efficient for facilitating a wide range of children's development facets including creative skill development, family relationship improvement, language growth and social skill development (Diyani 2011).

Korosec (2013) suggests that the use of puppets is an effective tool for introducing to English to VYL. Puppets can incorporate all core facets associated with a child's development including perception, speech, and narration comprehension, movement, coordination and integration with the environment. Puppets make young learners feel more calm and driven and contribute into lowering Krashen's 'affective filter,' which impedes learning (Krashen, 1981). Moreover, puppets promote learning whilst providing very young learners with an opportunity to master conversational skills (Brezigar, 2010). Additionally, puppets motivate very young learners to empathize and connect with the puppet, thus fostering a safe and pleasant environment for learning (Brezigar, 2010).

Toledo (2016) asserts that puppets are effective in introducing EFL in preschool settings because when learners' attention shifts to the puppet they become unaware of the fact that they are being taught a foreign language. Puppets can take advantage of preschoolers' natural ability to learn from real experiences and develop their social awareness in a natural manner and these processes are particularly effective in facilitating speaking skill practice. In fact, according to Toledo (2016), when very young learners concentrate on the puppet, they essentially acquire a foreign language -without realizing that they are being introduced to it. Toledo (2016) further suggests that puppets enable teachers to create environments in which very young learners are given the opportunity to put their curiosity and imagination into practice and then participate in oral production activities, which boost their self-esteem and teach them to interact with others at a young age.

3. Method

This chapter presents the aim of this research and the research questions that emerged from the relevant literature, the research tools employed and the description of the sample.

3.1. Research purpose, goals and research questions

The main purpose of this work is to explore the beliefs of English language teachers in Greek state and private kindergartens regarding developmentally appropriate practices in teaching English to very young learners. More specifically the following research objectives are set: The first target of the research is to explore the views English language teachers in Kindergartens of the private as well as the public sector hold concerning the introduction of English in preschool. Secondly, the research aims to investigate the knowledge of English language teachers in the public and private sector, concerning the appropriate methodology that needs to be implemented during the introduction of English to very young learners. Lastly, the research strives to investigate potential difficulties English language teachers encounter when teaching English to very young learners.

The research questions that guided the present work were:

1. What are Greek EFL teachers' beliefs concerning developmentally appropriate practices for teaching English in preschool settings?
2. What are Greek EFL teachers' self-reported practices in teaching English in preschool settings?
3. What are Greek EFL teachers' self-reported challenges regarding the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in preschool settings?

3.2 Methodological approach

Following Bryman's (2017) suggestion, the first step I took was to review the literature related to EFL and very young learners. Initially specific terms were defined, regarding the special characteristics of very young learners and subsequently I focused on the necessary concepts concerning methodology, approaches and theories regarding teaching English to very young learners. The initial stage of planning includes the choice of the research strategy which will be utilized. Based on this strategy, decisions regarding the sample and the research tools to collect and analyze data will be made. There are two research approaches, namely the qualitative and the quantitative one. Both approaches follow different guidelines and incorporate different stages (Bryman, 2017). The current study was based on the qualitative paradigm as my main goal was to explore in depth, record, analyze and interpret the beliefs, the views the needs, the experiences and the challenges of Greek EFL teachers' regarding the implementation of the programme during the school year 2021-2022.

3.3 The research tool

This study is based on the qualitative paradigm and utilizes focus group interviews in order to explore Greek EFL teachers' beliefs regarding appropriate teaching practices in preschools and the challenges they have experienced within the specific educational context. According to Bryman (2017) a focus group is defined as a group interview, while the distinct difference lies in the fact that the focus of the interview is centered on the detailed analysis of certain topics. Focus groups were employed as they are considered ideal for obtaining data on a group's collective perceptions (Bryman, 2017). For the current study focus group interviews were considered as the most suitable tool through which EFL teachers from different professional backgrounds (EFL teachers working for the first time in public preschools to EFL teachers from the private sector with many years of experience) could express their views, but to also exchange opinions, modify them, agree or disagree with one another or even become aware of views that they may not have thought of prior to the interview.

The current work employed semi-structured interviews due to the fact that my goal was to offer participants the opportunity to describe their beliefs, practices and experiences in a flexible yet structured manner. In terms of content the interview questions focused on teachers' beliefs and self-reported practices regarding the Introduction of English in Kindergarten, their confidence to approach such young learners, their training needs, the difficulties they have encountered and finally their collaboration with the Kindergarten teachers and the children's parents. Having these questions in mind, the research questions were formed, which, as Bryman (2017) mentions need to precede the planning and conduct of a study. As far as the phrasing of the questions is concerned, an attempt was made so that the questions would be phrased clearly and in a manner that they could be easily understood by the participants. Interviews were conducted in Greek so that the participants produce longer and more detailed answers. To make the content of the questions even clearer, the questions were also presented to the interviewees by screen sharing. It is also worth mentioning that, as is stated in Symeou (2007) the credibility of a qualitative research is corresponding to the internal validity of the internal meaning of the qualitative research.

Another fact that is worth mentioning concerning the research procedure is that I was keeping notes while listening to the interviewees' replies, Moreover, I tried to explain the main points of each question, so as to ensure that the content of the questions would be clearly understood. Apart from keeping notes throughout the interviews, the meeting was also recorded. According to Robson (2010) recording the interview contributes to the validity of the interview results. Last but not least, I strived to encourage the participants during the interview and did not provide any negative comments in order to create a climate of trust.

3.4 Interview questions

The interview questions (Appendix ??) were developed based on the relevant literature regarding the developmentally appropriate practices for the introduction of English in preschool (Mattheoudakis, 2021) and the research questions of the current work. The questions focused on i) teachers' theories and views on the developmentally appropriate practices of teaching English to very young learners ii) difficulties and challenges they have encountered in preschools iii) their views on co-teaching with preschool teachers and their collaboration with the parents and iv) suggestions for optimizing the introduction of EFL in preschools.

The language in which the research questions are phrased is Greek. Greek was chosen by the researcher as it was deemed more appropriate, as Greek is the native language of the interviewees. When the questions are asked and answered in the participants' native language, it is expected that more informed answers will be provided by them, as they will feel safer to express themselves in their native language. It is also worth mentioning that while structuring the questions, the researcher strived to make them as understandable and clear as possible in order for the participants to give clear and targeted answers.

3.5 Selection of participants

According to Bryman (2017) in qualitative research participants must be chosen strategically and purposefully so that they are aware of the topic of the research and can provide answers in an appropriate manner. Accordingly, given that the main objective of the current work was to explore Greek EFL teachers' perceptions on developmentally appropriate practices in preschool, the participants selected were all EFL teachers who

currently teach in preschool settings. More specifically, eleven Greek EFL teachers participated in this study from different parts of Greece.

As far as the age of the participants is concerned, 8 out of eleven belong in the age group between 25-30 and 3 belong in the age group 31-35. For 8 of the participants this was their first year teaching Kindergarten and the other three had taught in preschools for 2-5 years. Out of the eleven teachers who participated in the research, four work in the private sector and seven in the public sector. As far as their educational level is concerned, out of the eleven teachers asked, seven hold a postgraduate degree and four have a bachelor's degree from English departments in Greek universities.

3.6 Research procedure

Initially the researcher reached out to colleagues she knew that teach in public and private Kindergartens all over Greece. After some responded positively, she sent an email to public Kindergartens in Greece (APPENDIX ii), stating the purpose of the research and informing them about participating in said research. In the email a letter was attached, which stated in detail the researcher's identity, the title and purpose of the research, as well as the university in which the research was carried out. The necessity and value of the research were also included in this informative email. Finally, a statement ensuring the total anonymity and confidentiality of the sensitive information the participants might share during the research was included (Bryman, 2017). In total, eleven teachers responded that would be willing to participate in the research and formed the final focus groups for the interviews.

Having collected the sample, the participants of the research were contacted by phone to settle on a time and date as well as the way the interviews would be conducted. They were also sent an interview guide and a consent form, which they signed and sent back to the researcher via email. Also, some basic information was provided to them, regarding the nature and topic of the interview. More specifically, they were informed that upon starting the interview they would be asked to answer a questionnaire with more general questions, concerning their age group, level of education, their years of experience in teaching very young learners and whether they work in the public or private sector. The interviews of the first two focus groups were carried out on 07.05.2022, the next two focus groups were

interviewed on 14.05.2022 and one more focus group of three participants was interviewed on 16.06.2022.

3.7 Data analysis

Interview data were analyzed using content analysis, which is a method that offers a comprehensive and systematic framework for making inferences from verbal and visual data in qualitative research. Initially I attempted to immerse myself in the data by reading and rereading the interview transcripts. I then implemented systematic reduction and labelling specific chunks of content in order to identify emerging themes. More specifically, I used Patton's (2002) analytical framework approach and followed the five step proposes for examining data. The first step included the transcription of the interviews and the verification of the data with tentative interpretations with each interviewee in order to enhance accuracy and also clarify vague and unclear chunks. Based on the interviewees' feedback I reread data and made fine-tuned adjustments to optimize them. I then created a coding scheme which comprised broad categories based on the literature i) on EFL for very young learners and teachers' beliefs ii) challenges and difficulties EFL teachers face in preschools. I subsequently coded the data based on these categories and organized them. Lastly, I interpreted my data and compared them with similar studies and drew conclusions.

As claimed by Creswell (2016) and Hassandra and Goudas (2003), one of the many criteria to ensure that a quantitative research is trustworthy is the technique of "participant control". Thus, after the completion of my analysis, excerpts of the research were returned to the participants reviewed and interpreted, in order for the participants to check the accuracy of the data collected.

Chapter 4 Results

4.1 Demographic and Educational characteristics

As mentioned earlier, the research sample was made up of EFL educators in Greek Kindergartens, both from the public and private sector. Out of the eleven educators that participated in the current work, all eleven are women. Regarding the age of the participants, eight of them are between the ages of 25-30 and the other 3 are between 31-35. Of the eleven participants asked, three have worked with preschoolers for a period of 2-5 years while the other eight had been employed in Kindergartens for the first time during the current school

year (2021-2022). Four of the participants are employed within the private sector and seven work in state Kindergartens. All of the participants work part time in Kindergartens and none of them is permanently employed. Seven of the participants hold a postgraduate degree, while four of them only have a bachelor's degree from one of the country's English departments.

4.2 Results

This section presents the main themes based on the answers provided by the participants. Five focus group interviews were carried out (FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4, FG5). The results will be presented based on the themes that emerged from the three research questions:

- What are participants' beliefs regarding the qualities of a good EFL teacher in preschool and the goals of EFL teaching in the specific setting?
- What are participants' beliefs concerning developmentally appropriate practices for teaching English in preschool settings and which of these practices have they actually implemented in their classrooms?
- What are participants' self-reported challenges regarding the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in preschool settings?

4.2.1 EFL teachers' qualities and teaching objectives in preschool settings

This section presents the emerging themes regarding participants' beliefs on teachers' qualities and the goals of EFL in preschool settings.

One of the themes explored in this research is what are the necessary characteristics of a good EFL teacher in preschool.

Regarding the academic qualifications of a "good" EFL teacher in preschool settings, all participants believed an EFL teacher who teaches very young learners should have at least graduated from an English language and literature department. Six participants pointed out that further training in school psychology, and preschool education would be necessary as well.

T3: As far as the academic characteristics are concerned, an EFL teacher in preschool needs to further their education by attending seminars that target this age group.

T5: I would also like to add that a Master's degree in preschool education or school psychology would be useful in this area.

Other than formal qualifications there was a unanimous opinion that, an EFL teacher who teaches Kindergarten should be patient and have a strong drive to work with such young learners. Nine participants pointed out that an EFL teacher at Kindergarten should love very young learners and be able to understand their differences from older learners. The quotations below vividly illustrate participants' views regarding the characteristics of EFL teachers in preschools:

T2 : You have to be patient, loving... You have to love the specific age of children and realize you are not in a language school teaching B2. And it's hard, especially if you have worked a lot of years with older children.

T3: I also think patient is the key word here! And of course, demonstrating an unconditional love for your pupils and understanding how demanding this age group is in terms of teaching.

T9: To me, although basic training is necessary, it is not what is most important. A good preschool English teacher needs to showcase a lot of enthusiasm for her very young learners. If you can't handle four-year-olds, you will suffer and they will suffer...It's a whole different game compared to secondary education or even primary school.

T9: Caring, playful, like a preschool teacher, only you play with them in English...no grammar, no writing or boring worksheets, it's all about playing and learning!

One interviewee further pointed out that having a good sense of humor would also prove extremely helpful in effectively carrying out her job:

T1: I might add that a good sense of humor can prove extremely helpful. It breaks the ice and makes everyone feel more comfortable.

Another topic explored in the present research was the learning objectives and goals of EFL learning in the preschool setting. For the majority of participants of the current work, the programme of EFL in preschools constitutes an opportunity for very young learners to have fun while learning the language, singing songs, doing crafts, and generally love the language and get acquainted with it in a relaxed and calm environment. In terms of specific objectives, five participants pointed out that little outcomes are expected from the pupils, mainly to be able to produce basic words or small chunks of language, as well as to repeat and reproduce chants and songs that have been presented to them.:

T2: Definitely, we don't want our learners to produce elaborate sentences or carry out conversations. We expect that they will be able to recognize a basic vocabulary of about

100 words and be able to say the word when shown the equivalent flashcard. I also expect that they will be able to answer simple questions like “How are you?” “What’s the weather like today” etc.

T3: They are really young, it’s mostly about listening English and producing simple phrases and simple words and songs.

T4: It is a chance for the little ones to have a first contact with the English language. To see that they can play, laugh, sing have their everyday routines in English. We don’t expect them to be able to read or write but for sure we want them to connect English with pleasant experiences.

T5: To me it’s like providing them the opportunity to come in contact with English for the first time, to sensitize them to English through chants and games and songs in a playful manner.

T7: Playing and having fun and learning things in English. Nothing like a typical Greek language school. It is us the ones that have to be adjusted to their needs. I keep saying this to myself every day.

T8: I strongly believe that the learning objectives of the introduction of English in preschool should be mere familiarization with the basic concepts of the language while the pupils are having fun, so that they will connect English with a relaxed and stress-free environment.

Other participants said that their objective was to familiarize the pupils with basic words and for them to be able to produce and recognize some words and language chunks, as well as to reproduce some chants and rhymes. In FG5, two of the educators mentioned that it would also be useful to expect Kindergarten learners to recognize at least some letters of the alphabet, know words that begin with these letters as well write the letter.

T9: I would also like to add that I expect some of my older learners to be familiar with some, if not all, alphabet letters. I expect them to be able to write letters, distinguish capital from lower case and be able to tell the beginning sound of a word when they hear it, like A for apple, B for ball etc.

T10: Yes, I agree. And maybe even be able to write their names in English.

Another theme explored in this research is the language of instruction. Participants of FG1, FG2 and FG3 said that they mostly use the English language but will also use Greek from time to time.

T3: We teach English so the main language I speak in the lesson is English. It is amazing how natural it comes to them and they begin to understand and follow basic commands after only a few lessons. However, there are times that I have used Greek to better explain some new concepts that I want to teach them.

T4: I agree that the most preferable language to use is English. However, when children get upset or fight with a classmate I speak Greek to them in order to comfort them, or resolve the argument.

Participants from FG4 and FG5, however, stated that they only use English in their lessons as they find that they can make themselves understood and that this helps their learners familiarize themselves with the language.

T9: I only use English from the first to the last minute of my lessons. We even set up a play with the Greek kindergarten teachers that I came from a foreign country and do not know any Greek. So far, the children understand me and they try to speak as much English as they can when I'm around.

4.2.2. Preschoolers as EFL learners and developmentally appropriate practices in preschool settings

Questions 4 to 16 aimed to explore participants' beliefs regarding i) preschoolers' characteristics as EFL learners ii) participants' beliefs regarding developmentally appropriate practices for the specific age group and context and iii) participants reflections regarding the practices they have actually implemented in their classrooms.

The short attention span was one of the main themes that emerged regarding preschoolers' characteristics as it was mentioned by the participants of all the focus groups as well as within each focus group. Nine participants across the five groups further mentioned that preschoolers are self-centered, meaning that in order for them to learn something, it has to be about one of their immediate interests, so that they relate with it and therefore be more willing to learn and retain the new information. Another aspect of very young learners' characteristics that was mentioned in one of the focus groups, is the preschoolers' need for activity, over a sedentary lesson:

T1: In my opinion, the first thing that distinguishes preschoolers from learners of other levels and age groups, is their attention span. You can't expect them to stay still for longer than ten minutes, just listening to you. You need to modify the activities so that they will stay focused.

T2: I agree about the attention span. I would also like to add how egocentric children of this age can be. They love to talk to me about their lives, what they did, what they saw or what happened to them. I found how to use this in my advantage, by repeating everything they tell me and sounding surprised, so they know I pay attention. Like if they tell me they'll go swimming, I say "Oh, swimming?" and I mime it. Next time, they will try to utter the word in English, and they want to, because it is immediately related to their lives.

Participants thought that due to these developmental characteristics, EFL teachers should try to plan a lot of activities, change them fast enough so that their learners would remain focused during the lesson. Regarding the fact that preschoolers are self-centered, two participants stated that EFL teachers need to tailor a lesson with topics that are close to their preschoolers' interests. In order for the preschoolers' need for activity to be met, the educators who mentioned this, also stated that they would make sure to plan activities that involve movement on that part of their learners:

T3: To be able to engage them actively requires a lot of planning from before and a lot of work. You have to figure out what they like, what they are doing with their preschool teacher during the specific week and so on.

T4: I also agree that because they are young and it's really easy to "lose them" because they have got a short attention span and they can't stay put you have to get in their world first. Participants also mentioned that preschoolers have a very strong imagination that should also be taken under consideration when designing tasks and activities:

T3: We should not forget about their vivid imagination, too. Using a puppet and pretending it can see, hear them and talk to them can also go a long way. They love the puppet and connect with it, thus loosen up and learn more easily.

T7: Their imagination can undoubtedly be utilized in a lesson. Let us not forget the fact that they are four and five-year-olds who still believe in Santa Claus and fairies. If we use them in our teaching they will definitely feel more interested in the lesson.

Two participants from the FG3 further noticed that there are some children you simply can't engage and they seem bored whatever you do:

T5: There are a couple of them, however, who simply are bored with everything. I asked the preschool teachers and they answered me that they are exactly like this with them too so I shouldn't take it personally.

T7: I also have a student, a boy who isn't really interested in anything, I don't know why and sometimes this is frustrating because he picks on the other kids and he spoils whatever we are doing.

Regarding participants' knowledge of developmentally appropriate methods for introducing English to learners of preschool age, data indicate participants from FG1 and FG2 were aware and mentioned a range of methods and approaches, such as the Total Physical Response, which they also said they have implemented in their lessons, the lexical approach, group-based learning and multiple intelligences. TPR in particular emerged as major theme as it was mentioned by 8 participants. The puppet, songs and chants was also mentioned by six participants:

T1: TPR really works in the preschool, at least it has worked for me. They are young, active, they have to move.

T2: Yes, TPR works even with the difficult ones. And also the puppet! They usually love the puppet! But I need to translate sometimes because in another case they lose their interest.

T3: TPR, games, chants and sometimes videos but not long ones. They definitely need activity in our lessons. We play a lot of games, like the freeze game, the floor is lava or Simon says to keep them moving. They have a lot of energy which needs to be exercised.

Interestingly, the participants of FG3 were not familiar with the terminology concerning appropriate methods and approaches to introduce English to very young learners, they did however mention descriptively a number of techniques they use, which could be identified with TPR, story based learning, learning through songs and play-based learning. The participants of the fourth focus group mainly focused on communicative ways of learning as well as the TPR approach.

T5: To be honest, it has been a while since I graduated and I am not really familiar with the terminology for methods and approaches in teaching very young learners. I try and use as many games and songs when I teach them, and I don't have them sit down for very long periods of time.

T6: It's the same for me as well. I also present them with crafts, have them do chants and dances and we read stories and act them out. I don't know exactly the methods I am using or if they are appropriate for their developmental stage, but they seem excited every time they see me and they respond well to the stimuli I present to them.

Other methods that were mentioned across the focus groups are those of storytelling, drama based learning and role play. It is interesting to note that all participants are familiar with the methodologies, however, the teachers that are employed in the public sector had more difficulty in using them, contrary to the teachers that have been employed in the private sector and have had this teaching position for longer:

T10: I know that fairytales and role play are a very efficient way to approach preschoolers. They are familiar with the themes, they enjoy the pictures and the story and they can benefit by acting out the story. It is very difficult, however, to find materials and stories that are appropriate for their age, as a lot of research is required. Also, the schools where I work do not have English books that I could borrow and use, so I would either have to buy them or find them online, something which is time consuming and requires a monetary investment on my part.

T9: I completely agree. If only we had some more material available for us to use, we could create richer and more effective lessons.

As mentioned above, educators of the private sector use storytelling and role play more frequently:

T6: I use fairytales and stories in my lessons at least twice a month, sometimes more. Our coursebook has a story at the end of every unit which puts in use all the vocabulary we have worked on and the heroes of the coursebook as well as our puppet are the characters of each story. We also have a large and updated library with a lot of storybooks with stories that our very young learners will be able to follow and understand easily.

T5: Yes, it is exactly as my colleague describes it. Moreover, the little ones love story time and after we have acted out some of the first stories now they are the ones that ask me to act out the story we had just read.

Another theme that emerged in the current work was the use of technology in EFL instruction in the preschool setting. Although all participants agreed that technology can facilitate a lesson, four of them pointed out that it is not always possible to use it and nine participants also mentioned that it can come with drawbacks as well.

Participants were asked about how much they have integrated technology in their lessons. All participants across the five focus groups mentioned that they have used some sort of technology at least once and that technology can facilitate the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in preschool.

Seven teachers said that they mainly use it to show You-Tube videos and songs to their learners, while others used it to present and create visuals for new vocabulary with the help of education applications, such as wordwall. When asked if they notice any disadvantages in the use of technology in the English language setting, most participants mentioned that despite its advantages, we need to eliminate the screen time preschoolers are exposed to. Four teachers however, mentioned that incorporating technology in their lessons is not always easy, as their schools do not provide them with the necessary resources and equipment to do so:

T4: Technology has undoubtedly helped me enhance my lessons. I mostly use it to show You-Tube videos of my learners' favorite songs and videos. The combination of image along with sound is very beneficial as they concentrate on learning the chant more easily. Also, when we watch an animated story in English, the animation helps them better understand what happens in the story, thus eliminating the need for translation.

T7: Technology has been an asset in my teaching since the beginning. I use it to present new vocabulary to my learners through online games and presentations with the help of all this online educational material that is available.

T8: Although I agree with the fact that technology offers an array of benefits, I still try to keep it in a minimum in my teaching. I allow for technology to be used for a maximum of ten minutes per lesson. Young learners are already exposed to screens for a large part of their day as it is, so I want to provide them with input from other sources as well.

T9: I agree, and I have also noticed how the existence of a screen can distract them from anything else they might be doing. It's like they're hypnotized! If we have coloring and I play a You-Tube video at the same time, they will stop coloring and only stare at the projector. This is why I turn off the screen when they are doing an activity and I just want music in the background.

T3: It goes without saying that technology can be beneficial for my lessons. However, I am not always able to use it in every school I work at. One of the schools I am employed at does not even have a computer, let alone an internet connection. I have brought my own tablet and used data to do some activities online with my pupils, however, it was difficult for all of them to see such a small screen, so I have not used my tablet many times ever since.

Another theme that was explored in the present research was the extent to which multiculturalism was promoted in the lessons. Interestingly, when asked about whether or

not English teachers have implemented developmentally appropriate practices to promote multiculturalism, most of the participants were at a loss of words and did not know how to respond. Some of the participants mentioned that they did not have enough time to incorporate this in their lessons, others said that they failed to see how this would be useful for language learning and others said that they have promoted multiculturalism by showing how English speaking countries celebrate certain holidays. There have been two educators, however, that mentioned inspiring ways of incorporating appropriate practices to promote multiculturalism.

T1: We have promoted multiculturalism by showing the learners how people celebrate Easter in parts of the world where the target language is spoken.

T4: No, I would not say I have had the opportunity to implement any practices that would promote multiculturalism. The time I have in the classroom is already limited, and I strive to cover material such as colors, animals, food, weather words, that I do not think prioritizing multiculturalism would be useful right now.

T3: Yes, I have implemented a lesson to promote multiculturalism. You see, I noticed when we were coloring that many children only used the pink color to draw people. So we had a talk about how people can have different skin colors, other than pink. We watched videos and listened to songs with characters of different racial backgrounds and then I challenged the children to draw people with different skin colors.

T2: I am not sure if this falls in this category, but in my class I have a boy whose family has just immigrated to Greece. This boy cannot speak Greek at all and he feels isolated from his classmates. However, when it is time for English he becomes part of the group as he sees that he knows, or maybe does not know, exactly what the rest of his class does not know and they all try to learn together. During the English lesson he feels like he is part of the group. His Greek teachers have told me he is really eager to learn English and even tries to communicate in English with them.

4.2.4 Challenges in implementing developmentally appropriate EFL practices in preschool settings

The last research question was the challenges that an EFL preschool teacher faces when teaching English. The main themes that emerged regarding participants' challenges in implementing developmentally appropriate practices in their classrooms, were time constraints, limited resources, long distances and, in some cases, cooperation with the Greek

kindergarten teachers. Participants viewed materials development for the specific age group of students as demanding, time-consuming and laborious. Nine participants referred to the difficulties in finding, creating or adapting materials for preschool settings:

T3: For me, the biggest challenge is that there is not a syllabus with specific material that can be used. I have to create all the material myself, which is exhausting and also I cannot always be sure that I provide my learners with material appropriate for their needs.

T4: There are some materials online from the ministry but they are not enough and also they do not always fit with the week's lesson so ideally for a proper lesson we need hours and hours for creating games, look for chants and songs.

T10: I never thought that teaching preschool would be an easy task but the difficulties I have faced exceeded my expectations. I have never before spent so much time for preparing a class and it's funny because when you are out of it you are thinking, come on it's just preschool, it's playing and singing, it's not like a proficiency class but now that I'm in it, I can tell you that it demands more work, energy and effort and preschool teachers are literally admirable for the work they do with the little ones.

T11: I think it's different for us-public preschool teachers, because this was our first year teaching in this context and also we do not really know whether we are going to be teaching preschool next year, so essentially it's like putting a lot of effort for nothing. We have part-time contracts but basically we end up spending the same amount of hours like full time substitutes in primary schools and secondary education and we know or hope that next year we will not be in preschools not because we don't like it -at least me, but because we want to have full time contracts...and this creates a chain.

Interestingly, participants from the private preschools did not seem to think that materials development for preschoolers is that demanding:

T5: I have created materials per thematic category. For example I have songs, chants, games, flashcards all sorts of visuals for the body parts, routines, food etc., so to me this is not really a problem. I add something new every time of course, but still, it was hard in the beginning but not now.

T6: I have a sort of pool, with activities, games, videos, songs and I constantly create new things as well. It takes time, especially in the beginning but then it's easier.

T7: It's exactly the same for me. What also is of great help is that we have an organized coursebook and syllabus so we are never sort of materials and activities to do. We also

cooperate with my EFL teacher colleagues in the school and make sure that we all cover the same topics and do the same things throughout a week.

Another theme that was explored in the current work was how well the EFL teachers in Kindergarten collaborated with the Greek teachers. When asked whether there is collaboration with the Greek teacher, participant T3 from FG2 promptly answered that “There is no collaboration, even though there should be”. Other participants also agreed that the collaboration with the preschool teachers was limited and mentioned a number of constraints related to working hours and conditions:

T1: There’s really not enough time to design activities and work together because I have multiple preschools to go to and I am always in a rush.

T2: In most of the schools I teach, they leave the classroom once I arrive. I have very little guidance and it is hard to find what activities they are working on, so that I can do something similar.

T3: They are busy, I’m busy running around from the one school to the other and preschools is a really intense environment, there are no breaks or time to relax and talk with colleagues, we all have to be alert all the time.

There were however some participants that said that they have a good collaboration with the Greek teachers:

T7: Most of the time they stay in class with me and help me with discipline issues.

Participants from all five focus groups thought that collaboration with the preschool teachers is extremely important for teaching EFL in preschools yet very few of them had actually managed to work closely with them:

T4: Especially in the one school, I was very lucky and the teachers there are very active and enthusiastic for English so they informed me from the beginning regarding the curriculum and the sequence they would follow and I was able to prepare materials based on what they were doing week after week. They have also provided me with background information for my learners, something which I found extremely useful.

T11: Preschool teachers know these ages, they are specialized with the specific ages and it’s extremely important that they collaborate and help us and from this respect, I was lucky, they help me a lot. I have used all sort of games they have also used with the students and they loved them.

Another theme that emerged from the interview regarding the challenges participants faced in preschools was “difficult” preschoolers. Across focus groups there were six participants that referred to specific students that created tension during the EFL class. Participants T1 and T3 actually seemed a bit frustrated as they had students who would constantly cry the minute the English class would start or students who shouted, yelled and hit other learners: T1: I have had yelling, crying, shouting, hitting other kids, the whole lot which is totally normal I guess for this age group but I had never worked with this age group before so especially in the beginning and especially a specific class was really hard for me. Preschool teachers usually intervene and sort out the crisis, thank god.

T3: I have a student who keeps crying and shouting and the only way to stop is when the preschool teacher comes close and talks to him. I feel uncomfortable and don't know what to do.

T4: I have a couple that they never participate I have others who never stop talking so I cannot even finish reading a fairy tale and this is hard because I have never worked with such young kids before and I do not know how to handle it.

T9: I have boy with autism and he is the integration group with a teacher who is excellent in handling him but the minute she walks out of the classroom he gets disoriented and cannot participate at all.

Conversely, another participant from the same focus group reflected on a rather positive experience she had with an autistic learner yet she also said she did not have the knowledge to work with the specific student:

T10: I also have a boy with autism but he loves English and he's really eager to learn! And his pronunciation of the words we learn is fantastic! I'm trying to encourage him more and I really wish that I had more knowledge on how to teach kids with autism. The preschool teacher from the integration group has been really helpful with me as well.

The last part of the interviews focused on exploring participants' suggestions regarding the improvement of the programme. The themes that emerged here are related to the distances the teachers have to travel, the amount of planning they are asked to do, the resources and infrastructure available and, finally the need for further training that should aim to teaching these ages. An interesting fact that came up was that the educators employed in the private sector did not come up against that many difficulties as the ones employed in public schools.

T1: This was my first year working as a substitute teacher in the public sector and I have to say I faced more difficulties than I anticipated. The schools I work at are in a different city than my residence and I have to drive for 90 kilometres every day to go to the schools. As you can understand, this is very tiring and not at all economical.

T2: I agree. I too travel very long distances to get to work every day. The soaring gas prices do not make things easier as I end up working only to fill my gas tank.

T3: Most of the schools I work at lack basic technological equipment and resources. Not only do I have to bring in my own equipment, I also have to create a lot of materials from scratch and carry them from school to school. Sadly, not knowing if I will work in a Kindergarten during the next school year I can't say that the work I have done will be useful to me next year.

T11: The workload is very demanding and I feel quite insecure from time to time because I don't know if the activities I design are effective and appropriate for my learners. I wish we were given more guidelines on how to approach learners in such a sensitive and demanding age.

As mentioned earlier, EFL Kindergarten teachers who are employed in the private sector and have worked at the same school for longer than one year do not face that many difficulties.

T7: I cannot say I have encountered that many difficulties in my job. I have the material almost ready every year and just add a few things I think would enhance my lessons from year to year. Having done this job for some time now I feel quite confident approaching very young learners.

T8: It's the same for me. Getting to know and connect with our new students at the beginning of each school year is a challenge, as are the challenges we face with more "difficult" students or to carry out a lesson plan that they will enjoy, but these difficulties are expected when being in this line of work.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion

This qualitative work aimed to investigate Greek EFL teachers' awareness of developmentally appropriate practices and the challenges they experienced while teaching English as a foreign language to pupils of preschool age. The data was collected through

focus group interviews with EFL teachers who are currently employed in Kindergartens of both the public and private sector. Data analysis involved content analysis of interviews which were carried out in focus groups.

Based on the results, the characteristics of a good EFL teacher in Kindergarten are both academic and non-academic. As far as the academic attributes are concerned, all participants agree that a bachelor's degree in English is necessary, while further training in school psychology and preschool education have also been mentioned. Besides the academic characteristics, it is essential that a good EFL teacher love her pupils, be patient and be able to adjust the lesson to the pupils' needs and not vice versa. This finding agrees with Andúgar and Perez (2018) who explored Spanish teachers' beliefs regarding the qualities of EFL teachers in preschool settings and found that patience and love for pupils at this age were regarded as key elements of a good EFL teacher in Kindergarten should process.

Regarding the objectives of the programme of EFL in preschools participants seemed to be aware of its objectives. Most of the interviewees pointed out that the aim of the introduction of English in preschool should be to familiarize very young learners with the English language through songs and games. They also believed that it is reasonable to expect from preschoolers to be able to say some basic words that are immediately related and connected to their life and interests and respond to basic questions. Lastly, three participants mentioned that some writing and reading is also expected, as they should be able to recognize some basic words when they see them written, learn to differentiate lower case from capital letters and be able to write their names. These findings also agree with the quantitative research carried out by Georgiou (2021) in the Greek preschool context, who found that the main objectives of the introduction of English in preschool should be familiarization with the language. Based on her research, the objectives of introducing English to preschoolers are to be able to answer simple questions, be able to produce vocabulary that is related to their life and know how to write and identify some simple words and alphabet letters.

Regarding the developmentally appropriate practices for preschoolers, findings indicate that most of the teachers are familiar with methodologies and approaches that can facilitate an effective lesson adapted to the needs of preschool students. The method that educators mentioned the most was Total Physical Response, while other methodologies mentioned were project based learning, songs and rhymes, group based learning as well as the communicative approach. This findings agree with Georgiou (2021), who also concluded

that educators who work with very young learners have familiarized themselves with these methodologies. This finding is also verified in Reynolds et al (2021), who concluded that pre-service EFL Kindergarten teachers are well aware of the methodologies they should use when teaching learners of the preschool age. Generally, the belief held by the participants of the research is that a bilingual approach be kept while teaching the foreign language. Namely, when approaching such young learners, we should teach them in the same way they are taught their mother tongue. The same opinion can be found in Bialystok (2018), whose research concluded that it is neither necessary, nor effective to separate EFL acquisition and mother tongue acquisition in the Kindergarten classroom.

Interestingly, there were also some teachers that admitted they were not familiar with the terminology of developmentally appropriate methods to teach very young learners. What these teachers did instead in this part of the interview was provide the researcher with descriptions of what they do in a lesson. What was concluded from these descriptions was that despite not being familiar with the equivalent terminology, the teachers implemented developmentally appropriate methods in their teaching. Such methods were the lexical approach, the use of the hand puppet, total physical response, story based learning and role play. These findings are in line with Mede (2017) who concluded that future training programmes should involve more developmentally appropriate practices and enhance the educators' skills in order for them to implement said practices in the EFL preschool setting. Findings further show that participants were aware of the characteristics of very young learners that distinguish them from older learners of primary and secondary education. More specifically, the teachers identified an array of characteristics. Such attributes are a short attention span, egocentrism and a constant need for activity. What is impressive is that the educators manage to plan and carry out effective lessons while keeping in mind these specific characteristics of preschoolers. These findings are also indicated in the study conducted by Reynolds et al (2021). More specifically, in their qualitative study, they investigated teachers' beliefs about teaching in the pre-primary level, and found that the majority of their sample could identify certain characteristics that separate preschoolers from older learners (2021). The characteristics mentioned are a short attention span, need for activity and egocentrism (2021).

A rather interesting finding of the current work is that EFL teachers have a vague and abstract concept regarding the intercultural practices they should follow in preschool.

Regarding the implementation of practices that would promote multiculturalism in the EFL preschool classroom, the vast majority of the teachers asked did not know how to respond and they admitted that this idea had not crossed their mind. Some teachers, however mentioned that they taught about customs in countries where the target language is spoken. This however contradicts Karras (2020), who advocates that teaching only the materialistic aspect of culture is superficial. As is mentioned in Karras (2021) intercultural teaching is imperative in the EFL classroom. However, there was one teacher who actually undertook a project whose aim was to familiarize the learners with different skin colors.

Findings related to the co-teaching with the Greek Kindergarten teachers constitutes another topic that yielded enlightening information. The vast majority of the participants admitted that they had very little communication and cooperation with the teachers of the schools they are currently employed at. This fact was mainly attributed to the reality that the EFL teachers have to leave quickly after their lesson in order to teach at the next school, as well as the fact that either of the teachers has to work with the children when the other is free, something that can create an obstacle for further communication. This finding contradicts the pilot study of the introduction of English in Greek state pre-primary schools (Alexiou, Penderi & Serafeim, 2021). According to this research the communication and cooperation between the EFL teachers and the Greek kindergarten teachers was smooth and with very few problems (Alexiou, Penderi & Serafeim, 2021). The difference of outcomes may be attributed to the fact that last school year's (2020-2021) COVID-19 regulations lead the schools to conduct online lessons during a considerable part of the school year, thus not providing educators with a clear view of how the programme would be carried out in a yearly basis. Another aspect that may have contributed to the cooperation between EFL teachers and Greek Kindergarten teachers is the age of the teachers. As mentioned in Koskosidou (2021), younger teachers had the tendency to be more receptive and open towards the programme, compared to Greek Kindergarten teachers who were older. Another reason why EFL Kindergarten teachers faced difficulty in communicating with the Greek Kindergarten teachers could be the fact that EFL teachers do not have the experience of the necessary background to handle learners of such young age (Zerva, 2021). This lack of experience may have created a frustrating environment which the EFL were not able to handle, resulting in their feeling that there was insufficient communication between them and the Greek EFL teachers (2021).

As far as the difficulties and challenges that EFL teachers encounter are concerned, it can be claimed that the problems that are caused are mainly attributed to the state and relevant governmental policies. My findings about the difficulties that EFL teachers have come in agreement with Georgiou, (2021). A difficulty that was widely mentioned was the lack of training, which contributed to some educators' feeling insecure about their work. Another challenge that preschool EFL teachers have faced was the limited resources made available to them, both in terms of equipment but also in terms of materials that were available for them to use. Lastly, the majority of the educators who participated in the present research mentioned that the distances they were asked to travel, not only from one Kindergarten to another, but also from their place of residence.

An interesting finding that is in line with Georgiou (2021), is that the difficulties and challenges mentioned in the present work seem to be dependent on the state's attitude towards the introduction of English in Kindergarten. Educators employed in public Kindergartens are asked to face the reality of working part time with a demanding workload, many times far from their place of residence. Also, they are mostly substitute teachers with short-term contracts who may or may not have the same teaching position next year, a fact that discourages them from investing on creating effective lesson plans. Finally, the fact that they are required to create and carry out the lessons by themselves with little or no guidance and training adds further frustration on their part as they feel insecure about their effectiveness. These conclusions are further supported by Metohianaki (2017) and Alefantos (2020), who have claimed that all substitute teachers have faced difficulties in their work due to their limited money, resources and the conditions of their employment.

5.2 Limitations

The present research exhibits several limitations. The main limitation is that there was no triangulation, as it is solely dependent on interviews. This method was considered the most reliable way to obtain trustworthy information, as the participants provided long and detailed answers. Different methods would possibly be more time consuming or difficult to carry out because of limited time. Limited time was also what prevented the researcher from employing other research tools such as observation in order for more accurate results to be acquired. Another factor that prevented classroom observation was the state regulations which were implemented across the country and did not allow people from other schools to enter a classroom, as a way to limit the expansion of COVID-19. The study may only be

limited to EFL Kindergarten teachers employed in Greece and not other countries, as it is a quantitative study and therefore cannot be generalized.

5.3 Further implications

The study's findings are intended to shift the emphasis on EFL education and the instructors' professional development in terms of the strategies and tactics they employ while teaching English to pupils of preschool age. This study attempted to address a gap in the implementation of the programme, as well as to provide new information with the purpose to surmount the obstacles posed by teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards foreign language instruction to preschoolers. Besides the fact that the present research is a genuine endeavor to showcase EFL educators' beliefs and practices and evaluate the way the programme of the Introduction of English in preschool was implemented, it is undeniable that there are further suggestions for further improvement of the research.

Furthermore, the current research allows teachers to evaluate and contrast the methods and approaches they employ in nursery schools, with the goal of directing them toward more efficient and widely used ones. Furthermore, because VYL is an area that will play an essential role in the future, this research can provide teachers and future academics with useful insights into an under-researched subject. Hence, future studies on this topic should include a bigger sample of EFL teachers employed in Kindergarten, as well as triangulation of methods, for example, classroom observations and questionnaires, diary studies.

Conclusion

Overall, the current thesis is an genuine effort to explore the beliefs about and practices of Greek EFL teachers regarding the developmentally appropriate practices of the approaches and methods utilized in the language classroom of the preschool setting. The dissertation also looks into the challenges that EFL teachers experience, which are mostly dependent on government actions. If developed, the proposed material could be a useful aid for teachers working with pupils of the preschool age.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Ενημέρωση σχετικά με το απόρρητο, την εμπιστευτικότητα, την δυνατότητα αποχώρησης και ό,τι σχετίζεται με το ηθικό κομμάτι της έρευνας.
 2. Θα ήθελα να μου πείτε κάποιες πληροφορίες σχετικά με τα τυπικά σας προσόντα (βασικές σπουδές, μεταπτυχιακή ή διδακτορική εκπαίδευση, επιμορφώσεις, ξένες γλώσσες, ηλεκτρονικοί υπολογιστές κ.λ.π.)
 3. Έχετε λάβει κάποια επιμόρφωση (π.χ. σεμινάρια) για ζητήματα που αφορούν την εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής στο νηπιαγωγείο; Αν ναι, ποια είναι αυτά; Έχετε παρακολουθήσει την επιμόρφωση του Υπουργείου;
 4. Έχετε ξαναεργαστεί σε νηπιαγωγείο; Αν ναι, για πόσο καιρό;
 1. Θεωρίες και απόψεις των εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τις εξελικτικά κατάλληλες πρακτικές διδασκαλίας της Αγγλικής γλώσσας σε νήπια.
- Ποια πιστεύετε ότι είναι τα τυπικά και τα ουσιαστικά προσόντα που χρειάζεται ένας εκπαιδευτικός Αγγλικής για να εισάγει αποτελεσματικά την Αγγλική στο νηπιαγωγείο?
 - Τι σημαίνει για εσάς «εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής» στο νηπιαγωγείο?
 - Πού κατά τη γνώμη σας πρέπει να δίνεται προτεραιότητα στο νηπιαγωγείο όσον αφορά την εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής γλώσσας συγκριτικά με μεγαλύτερα παιδιά στο δημοτικό ή την δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση?
 - Ποια πιστεύεις ότι είναι τα χαρακτηριστικά (εύρος προσοχής, εγωκεντρισμός, δραστηριότητα, φαντασία, γλωσσικά χαρακτηριστικά κτλ) των παιδιών προσχολικής ηλικίας που τα ξεχωρίζουν από τα μεγαλύτερα όπως του Δημοτικού ή της Δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης?
 - Κατά τη γνώμη σας, πόσο πιστεύετε ότι αυτά τα χαρακτηριστικά συνδέονται με την εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής γλώσσας στο νηπιαγωγείο
 - Γνωρίζετε συγκεκριμένες μεθόδους για την εκμάθηση της Αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας σε μικρούς μαθητές όπως του νηπιαγωγείου;
 - Πιστεύετε ότι οι παρακάτω μέθοδοι είναι αποδοτικές στην εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής γλώσσας στο νηπιαγωγείο;
 - Κατά τη γνώμη σας μπορούν οι νέες τεχνολογίες να βοηθήσουν στην εισαγωγή των Αγγλικών στο νηπιαγωγείο; Αν ναι, πώς; Θεωρείτε πως υπάρχουν μειονεκτήματα;

- Πιστεύεις πως έχεις ικανοποιητική γνώση για το συγκεκριμένο πεδίο;
- Πιστεύετε πως είναι προτιμότερο τα νήπια να διδάσκονται αγγλικά από δίγλωσσους δασκάλους, φυσικούς ομιλητές της αγγλικής γλώσσας;
- Ποια γλώσσα θεωρείτε προτιμότερο να χρησιμοποιείται όταν διδάσκετε αγγλικά σε μαθητές νηπιαγωγείου;
- Πριν διδάξετε, θεωρούσατε ότι η διδασκαλία αγγλικών σε νήπια θα ήταν εύκολο ή δύσκολο εγχείρημα; Έχει αλλάξει η άποψή σας αφού διδάξατε;

2. Ορθές Πρακτικές των Δασκάλων στην Εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής Γλώσσας στο νηπιαγωγείο

- Ακολουθήσατε κάποια ιδιαίτερη εκπαιδευτική πρακτική προκειμένου να βοηθηθούν οι μαθητές του νηπιαγωγείου?
- Από την εμπειρία σας, οι πρακτικές που εφαρμόσατε είχαν αποτέλεσμα όσον αφορά την εκμάθηση της Αγγλικής ?
- Χρησιμοποιείς το δράμα/αφήγηση/Πολυαισθητηριακή/TPR στην τάξη σου; Αν ναι, ποιοι ήταν οι λόγοι που σε έκαναν να το επιλέξεις; Αν όχι, ποιοι ήταν οι λόγοι που σε ώθησαν στο να μην τις χρησιμοποιήσεις;
- Υπάρχουν στην τάξη σας παιδιά από διαφορετικά πολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα;
- Εφαρμόσατε στην τάξη σας προγράμματα ή δράσεις κατάλληλες αναπτυξιακά που να προάγουν την διαφορετικότητα και την ποικιλομορφία;

3. Δυσκολίες και προκλήσεις στην εφαρμογή της Διδασκαλίας της Αγγλικής γλώσσας στο νηπιαγωγείο

- Ποια είναι τα κυριότερα συναισθήματα που βιώσατε κατά τη διάρκεια του μαθήματος σας στο νηπιαγωγείο;
- Μπορείτε να αναφέρετε μια ευχάριστη και μια δυσάρεστη εμπειρία που βιώσατε και σας έδωσε περαιτέρω τροφή για σκέψη και προβληματισμό;
- Πώς πιστεύετε ότι σαν καθηγητής/τρια Αγγλικής θα μπορούσατε να βοηθηθείτε καλύτερα στο εκπαιδευτικό σας έργο; Τι σας έλειπε περισσότερο για να δουλέψετε

πιο αποτελεσματικά και μεθοδικά (π.χ. υλικοτεχνική υποδομή, βοηθητικό προσωπικό, επιμόρφωση κλπ)?

- Πώς είναι η συνεργασία σας με τους νηπιαγωγούς των τμημάτων? Επιζητείτε τη γνώμη και τη συμβουλή τους σε ενδεχόμενα προβλήματα;
- Υπήρχε τμήμα ένταξης ή παράλληλη στήριξη στα τμήματα που μπαίνατε και αν ναι πώς ήταν η συνεργασία σας?
- Πώς είναι η συνεργασία σας με τους διοικητικούς Προϊσταμένους σας (Προϊσταμένη νηπιαγωγείου, Διευθνήτης Εκπαίδευσης, Σύμβουλος Αγγλικής); Επιζητείτε τη γνώμη και τη συμβουλή τους σε ενδεχόμενα προβλήματα;
- Πιστεύετε ότι η συνεργασία με τους γονείς σε σχέση με τις άλλες βαθμίδες είναι σημαντική?
- Έχουν υπάρξει εμπόδια με τα οποία ήρθατε αντιμέτωπες ως προς την ολοκλήρωση της δουλειάς σας;
- Ποιές καλές πρακτικές θα προτείνατε ώστε η εισαγωγή της Αγγλικής στα νηπιαγωγεία να έχει ακόμα θετικότερα αποτελέσματα?

Appendix B: Interview Transcript

R: Researcher

T1: Teacher 1

T2: Teacher 2

R: Καλησπέρα σας

T1: Καλησπέρα.

R: Καταρχάς θέλω να σας ευχαριστήσω πολύ που δεχτήκατε να πάρετε μέρος στην έρευνά μου.

T2: Χαρά μας να συμμετέχουμε σε τέτοιες ενέργειες

R: Σας ευχαριστώ πολύ συνάδελφοι. Λοιπόν η έρευνά μου έχει 3 σκέλη η μία είναι η θεωρίες και οι απόψεις των εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τις κατάλληλες πρακτικές διδασκαλίας της αγγλικής γλώσσας σε νήπια η άλλη είναι τι ουσιαστικά είναι αυτό το οποίο εφαρμόστηκε όταν διδάσκουμε πάρα πολύ νεαρούς μαθητές και το τρίτο σκέλος είναι οι δυσκολίες που έχετε συναντήσει στο έργο σας. Θα ήθελα αρχικά να σας ρωτήσω ποια πιστεύετε ότι είναι τα τυπικά και τα ουσιαστικά προσόντα που χρειάζεται ένας εκπαιδευτικός αγγλικής για να εισάγει την αγγλική γλώσσα στο νηπιαγωγείο.

T2: Να ξεκινήσω εγώ;

T1: Ναι βεβαίως.

T2: Ωραία λοιπόν σίγουρα πρέπει να είναι γνώστης της γλώσσας έτσι; Άρα στα τυπικά προσόντα θεωρώ απαραίτητο το να έχει τελειώσει στην Αγγλική φιλολογία τώρα από κει και πέρα ως ουσιαστικά προσόντα θεωρώ ότι πρέπει να έχει οτιδήποτε χρειάζεται να έχει ένας εκπαιδευτικός γιατί πάνω από όλα διδάσκουμε ανθρώπους, οπότε σίγουρα επειδή μιλάμε για μαθητές πολύ μικρής ηλικίας πρέπει να έχει πάρα πολλή υπομονή, πρέπει να έχει πολύ θετική διάθεση, να έχει μεταδοτικότητα, να έχει όρεξη να τους διδάξει και πολύ φρέσκες ιδέες, δηλαδή να μην μένεις στα ίδια και τα ίδια, γιατί συνεχώς πρέπει να εξελίσσεται και να πηγαίνει μαζί με το παιδί.

T1: Ναι συμφωνώ και εγώ. Όλοι δουλεύουμε αποκλειστικά και μόνο με το προφορικό κομμάτι της γλώσσας, αφού δεν μπορούν τα ίδια να γράψουν ούτε να διαβάσουν οπότε η καλή προφορά είναι απαραίτητο προσόν για έναν καθηγητή και σαφώς υπομονή, αγάπη προς τα παιδιά ακόμα και η αίσθηση του χιούμορ, νομίζω ότι είναι απαραίτητα για να μπορέσουν τα παιδιά εύκολα να νιώσουν άνετα με έναν καινούριο εκπαιδευτικό που μπαίνει μέσα στην τάξη τους, καθώς και φαντασία, δημιουργικότητα, απαραίτητα στοιχεία για να γίνει το μάθημα πιο διασκεδαστικό για τους μικρούς μαθητές.

R: Πολύ ωραία για εσάς τι σημαίνει η εισαγωγή της αγγλικής γλώσσας στο νηπιαγωγείο;

T1: Νομίζω πως η εισαγωγή της αγγλικής στο νηπιαγωγείο, που είναι κάτι εντελώς πρωτόγνωρο έχει να κάνει με την ομαλή προσέγγιση της γλώσσας με έναν τρόπο παιγνιώδη. Θα πρέπει να δίνεται έμφαση στην επικοινωνία για αυτό και η χρήση αποκλειστικά προφορικού λόγου είναι απαραίτητη. Ουσιαστικά τα παιδιά έρχονται σε επαφή με τη γλώσσα μέσα από το παιχνίδι μέσα από τραγούδια, μέσα από ποιήματα μέσα από βίντεο, κινούμενα σχέδια, ιστορίες και προσπαθούν να αναπαράγουν αυτά που ακούν χωρίς απαραίτητα να καταλαβαίνουν το νόημά τους. Παράλληλα θεωρώ ότι μέσα από την εισαγωγή της αγγλικής στο νηπιαγωγείο τα παιδιά έχουν τη δυνατότητα να ενισχύσουν την αυτοπεποίθησή τους και μέσα από τον έπαινο τον οποίο λαμβάνουν από τους εκπαιδευτικούς, τόσο τους εκπαιδευτικούς της αγγλικής όσο και τους νηπιαγωγούς αισθάνονται ολοένα και πιο σίγουρα για τον εαυτό τους.

T2: Δεν έχω πολλά να πω, θέλω μόνο να προσθέσω ότι για μένα η εισαγωγή της αγγλικής είναι στην ουσία εισαγωγή στην αγάπη για τα αγγλικά το γεγονός ότι δεν υπάρχει κάποια συγκεκριμένη ύλη που πρέπει ας πούμε να καλυφθεί και ότι δεν υπάρχει ένα βιβλίο δείχνει ότι τα παιδιά μπορούν να γνωρίσουν τη γλώσσα σε ένα ρεαλιστικό περιβάλλον και θέλω να δώσω ένα παράδειγμα. Ας πούμε τα παιδιά εντυπωσιάζονται, έρχονται πολλές φορές και μου λένε ότι πήγαμε ένα ταξίδι κάπου με τους γονείς τους και ότι στο αεροδρόμιο μιλούσαν αγγλικά οπότε καταλαβαίνουν τη σημασία και πόσο χρήσιμα είναι αυτό.

R: Πολύ ωραία. Ποια πιστεύετε ότι είναι τα χαρακτηριστικά των παιδιών προσχολικής ηλικίας που τα κάνουν να διαφέρουν από μεγαλύτερα από παιδιά μεγαλύτερων ηλικιών, όπως δημοτικού ή ακόμα και δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης;

T2: Σίγουρα ο ενθουσιασμός που έχουν σε αυτή την ηλικία, η περιέργεια για οτιδήποτε καινούργιο, η φαντασία που δεν έχει όρια και το γεγονός ότι δεν ντρέπονται να μιλήσουν. Δηλαδή θεωρώ ότι όσο μεγαλώνουν τα παιδιά σιγά σιγά χάνουν και τον ενθουσιασμό τους αλλά και αρχίζουν να ντρέπονται περισσότερο σε σχέση με τα παιδιά μικρότερης ηλικίας.

T1: Πολύ ωραία, συμφωνώ και εγώ. Επίσης σίγουρα έχουν περιορισμένο εύρος προσοχής, για αυτό είναι αρκετά απαιτητικό για εμάς το να διατηρούμε συνεχώς το ενδιαφέρον τους στο κίνητρό τους, επειδή πολύ εύκολα μπορεί να βαρεθούν και να παρατήσουν κάποια δραστηριότητα στη μέση, παρόλο που τα ίδια είναι πολύ δραστήρια και κιναισθητικά, χάνουν πολύ εύκολα το ενδιαφέρον τους επίσης νομίζω ότι αν ένα στοιχείο είναι πως λατρεύουν και τα ίδια τον έπαινο και την ανταμοιβή νομίζω πως στις ηλικίες αυτές τα παιδιά είναι ιδιαίτερα εγωκεντρικά και δεν ασχολούνται τόσο πολύ με το πώς μπορεί να λειτουργήσουν σαν ομάδα, όσο με το τι μπορεί να κάνει το καθένα ξεχωριστά, πώς μπορεί να ευχαριστήσει τη δασκάλα του και πώς μπορεί να ενσωματώσει όλη αυτή τη φαντασία που έχει είτε σε κατασκευές, είτε σε παιχνίδια, είτε σε ιστορίες.

R: Πιστεύετε ότι τα χαρακτηριστικά αυτών των παιδιών μπορούν να συνδεθούν με την εισαγωγή της αγγλικής γλώσσας;

T1: Φυσικά. Ας πούμε, τα παιδιά έχουν πολύ καλή οπτικοακουστική αντίληψη και πολλές φορές καταλαβαίνουν το γενικό νόημα φράσεων χωρίς να καταλαβαίνουν συγκεκριμένες λέξεις οι οποίες τις περισσότερες φορές θα είναι και άγνωστες. Μαθαίνουν αποκαλύπτοντας την γνώση, δεν ντρέπονται να μιλήσουν, επαναλαμβάνουν λέξεις πολλές φορές και μιμούμενοι σωστά την προφορά.

T2: Και κάτι ακόμη να συμπληρώσω. Επειδή εγώ είπα πριν για τον ενθουσιασμό και την όρεξη που έχουν τα παιδιά θεωρώ ότι αυτό ισχύει, έχουνε πολλή περιέργεια να σκεφτούν, αχ τι λέει αυτό το βίντεο, τι θα πει αυτό τι γράφει η μπλούζα μου, οπότε έχουν μια αγάπη, ένα κίνητρο.

R: Πολύ ωραία. Κατά τη γνώμη σας πού πρέπει να δίνεται προτεραιότητα στο νηπιαγωγείο όσον αφορά την εισαγωγή της αγγλικής γλώσσας, και αν πιστεύετε ότι υπάρχει κάποια διαφοροποίηση στα μεγαλύτερα παιδιά που φοιτούν στο δημοτικό;

T2: Νομίζω πως είναι η ενίσχυση του προφορικού λόγου, αυτό το λένε είναι ουσιαστικά το μοναδικό που μπορούμε, το μοναδικό στοιχείο που μπορούμε να δουλέψουμε σε αυτή την ηλικία δεν γίνεται να έχουμε απαιτήσεις για γραφή για ανάγνωση τα παιδιά είναι πάρα πολύ μικρά ακόμη δεν έχουν κατακτήσει την πρώτη τους γλώσσα, τα ελληνικά, πόσο μάλλον τα αγγλικά.

T1: Νομίζω ότι η έμφαση πρέπει να δίνεται εκεί και κυρίως στο παιχνίδι η επικοινωνία μέσω του παιχνιδιού. Πρέπει μια τέτοιου είδους κουλτούρα να καλλιεργηθεί πώς θα μάθουν μέσα από το παιχνίδι.

R: Πολύ ωραία, γνωρίζετε κάποια μέθοδο για την εκμάθηση της αγγλικής ως ξένης γλώσσας σε μικρούς μαθητές; Και μπορείτε ελεύθερα να χρησιμοποιήσετε και αγγλική ορολογία

T1: Η λεξική προσέγγιση, η δραστηριοκεντρική προσέγγιση, η θεωρία της πολλαπλής νοημοσύνης, όπως θα έχουν πλέον μεταφραστεί και στα ελληνικά, είναι κάποιες από τις μεθόδους τις οποίες λίγο πολύ χρησιμοποιούμε όλοι καμιά φορά μπορεί και να μην το αντιλαμβανόμαστε ότι τις χρησιμοποιούμε, αλλά σίγουρα είναι τρόποι και μέσα οι οποίοι διευκολύνουν πολύ τη διδασκαλία της στα παιδιά προσχολικής αγωγής.

T2: Προσωπικά θέλω να πω ότι δεν χρησιμοποιώ μία και μόνο μέθοδο αλλά παίρνω στοιχεία από διάφορους τρόπους, οτιδήποτε περιέχει μέσα παιχνίδι οτιδήποτε ενισχύει την ομαδικότητα κάτι που να βοηθάει τα παιδιά μαθαίνουν με βιωματικό τρόπο είμαι υπέρ στο να το δοκιμάζω και να βλέπω πώς λειτουργεί μέσα στην τάξη.

R: Πολύ ωραία. Έχετε κάποιο παράδειγμα ίσως κάποιας μεθόδου που χρησιμοποιήσατε;

T2: Της λεξικής προσέγγισης θα είναι το γεγονός ότι προσωπικά παρουσιάζω πολλές φορές το νέο λεξιλόγιο μέσα από flashcards. Δείχνω μια εικόνα συγκεκριμένη στα παιδιά, επαναλαμβάνουν πολλές φορές τη λέξη, και μετά παίζουμε διάφορα παιχνίδια με τις κάρτες, έτσι ώστε να μπορέσουν να θυμούνται όσο το δυνατόν καλύτερα τις νέες λέξεις που μαθαίνουμε κάθε φορά.

R: Και είναι κάτι το οποίο το βρέχετε βρει αποτελεσματικό;

T2: Ναι νομίζω ότι βοηθάει και τα ίδια τα παιδιά και πολλές φορές τυχαίνει στην αρχή κάθε μαθήματος, μου λένε κυρία έφερες κάρτες, ποια καινούργια λεξούλα θα μάθουμε, δηλαδή ήταν και αυτά νομίζω ότι καταλαβαίνουν πως είναι ένας τρόπος για να μάθουν κάτι καινούργιο κάθε φορά.

T1: Εμένα θεωρώ ότι με έχει βοηθήσει πολύ και το μουσικό κινητικό κομμάτι. Δηλαδή νομίζω ότι επειδή πολλές φορές μπορεί να ξεχαστούν, επειδή κινούμαστε χωρίς με δίνουμε και έμφαση στη μουσική, ας πούμε ή με τη μορφή κάποιου τραγουδιού, μαθαίνουν αβίαστα. Δηλαδή τα ακούω να λένε τα λόγια χωρίς να έχουμε προσπαθήσει ιδιαίτερα. Όντως το απολαμβάνουν και είναι ένας τρόπος ας πούμε να εκτονώνονται. Θεωρητικά σε αυτήν την ηλικία δηλαδή επειδή δεν μπορούν να κάτσουν πάρα πολύ ώρα αν θέση τους επιζητώ και την κίνηση.

T2: Σας ευχαριστώ. Πιστεύετε ότι οι νέες τεχνολογίες μπορούν να βοηθήσουν στην εισαγωγή των αγγλικών στον στο νηπιαγωγείο, ή μήπως θεωρείτε ότι υπάρχουν και τυχόν μειονεκτήματα στην εφαρμογή τους;

T1: Προσωπικά θεωρώ σίγουρα βοηθούν. Είναι πλέον απαραίτητες για να διεξαχθεί το μάθημα. Τα παιδιά είναι πάρα πολύ εξοικειωμένα με την τεχνολογία.

R: Μπορείτε να μου πείτε καποιον τροπο με τον οποιο ενσωματωνετε τις νέες τεχνολογίες στο μάθημα σας;

T2: Νομίζω η χρήση του διαδικτύου ύπαρξη υλικού ή και ακόμη καλύτερα διαδραστικού πίνακα, ο οποίος ευτυχώς για μένα υπάρχει σε κάποια, όχι σε όλα τα σχολεία στα οποία πηγαίνω είναι τρόποι με τους οποίους τα παιδιά έχουν πολύ καλύτερη έκθεση στη γλώσσα. Μπορούν και συνδυάζουν ήχο με εικόνα, είναι διασκεδαστικό ακόμη και μια ιστορία την οποία θα τη δούμε μέσα από ένα βίντεο αντι να την ακούσουν απλά και μόνο μέσα από ένα βιβλίο. Και ακόμη και η δική μας η δουλειά διευκολύνεται περισσότερο αφού βάζουμε το τραγούδι, για παράδειγμα το οποίο θέλουμε να ακούσουμε, το ακούν και παράλληλα μπορούμε να το συνδυάσουμε και με κάποιες κινήσεις συγκεκριμένες τις οποίες θα επαναλάβουν. Τα παιδιά διευκολύνονται και τα ίδια και εμείς μέσα από τις νέες τεχνολογίες.

R: Εξαιρετικά θα ήθελε η άλλη συνάδελφος να συμπληρώσει κάτι;

T1: Όχι με κάλυψε απόλυτα.

R: Πολύ ωραία θεωρείτε ότι η γνώση σας για το συγκεκριμένο πεδίο και για να προσεγγίσετε την συγκεκριμένη ηλικιακή ομάδα παιδιών είναι ικανοποιητικές ή θα θέλατε κάποια παραπάνω επιμόρφωση;

T1: Σίγουρα εξελισσόμαστε όσο μπορούμε σε ατομικό επίπεδο. Θεωρώ ότι η γνώση μας είναι ικανοποιητική, αλλά δεν πρέπει σε καμία περίπτωση να μένουμε στάσιμοι γιατί συνεχώς προκύπτουν νέες τεχνολογίες και πρέπει να ενημερωνόμαστε για αυτές.

T2: Για εμένα ίσως μια πιο πρακτική βοήθεια, τύπου σεμινάριο αλλά με πολύ πρακτικά πράγματα θα ήταν πολύ ωφέλιμο. Προσωπικά για μένα ήταν το μεγαλύτερο άγχος όταν έγινε η πρόσληψή μου στα νηπιαγωγεία, με άγχωνε πάρα πολύ το κομμάτι αυτό το ηλικιακό των παιδιών δηλαδή κι εγώ η ίδια δεν είχε ξανατύχει να χρειαστεί να διδάξω σε τόσο νεαρές ηλικίες, οπότε έλεγα ότι χρειάζεται να μάθω κάποια πράγματα για τις ηλικίες αυτές να μάθω τα παιδιά πώς λειτουργούν γνωστικά στην ηλικία αυτή, οπότε νομίζω πως αυτό είναι ένα κομμάτι του που πολλοί συνάδελφοι αντιμετωπίζουμε. Νομίζω ότι ένα σεμινάριο ή γενικώς κάποια ημερίδα που θα αφορά και λίγο γενικά τα χαρακτηριστικά αυτής της ηλικίας είναι το πρώτο βήμα για να περάσουμε μετά στο κομμάτι το διδακτικό. Τα παιδιά σε αυτή την ηλικία λίγο πολύ μας βλέπουν σαν γονείς οπότε χρειάζεται μια καλή εξοικείωση με τα χαρακτηριστικά τους, με τις ανάγκες τους, με τα δυνατά και τα αδύναμα τους σημεία προτού περάσουμε στο επόμενο κομμάτι που αφορά τη διδασκαλία.

R: Η επόμενη μου ερώτηση είναι ποια γλώσσα θεωρείτε προτιμότερο να χρησιμοποιείτε όταν διδάσκετε αγγλικά;

T1: Σίγουρα τα αγγλικά, και όχι τα ελληνικά γιατί είναι που είναι πολύ περιορισμένες οι ώρες διδασκαλίας των αγγλικών, 2 ώρες την εβδομάδα σημαίνει πως τα παιδιά εκτίθενται μεν στη γλώσσα αλλά πολύ περιορισμένα, οπότε πρέπει και εμείς να φροντίσουμε οι 2 αυτές ώρες την εβδομάδα να περιλαμβάνουν όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερο έκθεση γίνεται στην αγγλική και λιγότερο την ελληνική.

R: Πολύ ωραία. Πριν μπειτε στην τάξη θεωρούσατε τη διδασκαλία αγγλικών σε νήπια ένα εύκολο ή ένα δύσκολο εγχείρημα; Και οι απόψεις σας έχουν πλέον επιβεβαιωθεί ή έχει αλλάξει κάτι αφού διδάξατε;

T2: Η αλήθεια είναι ότι εμένα από την αρχή μου φαινόταν δύσκολο, ειδικά όσο δεν ήξερα τι θα αντιμετωπίσω. Σίγουρα είχε αλλάξει η άποψή μου δηλαδή πλέον δεν με τρομάζει ίσα ίσα μόνο χαρά και ικανοποίηση και ευχαρίστηση που προσφέρει όλο αυτό και δεν αμφισβητώ ότι έχει δυσκολίες, το γεγονός ότι πρέπει να κρατήσω το ενδιαφέρον των παιδιών είναι πολύ σημαντικό, αλλά σίγουρα δεν με τρομάζει πια οπότε έχει αλλάξει η άποψή

T1: Εγώ για να είμαι ειλικρινής, μέχρι πριν γίνει εισαγωγή των αγγλικών στα νηπιαγωγεία δεν με είχε απασχολήσει ποτέ αυτό το ερώτημα, καθότι ειδικά στον ιδιωτικό τομέα ήταν λίγο δύσκολο να κληθούμε να διδάξουμε σε αυτές τις τόσο νεαρές ηλικίες. Παρόλα αυτά, έπειτα από την εισαγωγή της αγγλικής και την πρόσληψή μου ήταν όπως είπα και πριν ένα κομμάτι το οποίο με άγχωνε. Με αγχώνει περισσότερο η επαφή με τόσο νεαρές ηλικίες, το αν θα με αποδεχτούν, το πώς θα μπορέσουν να πειθαρχήσουν. Τελικά είδα πως τα παιδιά στις ηλικίες αυτές είναι πολύ πιο υπάκουα από ότι τα παιδιά του δημοτικού ή ακόμη χειρότερα του γυμνασίου και του λυκείου. Τα παιδιά αυτά στις ηλικίες αυτές ακολουθούν ένα συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα, είναι, χωρίς να θέλω να ακουστεί κάπως, πως λειτουργούν λίγο σαν στρατιωτάκια, με την έννοια ότι σέβονται τους κανόνες και επίσης είναι παιδιά τα οποία αν καταλάβουν την αγάπη που τους δείχνεις και το τι θες να τους μάθεις κάτι θα σε αγκαλιάσουν μόνα τους και θα στο δείξουν. Δηλαδή εμένα με βοήθησαν τα ίδια τα παιδιά να λυθώ και να είμαι ακόμη περισσότερο ο εαυτός μου χωρίς να νιώθω αμφιβολίες για το

αν θα με αποδεχθούν ή όχι είναι δηλαδή τα ίδια τα παιδιά κλειδί στο να επιτευχθεί διδασκαλία με τον καλύτερο δυνατό τρόπο.

R: Πολύ ωραία και τώρα θα προχωρήσουμε στο δεύτερο σκέλος της συνέντευξής μας, το οποίο είναι οι πρακτικές που χρησιμοποιείτε όταν διδάσκετε νήπια, και θα ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω αν έχετε ακολουθήσει κάποια ιδιαίτερη πρακτική, προκειμένου να βοηθηθούν νέοι μαθητές σας. Υπάρχει κάποια πρακτική την οποία ξεχωρίζετε;

T2: Νομίζω το TPR είναι κάτι το οποίο χρησιμοποιούμε όλοι γιατί υπάρχει έτσι ένας συνδυασμός κίνησης, τα παιδιά παράλληλα μπορούν να διατηρούν το κίνητρό τους, το ενδιαφέρον τους. Επίσης και η λεξική προσέγγιση που για μένα λειτουργεί καλά γιατί βλέπω πως τα παιδιά ανταπεξέρχονται σε αυτό, το περιμένουν το θέλουν το ζούνε, και έπειτα τρόποι με τους οποίους γενικώς μπορούμε να αξιοποιούμε όλα τα χαρακτηριστικά του παιδιών δηλαδή και οι κιναισθητικοί μαθητές, ειδικά οι περισσότεροι σχεδόν όλοι σ αυτή την ηλικία είναι, θα μπορούν να έχουνε έναν τρόπο με τον οποίο θα μάθουν καλύτερα, θα διασκεδάζουν παράλληλα.

T1: Νομίζω πως γενικά το παιχνίδι πάλι είναι το σημαντικότερο όλων. Δεν ξέρω αν μπορούμε να το κατατάξουμε στο ότι ανήκει σε κάποια συγκεκριμένη προσέγγιση αλλά το παιχνίδι είναι το μέσο με το οποίο μαθαίνουν όλοι οι μαθητές ανεξαιρέτως.

T2: Ναι συμφωνώ απόλυτα δηλαδή με κάλυψε πλήρως συνάδελφος. Και θέλω να επισημάνω αυτό που είπα και νωρίτερα ότι και η χρήση χιούμορ θεωρώ ότι βοηθάει πάρα πολύ εφόσον βέβαια μπορεί ο δάσκαλος να το υποστηρίξει γιατί έτσι τα παιδιά νιώθουν πιο οικεία και ίσως μαθαίνουν καλύτερα.

T1: Βεβαίως και ναι δεν είναι μόνο το τι βιβλιογραφία έχουμε αλλά είναι και να βάζουμε την προσωπικότητά μας μέσα στο μάθημα.

R: Ακριβώς. Ωραία οπότε μου έχετε πει και τι χρησιμοποιείτε και για ποιους λόγους το επιλέξατε, θα ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω αν στις τάξεις σας έχετε παιδιά από διαφορετικά πολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα πέρα από το τυπικό ελληνικό.

T2: Εγώ έχω ναι κάποια παιδιά που έχουν έρθει από άλλες χώρες, αλλά έχουν ενσωματωθεί πλήρως.

T1: Και εγώ επίσης έχω μαθητές από άλλα πολιτισμικά περιβάλλοντα. Δεν μπορώ να πω βέβαια ότι έχουν πλήρως ενσωματωθεί, μάλιστα έχω μαθητή ο οποίος δεν μιλάει καθόλου ελληνικά παρ'όλα αυτά με τα αγγλικά είχε μια πάρα πολύ καλή επαφή και επειδή και ο ίδιος αφιερώνει ώρες μέσα από παιχνίδια με κινούμενα σχέδια τα οποία παρακολουθεί στα αγγλικά, είναι καλύτερη επαφή του με τα αγγλικά παρά με τα ελληνικά. Δηλαδή η νηπιαγωγός μου έχει εξομολογηθεί πως δεν μπορεί να συνεννοηθεί μαζί του και βασικά πράγματα ας πούμε για την ώρα που θα φάνε για το τι τώρα βγαίνουμε διάλειμμα έξω, έχει επικοινωνιακό πρόβλημα το οποίο δεν υπάρχει τόσο πολύ στα αγγλικά. Στα αγγλικά μάλιστα το παιδί έχει ένα αρκετά πλούσιο λεξιλόγιο για την ηλικία του, πολλές φορές τυχαίνει να μαθαίνουμε ας πούμε λέξεις σχετικές με την άνοιξη και να γνωρίζει ήδη λέξεις όπως να μου της λέει πριν καν εγώ τις αναφέρω.

R: Πολύ ωραίο αυτό, πολύ ενδιαφέρον. Στο ίδιο πλαίσιο θα ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω αν έχετε εφαρμόσει προγράμματα ή δράσεις που να προάγουν τη διαφορετικότητα και την ποικιλομορφία.

T1: Νομίζω πως εξαιτίας του γεγονότος ότι είναι αρκετά μειωμένες οι ώρες μας, δηλαδή 2 ώρες την εβδομάδα μόνο, δεν μας δίνει πάρα πολύ μεγάλο περιθώριο να προσεγγίσουμε πολλές και διαφορετικές κουλτούρες αν και κακώς. Το βάρος ίσως πέφτει περισσότερο στο κομμάτι των αγγλικών δηλαδή στο πώς θα μπορέσουμε να φέρουμε τα παιδιά σε επαφή με την αγγλική κουλτούρα εγώ ας πούμε προσπάθησα κατά την περίοδο τώρα πριν από τις γιορτές του πάσχα να μιλήσω λίγο στα παιδιά για συγκεκριμένα έθιμα για το Easter Bunny,

για να κάνουμε ένα egg hunting, δηλαδή πράγματα τα οποία είχαν να κάνουν περισσότερο με τα έθιμα που υπάρχουν σε αγγλόφωνες χώρες και λιγότερο σε άλλα διαφορετικά πολιτιστικά περιβάλλοντα.

T2: Μάλιστα ναι ναι και εγώ κάτι πέρα από αυτά που ανέφερε συνάδελφος δεν μπορώ να πω ότι έχω κάνει, αλλά οτιδήποτε προάγει τη διαφορετικότητα και την ποικιλομορφία είμαι πρόθυμη να το εντάξω στο μάθημά μου, ειδικά στο μέλλον.

R: Πολύ ωραία.

T1: Θα βοηθήσει πάρα πολύ τους μαθητές να έρθουν πιο κοντά, ειδικά σε περιπτώσεις όπως είναι και η περίπτωση που έχω στο δικό μου τμήμα, που οι μαθητές δεν έχουν ενσωματωθεί ακόμη καλά ή σε περιπτώσεις που οι ίδιοι οι γονείς δεν μιλάνε τα ελληνικά θα βοηθήσει τα παιδιά να έρθουν πιο κοντά μεταξύ τους. Πιθανόν να πουν κάποια έθιμα που έχουν στη δική τους περιοχή, να μιλήσουν για τη θρησκεία τους ή οτιδήποτε άλλο αποτελεί στοιχείο της κουλτούρας τους, θα έπρεπε να προσπαθήσουμε περισσότερο και πιο ενεργά να το κάνουμε κομμάτι του μαθήματος.

R: Ωραία ευχαριστώ πολύ και ποια είναι τα κυριότερα προβλήματα που έχετε αντιμετωπίσει στη διεκπεραίωση της δουλειάς σας;

T1: Νομίζω ότι τα προβλήματα που αντιμετωπίζουμε έχουν να κάνουν περισσότερο με το κομμάτι της μετακίνησης. Δηλαδή το γεγονός ότι είμαστε μειωμένου ωραρίου για 12 ή 14 ώρες και πρέπει να πηγαίνουμε σε 6 ή σε 7 διαφορετικά σχολεία και ότι έχουμε γύρω στο 20 στα 20-25 λεπτά να φύγουμε από το ένα σχολείο να πάμε στο άλλο. Και το γεγονός ότι οι περισσότεροι από εμάς που μετακινούμαστε καθημερινά αλλάζουμε νομό, μετάκινούμαστε μόνοι μας και χωρίς να μπορούμε να ενταχθούμε σε κάποιο γκρουπ αφού καμία άλλη ειδικότητα, κανένας καλός νηπιαγωγός δεν μπορεί να πάει μόνο για μία ώρα και να αλλάξει και να πάει στο επόμενο σχολείο, είναι σίγουρα πράγματα τα οποία αμαυρώνουν κατά κάποιο τρόπο αυτήν την όμορφη εμπειρία που βιώνουμε εντός της τάξης.

R: Μάλιστα θα θέλατε να προσθέσετε κάτι;

T2: Όχι όχι τα προβλήματα που αντιμετωπίζω είναι τα ίδια, οπότε του χρόνου ελπίζουμε σε αύξηση του ωραρίου αλλά και ότι θα μπορέσουν να καλυφθούν οι ανάγκες σε περισσότερα νηπιαγωγεία, πιο κοντά το ένα στο άλλο.

R: Και μιας και είμαστε έτσι σε αυτό το πλαίσιο γενικότερων προτάσεων, πιστεύετε ότι θα μπορούσε να προστεθεί κάτι είτε σε υλικοτεχνική υποδομή είτε στη μορφή κάποιας επιμόρφωσης προσωπικού οτιδήποτε που θα σας βοηθούσε σε περισσότερο να δουλέψετε πιο αποτελεσματικά και μεθοδικά;

T2: Σίγουρα η επιμόρφωση πρέπει να είναι διαρκής, δεν νομίζω ότι αρκεί μια επιμόρφωση για μια ζωή αλλά για μένα πολύ σημαντικό ρόλο παίζει το βοηθητικό προσωπικό. Ειδικά με περιπτώσεις παιδιών που ίσως να αντιμετωπίζουν κάποιες δυσκολίες, θα ήθελα σίγουρα να έχω ένα έμπειρο προσωπικό δίπλα μου, που να ξέρει να με καθοδηγήσει την ώρα του μαθήματος.

T1: Συμφωνώ απόλυτα και ειδικά το διδακτικό προσωπικό. Έχουμε όλοι οι μαθητές οι οποίοι αντιμετωπίζουν κάποιες δυσκολίες μαθησιακές, και δεν ξέρω κατά πόσο και εμείς οι ίδιοι είμαστε οι αρμόδιοι για να έρθουμε αντιμέτωποι με τα θέματα αυτά ίσως κάποιοι εκπαιδευτικοί ειδικής αγωγής να είναι οι καταλληλότεροι που θα μπορούσαν να βοηθήσουν και να διευκολύνουν το μάθημα. Επιπλέον η υλικοτεχνική υποδομή φυσικά είναι απαραίτητη. Υπάρχουν σχολεία, ειδικά στην περιφέρεια και στην επαρχία που δεν έχουν ούτε τα βασικά, δηλαδή την ύπαρξη ενός υπολογιστή, λαπτοπ, ακόμη και το ίντερνετ πολλές φορές μπορεί να κάνει φοβερές διακοπές, είναι υπερβολικά αργό, με αποτέλεσμα να δυσχεραίνεται η δική μας η θέση και να καταφεύγουμε σε πιο παραδοσιακές μεθόδους διδασκαλίας για να κρατήσουμε το ενδιαφέρον των παιδιών.

R: Θα ήθελα τώρα να σας ρωτήσω πώς είναι η συνεργασία σας με τις νηπιαγωγούς των τμημάτων. Ζητάτε τη γνώμη τους ή τη συμβουλή τους;

T1: Ναι η συνεργασία μου με όλες τις νηπιαγωγούς είναι πάρα πολύ καλή. Μου έχουν δώσει το ελεύθερο να φέρομαι όπως θέλω εγώ την ώρα του μαθήματος. Εννοείται ότι επιζητώ τη γνώμη τους από την άποψη ότι γνωρίζουν πολύ καλύτερα από μένα το τμήμα, εφόσον το είχαν από την αρχή της χρονιάς και έχοντας μεγαλύτερη εμπειρία με παιδιά στις ηλικίες ξέρουν ίσως να διαχειριστούν κάποια θέματα καλύτερα από μένα. Πολλές φορές τις ρωτώ με τι ασχολούνται στο μάθημα ώστε οι θεματικές να είναι παρόμοιες και αφού τα κάνουν στα ελληνικά τα μαθαίνουμε και στα αγγλικά και γενικά να παίρνω τη γνώμη τους.

T2: Για να είμαι ειλικρινής, το προτεινόμενο πλάνο που ήταν να γίνεται συνδιδασκαλία τουλάχιστον στις δικές μου τις περιπτώσεις δεν συμβαίνει. Τις περισσότερες φορές ούτε θα μείνει στην τάξη, ενώ τις περισσότερες φορές κάνω αποκλειστικά μόνη μου το μάθημα, και αυτό συμβαίνει για διάφορους λόγους. Είτε γιατί είναι μια ευκαιρία και για τις ίδιες τις νηπιαγωγούς να πάρουν μια ανάσα από το μάθημα, καθότι είναι μέσα στο τμήμα όλες τις ώρες, με πολύ τεταμένη την προσοχή τους, καθώς τα παιδιά είναι μικρά και μπορούν να συμβούν πολλά προβλήματα, πολλά θέματα μπορεί να προκύψουν. Παρόλα αυτά δεν μπορώ να πω ότι έχω κάποιου έντονο παράδειγμα συνδιδασκαλίας στο μυαλό μου δηλαδή λειτουργούσα σχετικά αυτόνομα συμβαδίζοντας όμως όσο είναι δυνατόν με τις θεματικές ενότητες ή ζητώντας τη συμβουλή τους για διάφορα πράγματα που είχα στο μυαλό μου να διδάξω.

R: Ωραία. Υπάρχει κάποιο τμήμα ένταξης ή παράλληλη στήριξη στα τμήματα που μπαίνετε;

T1: Εμένα υπάρχει σε 2 τμήματα. Υπάρχει ένας μαθητής με γλωσσική διαταραχή οπότε υπάρχει παράλληλη στήριξη αποκλειστικά γι αυτόν. Έχουμε εξαιρετική συνεργασία με τη συνάδελφο νηπιαγωγό είναι και αυτή η οποία παραμένει όλες τις ώρες μέσα στο τμήμα και θεωρώ πως και αυτή με τον τρόπο της έχει βοηθήσει πάρα πολύ στο να με αποδειχθεί το παιδί, γιατί στην αρχή μπορώ να πω ότι ήταν αρκετά διστακτικό μαζί μου. Έλεγε ποια είναι αυτή, γιατί μπαίνει μέσα στο τμήμα, ήταν πιο δύσκολο να με αποδεχτεί όμως με τη δική της τη συμβολή αυτά τα θεματάκια ξεπεράστηκαν πολύ γρήγορα. Το ίδιο συμβαίνει και σε άλλο ένα τμήμα που υπάρχει παράλληλη στήριξη και μένει η νηπιαγωγός επίσης μέσα και αυτή με τον τρόπο της βοήθησε νομίζω στο να γίνω πιο εύκολα αποδεκτή για τα παιδιά.

R: Ωραία, και θα ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω αν έχουν υπάρξει εμπόδια με τα οποία έχετε έρθει αντιμέτωπες ως προς την ολοκλήρωση της δουλειάς σας.

T1: Σίγουρα όλα τα εμπόδια που αναφέραμε πριν, οτιδήποτε έχει να κάνει με την απόσταση. Από τον καιρό, μέχρι κάτι στο δρόμο. Τέλος πάντων ίσως το ωράριο, το άγχος το να προλάβω να πάω από το ένα σχολείο στο άλλο μέσα σε έναν πολύ συγκεκριμένο χρόνο όλα αυτά είναι εμπόδια που δεν διευκολύνει το έργο μας ακόμη και τα έξοδα. Δηλαδή οι εξελίξεις με τις τιμές της βενζίνης και του πετρελαίου, το γεγονός ότι εμείς κάθε μέρα μετακινούμαστε χωρίς να είμαστε ικανοί να μοιραστούμε τα έξοδα με άλλους συναδέλφους όπως κάνουν για παράδειγμα νηπιαγωγοί δάσκαλοι του μετακινούνται και αυτοί καθημερινά από τα σπίτια τους σε άλλους νομούς και είναι ένα πάρα πολύ σοβαρό εμπόδιο.

T2: Τα έξοδα λοιπόν είναι ένα κομμάτι το οποίο δυστυχώς ή ευτυχώς εμείς πρέπει να λαμβάνουμε υπόψη μας. Μακάρι να αναλάμβανε και το υπουργείο ώστε να μην αποτελούν εμπόδιο στην ολοκλήρωση της δουλειάς

R: Σας ευχαριστώ. Και ας περάσουμε στην επόμενη ερώτηση. Θα ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω αν θα προτείνατε κάποιες άλλες καλές πρακτικές ώστε η εισαγωγή της αγγλικής στα νηπιαγωγεία να έχει ακόμα θετικότερα αποτελέσματα.

T1: Ναι θεωρώ ότι έχει γίνει μια πολύ καλή αρχή, το γεγονός ότι έχουν μπει τα αγγλικά στο νηπιαγωγείο για μένα είναι εξέλιξη οπότε αυτό που θα πρότεινα είναι να υπάρχουν

περισσότερες ώρες διδασκαλίας στα νηπιαγωγεία, ώστε αυτό που κάνουμε να έχει νόημα. Δηλαδή θεωρώ ότι 2 φορές την εβδομάδα δεν είναι αρκετές. Το ιδανικό για μένα θα ήταν καθημερινά από μια διδακτική ώρα, τα παιδιά να έρχονται σε επαφή με τη γλώσσα ώστε να εξοικειωθούν πραγματικά με το λόγο.

T2: Συμφωνώ απόλυτα. Νομίζω ότι αυτό θα έπρεπε να είναι το ζητούμενο στο πώς θα αυξηθούν οι ώρες των αγγλικών σταδιακά, γιατί μοναδικός τρόπος για να εκτίθενται τα παιδιά στη γλώσσα είναι η παρουσία μας κατά τη διάρκεια του μαθήματος. Εφόσον λοιπόν θέλουμε να ενισχύσουμε τον προφορικό λόγο, θέλουμε να ενισχύσουμε την επαφή των παιδιών με τη γλώσσα αυτό μπορεί να γίνει μόνο αν αυξηθούν και οι ώρες των αγγλικών.

T1: Ούτως ή άλλως με τον τρόπο με τον οποίο γίνεται η διδασκαλία μέσα από το παιχνίδι, μέσα από τα τραγούδια, μέσα από τις ιστορίες νομίζω πως ούτε κουραστικό είναι για τους μαθητές και ίσα ίσα μπορεί σταδιακά να τους εμψυχήσει μια αγάπη πραγματική για τη γλώσσα έτσι ώστε καθώς μεγαλώνουν και προχωρούν στο δημοτικό με άλλα εφόδια να μπορούν να έρχονται πάλι σε επαφή με τα αγγλικά.

R: Πολύ ωραία, αυτή ήταν και η τελευταία μας ερώτηση, οπότε και έχουμε τελειώσει με τη συνέντευξή μας. Θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω άλλη μια φορά που δεχτήκατε να συμμετάσχετε εμείς σας οι απαντήσεις σας είναι είναι πολύτιμες.

T2: Να είστε καλά, καλά αποτελέσματα.

T1: Καλά αποτελέσματα.

Author's Statement:

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