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INTRODUCING ENGLISH
TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS II

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INTRODUCTION

The textbook *Teaching English to Very Young Learners II* is intended to provide easily comprehensible study materials for future or in-service teachers of pre-primary English as a foreign language (FLE). Therefore, it is written in simplified English (B1–B2 level of CEFR for languages) to be comfortable enough for students of PEP (pre-school and elementary pedagogy) – oriented study programs who are not involved in philological studies.

It develops the framework topics provided in the textbook *Teaching English to Very Young Learners I* (Pokrivčáková, 2020) where the very fundamentals (basic terminology, organisation of EFL acquisition, learners' characteristics and needs, teachers' roles and classroom management rules) of the early start of English language acquisition as a foreign language have been discussed. The second part of the textbook discusses some teaching techniques and methods that have been generally agreed, by both teachers and researchers, as beneficial for very young learners, i.e. learners between the ages of 3–6 years.

The first chapter introduces the topic of nursery rhymes and their use in pre-school English classrooms. The second chapter focuses on integrating songs (both folk and popular) as forms of musical-based and emotion-enhancing activities. Performing drama is an effective way of integrating language, movements and emotional expressions, therefore it is highly recommended for very young learners (see chapter 4). Children love stories and stories are great source of authentic language. Chapter 5, therefore, explains basic rules for using storytelling in pre-school classes. Picture books bring stories told in both words and pictures. This close integration of language and visuals has been proved to be another valuable way of acquiring new language and hence is discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 introduces the principles of Total Physical (TPR) response and its use in pre-school English classrooms. Since children mostly learn through games, the topic of language games for very young learners could not be omitted and thus is discussed in Chapter 8.

The textbook includes also a brief glossary of language pedagogy terminology and updated lists of sources.

The textbook is practice-oriented (based on the needs of contemporary teaching practice – compare Pokrivčáková, 2017), therefore it introduces many tips, suggestions and examples of good teaching practice. It also reflects on the

latest research results in language pedagogy. However, any user (either a university student or in-service teacher) should know there is no single "best way" to teach. The author of this textbook assumes that good and successful English language teachers are professionals, i.e. thinking, creative and practical persons who can make decisions on their own and draw on what is best for them and for their learners. The author hopes the book will help them to find make effective and well-informed decisions. In pursuing this aim, I wish you a lot of success.

Author

1/

NURSERY RHYMES AND VERY YOUNG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Key terms:
foreign language education, foreign language, nursery rhymes, lullabies, cumulative rhymes, counting out rhymes, counting down rhymes, riddles, tongue twisters, carols, proverbs and sayings, short stories in verse

While using songs and rhymes with older learners (teenagers, adults) may be an amusing and effective way how to ease possible frustration and anxiety linked to learning a foreign language (Shumin, 1997; Lin, 2000) or a stimulus for class discourse (Orlova, 2003), they are a fundamental vehicle for foreign language acquisition by very young and young learners. Before explaining their exclusive role in the early introduction of foreign languages to pre-school learners, the key terms should be defined since they mostly come from other disciplines beside language or educational disciplines (literature, music, aesthetics).

A rhyme, primarily, is a repetition of the same or similar-sounding words which occurs at the end of lines in poems or songs (love – dove, red – bed – bad – sad). Rhymes can also be short poems consisting of just two rhymed lines.

Nursery rhymes are short and simple rhymed poems for very young children. Literary theory distinguishes between two basic types of nursery rhymes: folk and author. **Folk nursery rhymes** are usually ancient and of anonymous origin. They were originally transmitted from older to younger generations orally. In the 18th and 19th centuries, national versions of nursery rhymes and other folklore pieces started being collected by national collectors (e.g. Charles Perrault, the Grimm brothers, John Newbery, Joseph Jacobs, Božena Němcová, Pavel Dobšinský, etc.).

Author nursery rhymes are of a newer origin and their authors are usually known and named.

Nursery rhymes (both folk and author ones) are an inseparable part of pre-school learning programs and are naturally included in pre-primary and primary English textbooks.

1.1
What makes nursery rhymes a natural part of foreign language acquisition?

When listening to nursery rhymes, children experience, for the first time in their lives, a patterned (i.e. not simultaneous) language with specific rhythm and sound.

Specific characteristics of nursery rhymes are:
* a strict rhythmical pattern and a musical quality to the rhymes,
* concrete imagery,
* action and dynamics,
* brevity,
* humorous play with sounds (alliteration, onomatopoeia, and other sound patterns) and meaning of words (homonymy, puns, etc.),
* humour and nonsense.

Because of the above qualities, nursery rhymes are well suited to the psychological characteristics of very young children and pre-school learners.

Pokrivčáková (2018) explains the attraction of nursery rhymes to children with the example of *Hey, Diddle Diddle* as follows:

Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed
To see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

Picture 1: Illustration cut out from a colouring page from SufNetKids, 2020.

The nursery rhyme is built upon concrete imagery. A cat, a cow, and a dog are animals that even the youngest children are familiar with. A fiddle, a dish, a spoon, and the moon are objects they could frequently see or use. Even the verbs "to jump" and "to run", and "to laugh" express activities children have always liked best. The concrete objects and activities are combined in a way that creates a nonsense quality. The humorous image of a cow jumping over the moon must have been funny to every child, making it pleased and happy. Moreover, no one can see any educational intent in the nursery rhyme which makes it even more attractive to children.

1.2
Sub-genres of nursery rhymes

- **Lullabies** – are nursery songs usually sung to babies or small children before they go to sleep.
- **Action rhymes** – are rhymes which include running, hopping, skipping, knee-riding rhymes, hand-clapping rhymes, finger-and-toe rhymes, and ball-bouncing rhymes because they involve movements of parts or the whole body (e.g. "If you're happy and you know it" or "Heads, shoulders, knees and toes…!").
- **Cumulative and inclusive rhymes** – their principle lies in substitution or linking new words to the rhyme pattern (the rhyme "There's a fox in a box…" is an example of an inclusive rhyme).
- **Alphabet rhymes** – help children practice the alphabet.
- **Riddles** – are short rhymes with a problem the children have to solve.
- **Tongue-twisters** are funny, usually nonsense phrases designed to be exceedingly difficult to articulate properly. They help fix appropriate pronunciation.
- Infantile mathematics helps children learn numbers, their sequence, simple arithmetic, and develop basic mathematical concepts. It includes **counting-down and counting-up rhymes**.
- If children need to choose somebody among themselves or if they must be divided into smaller groups, they usually introduce **counting-out rhymes**. Pointing to someone at the end of the rhyme means that he or she must leave the circle.
- **Carols** are songs, generally religious, sung during special festivals, e.g. Christmas carols.
- **Proverbs and sayings** are expressions of practical truth or wisdom. Popular examples include: "When the cat is away, the mice will play". "Hunger is the best cook". "All that glitters is not gold". "First think, then speak".
- Nearly all children love humorous **short stories in verse**.

1.3
Using nursery rhymes in foreign language acquisition

Nursery rhymes and songs have been used in teaching English to children for a long time and for a variety of reasons, including linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural ones (Prosic-Santovac, 2015).

Many studies identify nursery rhymes as useful pedagogical tools to learn and speak foreign languages. The following is a list of the most frequently mentioned benefits of such use:

1. Nursery rhymes represent a valuable source of authentic language, appropriate for children.
2. The language of traditional nursery rhymes is rich and colourful and extends children's vocabulary beyond the limited range of their own day-to-day experiences (Reilly & Ward, 2003).
3. When they perform rhymes or sing songs, children can improve their speaking skills and pronunciation (Morales, 2008) in a comfortable atmosphere, and it brings variety and fun to learning (Scott & Ytreberg, 1991).
4. Children can explore the sound and musicality of language (rhythm, stress, intonation, melody, etc.), which helps them develop an 'ear' for language.
5. Nursery rhymes help develop early phonological awareness in both mother and other languages through engagement with alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, and syllabic beat (Máčajová, Grofčíková & Zajacová, 2017; Campfield & Murphy, 2013, 2014; Cremin, Bearne, Dombey & Lewis, 2009; Pokrivčáková, 2018; Shin & Crandall, 2014).
6. Performing nursery rhymes (especially alliteration and tongue twisters) develops a child's skill to **articulate sounds** and to control pace and muscles in the mouth.
7. As Patel (2017) has it, children will delight in hearing the sounds they make and feeling the sounds in their mouths, playing with them for their own enjoyment, rather like playing with plasticine.
8. Nursery rhymes, with their repetitive nature, provide a chance for **linguistic drills**, without the accompanying feeling of potential boredom or frustration (Crystal, 2001). Listening to and performing nursery rhymes helps children to experience language in a holistic way and internalize abstract linguistic categories (grammar, language patterns, and chunks) in a natural way (Crystal, 2001; DeCastro, 2000; Gordon, 2007; Pinter, 2006; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Rixon, 1996, p. 36).
9. Easy-to-remember rhymes engage the concentration of children.
10. Nursery rhymes hold cultural significance and as such they help develop the intercultural awareness of children in a natural and playful way (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010).
11. Performing nursery rhymes and songs together with other children helps them understand the concept of group cooperation and togetherness.

Tips for teachers
- Use nursery rhymes and songs as everyday routines.
- Use a wide range of nursery rhymes sources: books, audio recordings, and video recordings.
- Create a classroom collection of favourite nursery rhymes and songs and let children illustrate it.
- Provide children with the opportunity to practice and perform nursery rhymes in a playful, nonsense and "crazy" way – changing the rhythm, pace, intensity of voice, etc.
- Let children play characters from nursery rhymes (see Chapter on drama).
- Let children dance, exercise or just move to the rhythm of the rhymes, and express a constant beat through their body actions (e.g. clapping). Children can also create sound effects through body percussion.
- Let children play tuned and percussion instruments so that they can go along with the nursery rhymes.
- Create chances for children to practice and perform their favourite rhymes to others (e.g. organise a special performance for family and others in the school).
- Pay attention to illustrations and discuss them with children.
- Consider organising other activities related to a nursery rhyme – miming, pictures or puppets, games, listening to a recording, watching a video, drawing, crafts, making a picture book, etc.

Nursery rhyme resources

There are countless collections published in both print and digital formats, however, many are of questionable quality. For educational purposes, materials produced by respected publishers are recommended, e.g. *The Complete Book of Rhymes, Songs, Poems, Fingerplays, and Chants* by Jackie Silberg & Pam Schiller (2002) or the BBC's *Nursery songs and rhymes section* (online). Other valuable sources include:

- Comer, K. (2008). *My Nursery Rhymes Collection.* Heatherton Victoria: Hinkler Books.
- Fusek Peters, A. & Yolen, J. (Eds.). (2010). *Here's a Little Poem.* Walker Books.
- King, K., Williams, S, & Beck, I. (2014). *The Oxford Treasury of Nursery Rhymes.* Oxford University Press.
- Larche, D. W. (1994). *Father Gander Nursery Rhymes: The Equal Rhymes Amendment.* Santa Barbara California: Advocacy Press.
- Opie, I. & Opie, P. (1997). *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tasks

1. Select a course book of pre-school English (with its teacher's book).
2. Analyse how many and what types of nursery rhymes occur in the selected textbook.
3. What are the functions of nursery rhymes in the selected coursebook?
    - *introducing a topic?*
    - *introducing new vocabulary?*
    - *fixing new vocabulary*
    - *exercising correct pronunciation?*
    - *an entertaining and relaxing activity?*
    - *summary of a unit?*
4. Does the author(s) of a selected course book use a variety of nursery rhymes?

2/

SONGS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Key terms:
songs, folk songs, author songs, popular songs, lyrics

2.1
Integration of words and music

It is generally believed that children naturally love music and music has been recognised as an essential medium of foreign language acquisition.

A song is a short poem (or any rhythmic set of words) which is typically set to a musical background or meant to be performed (sung) by the human voice. Lyrics (text) are written by a poet or lyricist and music is created separately by a composer. Sometimes, both elements of a song are written by one person. Like nursery rhymes, songs are an essential part of any pre-school learning plan or curriculum.

Many research studies (e.g. Cakir, 1999; Lo & Li, 1998) proved that songs (including folk songs and popular songs) help in the development of learners' abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as in fixing accurate pronunciation, rhythm, grammar, and vocabulary. Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) claimed that songs help develop concentration, memory, and coordination.

2.2
Benefits of using songs in the foreign language classroom

Positive points for using songs in a foreign language classroom can be listed as follows (adapted from Cakir, 1999):
- Play and music have potential to motivate, as well as capture and maintain interest and enjoyment of children.
- Songs create a wider context for language use for children.
- Music (especially its rhythmical pattern) makes it much easier to remember words than utterances which are just 'spoken' – it facilitates memorizing.

- Songs for children usually include frequently used words and they offer repetition, which makes them a great source for learning vocabulary.
- Singing helps develop deep breathing and articulation of phonemes – both of which are qualities of correct pronunciation.
- Songs are highly effective in triggering emotions and engendering pleasure.
- Singing songs together with other children contributes to the socialization of the child.
- Singing is the first step to playing musical instruments and producing music.
- Songs can easily be combined with actions & visuals.
- Songs may improve your classroom management and function as effective opening-class rituals (hello songs) or parting routines (good-bye songs). The teacher can even use a song to clean up the classroom, to sit down, to settle, to get in a circle, etc.
- Songs help children "to speak" when they go through a "silent period" (children do not talk independently).
- Moreover, singing action songs are a natural way to develop motor skills.
- Using songs can give students a chance to get a better understanding of the culture of the target language (Milington, 2011, p. 134).

The recommended procedure (adapted from Brewster et al., 2002):
1. Set the context.
2. Use visual aids (pictures, flashcards, objects) to introduce new vocabulary.
3. Play or sing the song to familiarize students with it.
4. Recite the lyrics with the class, line by line, without music. Say each line and let children repeat.
5. Sing the song together.
6. Recite the lyrics again and add actions, if possible. Encourage students to join in and do actions or mime.
7. Sing the song again – with actions.
8. Repeat the song several times. Let children play rhythmical musical instruments (drums, shakers etc.).
9. Do further listening activity (e.g. listen and repeat, listen and do, listen and act, listen and mime, etc.).
10. Give learners the written text of the song (for parents).

Selecting songs for your English classrooms

Teachers can find songs in books, magazines, on CDs, or on the internet. When selecting a song for an English class, the teacher should consider the following questions:

Is the length of the song appropriate?

Is the song linked to what the children are learning now?

Is the song related to the children's experiences?

Is the song appropriate for the level of proficiency of learners?

Does the song provide a good language model for learners?

Can the song be linked to other language children already use?

Can the song be accompanied by other activities? (drawing, acting, dancing, etc.)

Tasks

`I + I = ?`

1) Songs may be used as an effective tool to manipulate the classroom atmosphere. Search the internet and find examples of songs which have the potential to:
   – calm down learners
   – energise learners
   – play with various moods and expressions.
2) Select a song you consider appropriate for your English class. Create a set of 7 language-developing activities based on the selected song.

3/

PERFORMING DRAMA WITH CHILDREN

Key terms:
drama, role play, pretending, performing

Pretending is a fundamental part of children's play. Whether they use costumes or just their imaginations, they demonstrate a natural sense of drama.

Drama for the purposes of this course can be defined together with Holden (1981, p. 1) as "any activity which asks the student to portray a) himself in an imaginary situation or b) another person in an imaginary situation". Such a definition covers various forms of drama used in classrooms (e.g. role play).

Incorporating drama into the early start of foreign language acquisition is not a new approach, since its beginnings can be traced back to the 19th century. It is based on the belief that by repeating their lines (consisting of words and phrases) again and again over a period of preparing for, practicing and performing a drama piece, learners become familiar with a foreign language, they learn how to communicate in a new language (even with a very limited vocabulary) and also how to use non-verbal communication channels, such as body movements and facial expressions. One of the most significant benefits of using drama in the classroom is that all drama activities involve physical activity and emotional involvement of learners (O'Gara, 2008; Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Vitézová, 2016).

3.1
Drama in foreign language education: general notes

In the methodology of teaching languages, drama is generally considered a basic means for learning to speak and train accurate pronunciation (Barbu, 2007; Goodwin, 2001; Maley & Duff, 2001, 2005; Phillips, 2003). Learners can play, move, act and learn at the same time (Phillips, 2003). And it is useful for all learners of

English, including those with limited vocabulary (Aldavero?2008). The benefits of using drama in language lessons have been summarised by Desiatova (2009) as follows:

1 "Drama gives learners an experience (dry-run) of using the language for genuine communication and real-life purposes by generating a need to speak.
2. It encourages guessing the meaning of unknown language in context.
3. Learners need to use a mixture of language structures and functions ("chunks") if they want to communicate successfully.
4. Drama makes language learning an active, motivating experience.
5. Drama helps learners gain the confidence and self-esteem needed to use the language spontaneously.
6. By taking on a role, students can escape from their everyday identity and "hide behind" another character.
7. Giving students special roles encourages them to be that character and abandon their shyness.
8. Drama emulates the way of acquiring a language through play, makes the audience believe and enhances meaningful interaction.
9. Drama makes what is learned memorable through direct experience and affect (emotions) for learners with different learning styles.
10. When students dramatize, all communication channels (sight, hearing and physical exercise) are used and each student will be drawn to the one that suits them best. This means that they will be actively involved in the activity and the language will "enter" through the channel most appropriate for them.
11. Drama can develop students' ability to empathize with others and thus become better communicators.
12. Drama can help learners acquire language by focusing on the message they are conveying but not the form of utterance.
13. Drama after all can improve oral communication methodology and provide students with an opportunity to use English meaningfully, authentically and purposefully with targeted audiences".

3.2
Drama in the early start of foreign language acquisition

As Bertrand (online) has it: "For young children and adults alike it can be intimidating to speak a foreign language in front of other people. Even five-year-olds can fear of making mistakes and looking silly or it may just be that they are shy and don't want to talk in class."

One way of catching the interest of these children is through drama. By playing roles, pupils have the chance to 'hide' behind the character and lose some of their inhibitions.

The general benefits of using drama can be summarised as follows:
- With drama, children can perform and have fun with language.
- They can play with, and experience first-hand, a language.
- In addition, they can learn about drama techniques and a theatrical environment (masks, stage setting, decorations, etc.).
- When you link words and phrases with gestures and movements, they become easier to remember.
- Drama techniques can help learners to internalise the correct rhythm and intonation (Giebert, 2014).
- Movements in drama techniques can be used to illustrate more complex aspects of language, e.g. tenses, for which the language of learners is too limited.
- Drama teaches learners to listen to others (and wait for their turn).
- Learners learn to pronounce their words properly and they become aware of their voices when they speak.
- "In a drama lesson, all children are equally and actively involved, each role is essential for the successful performance of the play. A sense of belonging can be achieved" (Vernon, online a).

Drama techniques for pre-school learners
- pantomime – playing a story through poses, gestures and mimes
- role plays
- staging a short literary text (a nursery rhyme, a fairy tale, a drama)
- full-scale staging (school ceremonies and events).

Supporting activities:
- Making puppets and theatres
- Making masks and costumes
- Creating scripts – allow children to use their imagination and create their own script.

Teaching tips (modified from Vernon, online a):
1. Choose plays written especially for ESL classrooms because they are usually short, repetitive, and designed to involve whole groups of learners. Moreover, they are carefully planned to combine language, fun and movement.
2. Assign the roles according to your learners' language ability levels. Children who are more capable and more confident can be given parts with more lines,

while shyer children or those with a more limited vocabulary can have fewer lines to say, repeat lines said by other children or speak as part of a group.

3. Adapt the play for your own situation. Keep the script simple, some lines may be added and some may be deleted.
4. Pre-learn the vocabulary first (through songs, flash-cards and games).
5. Once the children are familiar with the separate words, let them start practising the lines in the play (as a game).
6. Only when all the children know the key words and lines of the play, the teacher can put together all the elements.
7. Once the children are able to run through the play fluently, arrange at least one performance (even if it is only for the class next door) because it is absolutely vital that they practice.
8. If you perform a play as part of an assembly, do not start the show with the play. Instead, have pupils sing a group song or play some vocabulary games in front of the audience as a warm-up activity.

4/

STORYTELLING WITH CHILDREN

Key terms:
storytelling, story, listening, speaking, reading

Stories have been part of human lives for millennia and they are at the centre of all ancient arts – drawing, singing, dancing and drama. Even today, stories are an essential component of most popular arts.

Hoffer (1955) claims that humans have an innate need to tell stories because they help make order and sense out of our lives. He emphasizes that "Man is eminently a storyteller. His search for a purpose, a cause, an idea, a mission and the like is largely a search for a plot and a pattern in the development of his life story – a story that is basically without meaning or pattern" (p. 62).

Similarly, Wright (2008, p. 4) claims that "children have a constant need for stories and they will always be willing to listen or to read if the right moment is chosen" and that "children want to find meaning in stories so they listen with a purpose. If they find meaning they are rewarded through their ability to understand and are motivated to try to improve their ability to understand even more. This is in contrast to so many activities in foreign language learning, which have little or no intrinsic interest or value for children".

4.1
Stories in the English classroom

Ahern et al. (2008) argue that stories are important sources of vocabulary, intonation, grammatical structures, and patterns in a real context. Language in storybooks is not referential, as in textbooks, but representational; and characters in storybooks think, talk, cry or shout just like in real life. By listening to stories, children learn concepts like sequencing and story structure. Once children become at ease with storytelling, they begin to learn that good stories have a beginning, middle, and end; they feature interesting characters who have a problem to solve, and other elements.

Cooper (1989) values storytelling as an "ideal method of influencing a child to associate listening with pleasure, and of increasing a child's attention span and retention capacity, as well as broadening vocabulary, and finally of introducing a child to the symbolic use of language" (p. 71). According to Bas (2008), storytelling has an immediate advantage for students because, for example, it "helps children to link fantasy with the real world. Moreover, most children are familiar with most of the stories, so they work with familiar contexts when they work with stories" (p. 197).

Moreover, on the level of personal development, stories can promote the systemic development of children's imagination, comprehension, memory, and judgment (Magalová, 2007, 2013).

Wright (2008, p. 6) offers a wide range of benefits children can get through storytelling (modified):
- Developing awareness of the variety of ways of being human.
- Researching the subject matter of the story.
- Reflecting on the story and its meaning.
- Predicting what might come next in the story.
- Listening for a particular detail in the story.
- Listening in order to try to get the gist or general idea.
- Inferring or guessing what is meant but not said.
- Visualising what the place, people or object might look like or sound like.
- Imagining how the protagonists might feel and what they might think.
- Imagining alternatives and what would have happened if…
- Analysing motives, behaviours, causes, and consequences.
- Evaluating behaviour within the story and also in the story presentation.
- Hypothesizing about motivations and actions.
- Responding creatively through drama and painting.
- Remembering the story and ideas about the story.
- Narrating the story.
- Communicating, sharing, and expressing ideas and feelings about the story.
- Discussing ideas related to the story.
- Learning how to learn in responding in all the above ways.

Telling stories to pre-school learners also brings some challenges (Vitézová, 2016). The teacher has to take into account while preparing for a class the fact that:
- Very young learners have very limited vocabulary and limited grammar.
- Very young learners have very short attention spans and can get disruptive (wriggly and distracted) when bored.

4.2
Reading or telling stories

Teachers can either read the story aloud or tell it by themselves. When reading the story, teachers do not need to learn the story or be afraid of making mistakes. The version they read is always the same and this helps children to predict what happens next. The book is also a source of supporting illustrations. When telling the story, teachers can use a wider range of expressive means (their hands are empty) and their language is more spontaneous. Each repetition is a new adaptation of the story – it includes new changes, modifications, digressions or omissions. When listening to a told story, children's experience is more personal (Wright, 2008, p. 15).

Teaching tips for storytelling
A) **Before telling/reading**
    a. Choose a story which is tied into whatever weekly theme you are teaching.
    b. Choose an appropriate book. Board books are the best because they are short (up to 24 pages) and have less text on pages. Lift-the-flap books are very effective (there are flaps on pages that can be opened and shut). Teachers often use well know fairy tales (e.g. *Three Little Pigs, Snow White, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood*) because children are already familiar with the story and so it is easier for them to focus on the new language.
    c. Set up a regular storytime (with a fixed structure, with opening and closing rituals, e.g. taking a book from a magic case, having special glasses for reading magical stories, having to wear a special hat of "readers", etc.). It makes the whole experience more of a special event.
    d. Set up basic "rules" for story time.
    e. Introduce keywords before you start the story by playing some simple flashcard games for example.
    f. Introduce keywords by using "a magic box" where you put things associated with the story. Before reading, open the box, take the things out, name them aloud one by one and ask children to guess what the story will be about.

B) While telling/reading a story

1. Whenever telling a story, be creative and act. Use both your voice and body: incorporate gestures, movements, change your voice, make animal sounds, sing little songs, etc. to help children link the spoken words and their meanings.
2. Keep language very simple, especially with 3–5 years old.
3. Unless using a board book, re-tell the story in your own (very simple) words.
4. Point to the pictures as you emphasise key vocabulary.
5. Repeat key vocabulary and phrases.
6. Exaggerate your facial expressions to express emotions
7. Use pauses for suspense, and change the pace to add variety.
8. Encourage children to participate – by asking questions and allowing them to make actions and sound effects.

C) After telling/reading a story

Activities done after telling/reading a story are as important as the telling/reading itself. They help keep children's attention and focus it on a new language. Here are some suggestions:

1. Have children go through pictures again and "read" the story for you.
2. Give learners picture strips of the story and ask them to retell it by using the visuals (Ersöz et al., 2006).
3. Let children act out the story themselves, or perform it with simple finger or stick puppets.
4. Give learners a set of pictures that depict the events of the story and ask them to sequence the pictures.
5. Repeat key quotes from the story and have children guess who said it.
6. Do any craft activity that relates to the story.
7. Let children draw a picture of their favourite part of the story and then explain it to the class, in English or in their mother tongue.
8. Introduce a song that interacts with the theme of the story.
9. Let children tell the class about a similar experience they might have had.

4.3
Useful classroom language for storytelling

We are going to read...
Bring me the book, please.
Look at the book...
I am going to tell you a story.
Are you ready?
Let's start.
Sit on the carpet and listen quietly.
Pay attention, please.
Don't talk.
Be quiet.
Stop talking.
Listen (with your ears).
Silence, please.
Look...
Point to...
Show me...
Go to...
Touch...
Draw....
Put pictures/objects in the right order.
Match...
Now, repeat after me.
Act it out.
Try again.
Is that right?
Is (the princess) good?
Is (the dragon) good?
Did you like the story?

Task:

Work with a famous Aesop's fable "The Lion and the Mouse" (see the print from the British Council's *Learn English Kids* section in the next page). Based on the teaching tips above, make a list of as many storytelling activities for pre-school learners as possible. Include visuals and other teaching materials you would use.

The lion and the mouse

Story Time

A lion was asleep in the sun one day. A little mouse came out to play. The little mouse ran up the lion's neck and slid down his back. The lion caught him with a great big smack!

'I'm going to eat you!' the lion roared, his mouth open wide.

'No, no, please don't!' the little mouse cried. 'Be kind to me and one day I'll help you.'

'I'm a lion! You're a mouse! What can you do?' The lion laughed, very hard, and the mouse ran away.

But the mouse was out walking the very next day. He heard a big roar, and squeaked when he saw the king of the jungle tied to a tree. But the mouse had a plan to set him free. The mouse worked quickly and chewed through the rope.

The lion said, 'Oh little mouse, I had no hope. You were right, little mouse – thank you, I'm free. You're the best friend there ever could be!'

Listen to this story   https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/the-lion-and-the-mouse

5/

READING PICTURE BOOKS

Key terms:
picture book, board book, illustrated book

5.1
What are picture books?

A picture book is a multimodal text (Kress, 2003), which integrates pictures and words together. The genre of picture books (especially the relationship between pictures and words) has been studied and discussed by numerous scholars (e.g. Cimermanová, 2014; Doonan, 1993; Lewis, 2001a; Lewis 2001b; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Nodelman, 1988; Preložníková, 2003; Serafini, 2013; Shulevitz, 1985; Watson & Styles, 1996).

The picture can clarify, complement, enhance, or even contradict the verbal text, and thus is essential to the understanding of the message (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006; Nodelman, 1988).

Picture books are very popular with very young readers even if they cannot read written texts. Manipulation with picture books (with words or wordless) teach them how to hold a book, in which direction to follow pictures, how the meaning of the book can be comprehended.

Within the wider category of picture books, literary theory distinguishes between board books, picture stories, picture books, and illustrated chapter books. **Board books** are intended for the youngest readers (ages 0–3). They are usually printed on paperboard and consist of a very short and simple text. **Picture stories** tell stories only by means of pictures and other visual elements. In **picture books**, "pictures extend, clarify, complement, or take the place of words" and **in illustrated books**, "drawings are placed periodically in the text" to supplement the story (Jalongo, 2004, p. 11).

5.2
Picture books in foreign language acquisition

Within the context of English language learning and acquisition, picture books are commonly known as *"real books"* (Dunn, 1997; Machura, 1991; Mourão, 2003) and *"authentic storybooks"* (Ellis & Brewster 2002; Preložníková, 2003). There's an emphasis on authenticity and narrative in all these labels.

Suggestions for using pre-school picture books (adapted from Case, 2008):
1. **Spotting something in the picture**
   Ask children to find some detail in the picture. "Can you see a lady-bird?"
2. **Saying something wrong** – describe the picture and say something wrong. Let the children correct you.
3. **Guessing what the next page shows.**
4. **Guessing what is under the flap** – only with pop-up books and flap books.
5. **Flashing the page** – open the book very rapidly and then close it right away and ask children what they could see.
6. **Letting children** turn the page and describe it. Then continue in reading.
7. **Finding the right page** – choose a detail in one of the pages and let children take turns flicking through the book to find it.
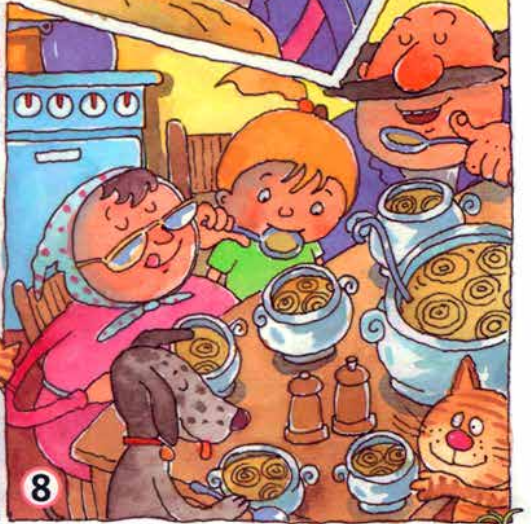8. **Making puppets of the characters** – photocopy a page of the book and cut round the edges of the characters and stick each one on a pole to demonstrate actions of the story.

Task

I + I = ?

1) Have a look at the picture story from the textbook *Here Comes Minibus 1: Pupils Book* (Papiol & Toth, 2000, pp. 46–47).
2) Suggest the detailed procedure for using it in your English class for very young learners, including steps for all 3 stages: before – during – and after telling the story (see chapter on storytelling).

6/

LET THEM MOVE....

In the previous chapters, various ways of integrating language with music (songs) and pictures (picture books) have been mentioned. When discussing drama techniques, the usefulness of integrating language and movements was pointed out too. In this chapter this type of integration will be explored in more detail.

6.1
What is Total Physical Response?

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method of language education created by American psychologist James Asher, based on the idea that learners learn a language better and quicker if they create a neural link between speech and action. The method was inspired by the experience of how humans learn their first language. Asher observed that when children learn their mother language, they become very physically involved. He saw that very young children are exposed to a lot of language and many times they are expected to respond only by movements. Parents usually instruct children verbally and children physically respond accordingly. Asher calls this process as 'language-body conversations'.

Basic principles of the method can be listed as follows:
1. Learners acquire a foreign language rather than learn it.
2. Learners are not required to speak until they are ready to, therefore the teacher should create a "safe zone" to lower inhibitions and stress.
3. Learners are given repeated commands and they act accordingly.

What are the positive sides of using TPR in pre-school classrooms?
*   It can be greatly beneficial for very young learners and beginners.
*   It is quite simple to use and no special preparation is necessary.

- It is a lot of fun for children.
- It is very memorable, and research has proved that it helps learners to remember phrases or words.
- It is a highly effective way of learning for kinaesthetic learners who need to be active in the class.
- It can be used in any class – in big or small classes, in homogeneous or mixed ability classes, etc.
- As no one is forced to speak and no one is called upon individually, TPR is great for quiet, shy, and introverted learners.

Are there any negatives?
- It is only suitable for beginners.
- Older learners may feel embarrassed.
- The method is based on drilling, which is a rather mechanical way of learning.
- Only a limited amount of vocabulary and grammar (commands) can be presented.

The suggested procedure to apply TPR with pre-school learners
1) The teacher says the word and performs an action ("I am waking up…").
2) The teacher says the word again and calls on the learners to mime the action.
3) The teacher repeats the word with action once more.
4) The teacher presents another word and action….
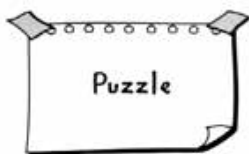
6.2
TPR activities suitable for pre-school learners

- **Simon says…** is a classic TPR game when children should do the action only when the teacher starts the sentence with "Simon says…" and should stay still if the teacher says just the action word ("Jump!").
- **Simon lies…** is a variation of the former game. Children should copy the teacher´s actions when the thing he says and the thing he does are the same, e.g. when he says "read" and mimes reading. If the words and actions do not match (reading and saying "eat") the children should stay still.
- **Songs and nursery rhymes:** Both books or the internet provide many examples of poems or songs that may be accompanied by movements.
- **Circle games:** the teacher says commands and the last learner to react is out of the circle.
- **TPR questions:** the teacher asks various questions and learners answer by action (e.g. yes = clapping their hands).

- **Quickly-slowly actions:** The teacher gives commands and asks children to perform them either quickly or slowly, which makes an activity more interesting and fun.
- **Action songs**, e.g. the song "If You're Happy and You Know It".
- **Picture dictation:** the teacher describes the picture and children draw it / colour it (e.g. **Draw a red circle.**)
- **Clay dictations:** the teacher gives instructions how to model a clay object and children follow them.
- **Running dictation:** Children go to the teacher's table to see a picture. Then they run to their groups to describe it (dictate it) to their classmates who draw its copy. For more details see TEFL Lemon or other online sources).

Task:

1) Look at the TPR activity from *Kids Only: songs, chants and action rhymes* (Myles, 1998, p. 3).
2) Discuss appropriate ways of introducing or revising vocabulary children will need to complete the task.
3) Originally, children are read a list of words (pictures) they need to connect. Think about providing more motivating context – introduce the sequence of words in the form of sentences or even a concise story.
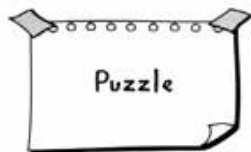
WHAT IS IT?

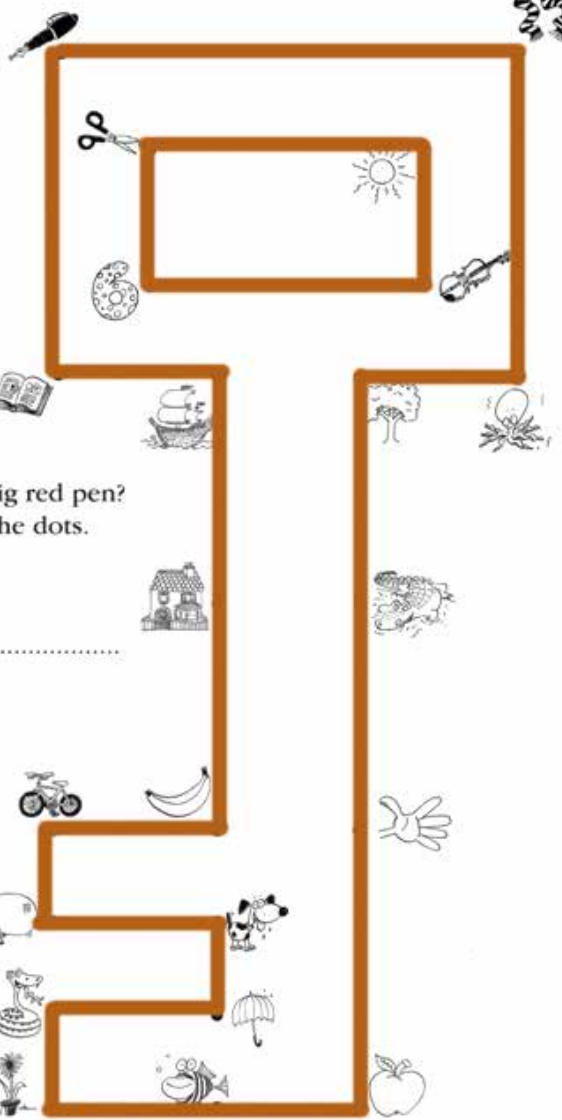Have you got a big red pen?
Listen, and join the dots.

It's a ....

WHAT IS IT?

Have you got a big red pen?
Listen, and join the dots.

It's a ....

Key

7/

LANGUAGE GAMES

Key terms:
language games, acquiring grammar, phonemic awareness, intrinsic motivation

For children, the most natural and motivating way of learning is through games. "Games provide a natural context for language practice. They promote the development of wider cognitive skills such as memory, sequencing, motor skills, and deductive skills" (Penn, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, they are considered to be the best vehicles for learning.

In games, children spontaneously respond to various stimuli – sounds, new vocabulary or new language structures. Therefore, playing games is a highly effective way to introduce the grammar of a foreign language in a natural, entertaining, and stress-free way.

Straková (2011, p. 87) defines the following three criteria of an effective didactic game (i. e. a game which is used in teaching for a pedagogical reasons):
- "an aim: children should learn or practise some aspect of language by playing this game;
- Learning focus: limited vocabulary (e.g. one topic) or structures (e.g. asking questions) should be used;
- Clear rules: children need to know what they should do, what will happen if they do it, and when the game is over".

7.1
How to organise games

Before the game
- Select an appropriate game, which ideally means that:
  - The game is related to the topic of the week.
  - The game involves an appropriate task, i.e. not too difficult for children to complete.
  - The game can be played with limited language – on a level the children can speak.
- Prepare materials needed for the game (e.g. a hat, a ball, visuals, etc.).
- Prepare the room for the game, e.g. arrange chairs in a circle.
- Set and explain the rules. Ensure that all children understand the rules.

During the game
- Be one of the players and do not be afraid to lose a point or two.
- Make the game fun for everyone.
- Praise children for any little progress and celebrate with them each little success.

After the game
- Make everybody feel like a winner
- Give prizes and rewards – and give something to everybody (e.g. stamps on their arms, pictures, a sticker, etc.)

7.2
Games to develop phonemic awareness

A) Rhyming words
1. Say a word.
2. Children get one point for saying any rhyming word.
3. The winner is the child (or group) with the most points.

B) Clapping out the words
1. Say a word, e.g. banana.
2. Ask children individually to clap their rhythm (syllables), e.g. ba-na-na.
3. Children get one point for saying any rhyming word.
4. The winner is the child (or group) with the most points.

C) **Rubber Band Words** (see *Bright Horizons*, online)
   1. Say a word, e.g. "nice" or "yellow" normally.
   2. Say a word very clearly and slowly, stretching it out and move your hands apart like a rubber band stretching.
   3. Snap your hands back together at the end of the word.
   4. Ask children to repeat it with you.

7.3
Language games to acquire grammar structures

A) **Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?**
   1) Bring a full cookie jar into the class. Set it on the table. Explain children the words "cookie" and "cookie jar".
   2) Let children draw their favourite cookie.
   3) In the meantime, when unobserved, empty the cookie jar and put it back in the same place.
   4) After children finish their drawings, point to the empty cookie jar and ask (with exaggerated gestures): "Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?" Ask children to repeat loudly the question – do it several times.
   5) Then, teach children the game as a poem (see a frame below). Later, you can play the game whenever you want to bring some fun and noise in the classroom.

   Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar? (see Extension, online)
   Group: Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?
   *   Jimmy stole the cookies from the cookie jar.*
   Jimmy: Who me?
   Group: Yes, you!
   Jimmy: Not me!
   Group: Then who?
   Jimmy: Linda stole the cookies from the cookie jar.
   Linda: Who me?
   Group: Yes you! (And so on).

B) Where are you? (c.f. FluentU, online)
1. Divide children into groups of 4–5 members.
2. Assign each group with a specific word or phrase (a cattle call) and ask children to remember the word well (e.g. good morning, little mouse, red shoe, goodbye).
3. Blindfold children and mix all the groups together.
4. The goal is to find all their members as quickly as possible.
5. At the sound of a whistle, everyone tries to locate their group by calling out to them using their cattle call. At the same time, they need to listen carefully.
6. When children think they have found all members of their group, they raise their hands. The first group to do this wins.

C) Something on your forehead (c.f. FluentU, online)
1. Prepare a set of small cards with pictures of objects children can already name. You will need as many cards as there are children in your class.
2. Tape cards to children´s foreheads.
3. Divide children into pairs.
4. Children in pairs ask yes or no questions to find out what is on their card, e.g. *Is it food? Is it big? Is it a ball?*

D) Walking pairs
1. Prepare two identical sets of small cards with pictures of objects children can already name. You will need as many cards as there are children in your class.
2. Give each child one card. Children are not allowed to show their cards to the other children.
3. Ask children to mingle, ask yes-no questions (e.g. *Are you a wolf? Are you a ball? Are you a yellow ball?*) and find their partners (children with the same cards).

CONCLUSION

While in some countries the teaching of foreign languages to very young learners (younger than 6) has been in the educational tradition for a long time, the Czech Republic belongs to those countries where the experience with the very early start of learning English in pre-school institutions has been developing for the last two decades.

Internationally, this period has seen the efforts to find the suitable model of organising learning units at nursery schools, a proper model of training teachers of pre-school English (compare Porubská & Pokrivčáková, 2004) and a set of effective methods and materials.

In this context, the main objective of the textbook *Introducing English to Very Young Learners II* is to summarise and integrate results of latest research and examples of good teaching practices. The content is organised into units according to the widely used genres of verbal materials pre-school teachers can choose from when patiently guiding children during their first steps in English (Pokrivčáková, 2004). These genres are folklore songs, poems, chants, nursery rhymes, drama pieces, stories (which can be either read or told), picture books, and language games.

Teachers who have read through the units in this book have been are given many teaching tips and recommendations. However, the author of the book above all believes that teachers should think about all materials critically, evaluate them carefully, and opt for what is the best for their children. Any book, textbook or handbook can be only a starting point and teachers must make their own contributions by critically examining each new technique or material. Therefore, the author wishes all readers – future teachers a lot of empathy, energy and love for children which will be for sure reflected back in the form of many successes of their tiny learners.

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GLOSSARY

acquisition: (or indirect, spontaneous learning) learning a language "naturally by hearing it, reading it, and using it" (Slattery & Willis, 2014, p. 145)

activity: any classroom doing or action that requires students to be active and use their language competences practically, in this book used synonymously with the term "an exercise"

authentic language: unabridged language which was originally intended for native speakers (magazine articles, internet blogs, literary texts, etc.)

author song: a short poem or other set of words accompanied by music or meant to be sung

board book: a book for very small children, with the pages pasted to heavy cardboard, with a very little words or wordless

carol: a religious folk song associated with Christmas

chant: a simple repetitious rhyme

comics: a literary text containing comic strips, intended chiefly for children

competence: the ability to use a particular language element (e.g. linguistic competence, pragmatic competence);

discipline: getting children to behave well

drill: a controlled speaking activity based on repetition of a model

evaluation: obtaining information about students' strengths and weaknesses in a foreign language communicative competence (through testing, examining, observing, etc.)

fable: a short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral

folk song: a song that originates in traditional popular culture

folk tale: a tale or legend which is part of the oral tradition of the common people

fairy tale: a children's story about magical and imaginary beings and lands; a fairy story

gesture: movement with a part of the body that bears some meaning

gist: general meaning of a text

graphic novel: a longer story in comic-strip format

illustrated book: a story embellished with illustrations which can be understood in the narrative without the illustrations

interaction: a two-way communication

intonation: the rise and fall of a voice while formulating an utterance

language acquisition: a mental process, unconscious, "natural" learning of a language (acc. to Krashen)

language learning: conscious, usually formal and organised learning of a language

lullaby: a quiet, gentle song sung to send a child to sleep

lyrics: the words of a song

miming: conveying meaning through facial movements

nursery rhyme: a simple rhymed poem for very young children

perform: present (a form of entertainment) to an audience

picture book: a story with illustrations where the illustrations are highly important to reinforce the narrative – in extreme the picture book does not need words.

proverb: a short, well-known saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice

riddle: a short sentence or rhyme with a problem the children have to solve

routine: the usual way in which people do things

short story: a piece of prose that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters

narration: the process of telling a story

narrator: a person who tells a story, especially a character who presents the story in a book

song: a simple poem accompanied by music

teaching approach: is a way of teaching committed and related to a particular theory about language or learning (e.g. Oral approach, Communicative approach, Natural approach, etc.)

teaching method: an organised set of teaching techniques and activities, e.g. Audio-lingual method, Suggestopaedia, The Silent Way, etc.

teaching technique: is a specific procedure carried out in the classroom to reach an educational objective

tongue twister: sequence of words or sounds that are difficult to pronounce quickly and correctly

Total Physical Response (TPR): additional language teaching method combining listening to a language and responding with appropriate physical action to spoken instructions

very young learner: 3–6 years old learner

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