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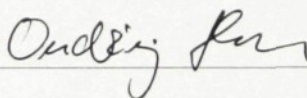
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HRA JAKO EFEKTIVNÍ NÁSTROJ VÝUKY
ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA U MLADŠÍCH ŽÁKŮ
GAME AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL OF TEACHING
ENGLISH IN YOUNG LEARNERS' CLASSES
DAS SPIEL ALS EINE EFFEKTIVE
UNTERRICHTSMETHODE DER ENGLISHEN
SPRACHE BEI JÜNGEREN KINDERN

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Cílem je prokázat **efektivnost výuky při použití vhodných vyučovacích prostředků u mladších žáků a poukázat na potřebu odlišného přístupu k této věkové skupině.**

Zpracování praktického projektu, analýza a interpretace výsledků v uvedené diplomové práci prokáží porozumění metodám analýzy teoretických východisek a jejich kritického zhodnocení a schopnost využití teoretických závěrů při volbě vhodných metod při výuce cizího jazyka. Posouzení efektivnosti teorie a zvolených metodických přístupů v praxi dále ukáže schopnost využití evaluace jako nezbytné strategie hodnocení celého výzkumu.

Specifikou uvedeného projektu je **vyzdvižení funkce hry v procesu výuky cizího jazyka pro její efektivitu a přístupnost ze strany žáků. Dále pak zdůraznění zásadních pravidel, týkajících se výběru a zařazení her do výuky anglického jazyka vzhledem k věkovým zvláštnostem této skupiny žáků a jejich jazykové vybavenosti.**

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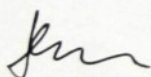
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Na tomto místě bych chtěl poděkovat Mgr. Lence Pávové MLitt. za její pomoc při tvorbě této práce a zejména ze její nezměrnou trpělivost.

ABSTRACT

Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá metodikou výuky anglického jazyka prostřednictvím her a herních aktivit v prostředí předškolního zařízení (Mateřské školy). Práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a praktické ověření teorie týkající se užití specifických metod a prostředků pro výuku mladších žáků. Cílem práce bylo prokázat efektivnost výuky při použití vhodných vyučovacích prostředků u mladších žáků a poukázat na potřebu odlišného přístupu k této věkové skupině. Specifikou obsaženého projektu je vyzdvižení funkce hry v systému výuky cizího jazyka pro její efektivitu a přístupnost ze strany žáků. Práce je členěna do tří částí: teorie a metodiky, profesionálního projektu a závěru včetně evaluace projektu. Přiložen je seznam použité literatury a dále obrazové a jiné materiály které byly použity při výuce.

Summary

The Diploma Thesis deals with a methodology of teaching English by means of games and game-like activities in the environment of a pre-school facility (kindergarten). The work includes academic research and a practical verification of the theory regarding the use of specific methods and means of teaching young learners. The aim of the work was to demonstrate the efficiency of teaching while using appropriate resources with young learners and to advert to the need of a different approach towards this age group. Particularity of the included project resides in emphasizing game's function within the system of teaching a foreign language, on account of its efficiency and approachability on the part of pupils. The work is structured into three parts: the Theory and Methodology, the Professional Project, and the Conclusion plus Evaluation of the Project. In appendices there are attached references to the literature used, together with visual and other materials used for teaching.

Zusammenfassung

Die Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Unterrichtsmethodik der englischen Sprache durch Spielen und Spielaktivitäten in den Vorschulanstalten (d.h. Kindergarten). Die Arbeit beinhaltet eine akademische Untersuchung und gleichzeitig eine praktische Überprüfung der Theorie für Verwendung der spezifischen Methoden und Mittel des Unterrichts von jüngeren Kindern. Das Ziel der Forschungsarbeit war in erster Linie der Effektivitätsbeweis der Ausbildung der jüngeren Kinder durch Gebrauch von passenden Unterrichtsmitteln, und weiter die Betonung des Bedürfnisses nach einem verschiedenen Zugang zu dieser Altersgruppe. Die Besonderheit des Projekts liegt in der Funktionshervorhebung des Spiels im System des Fremdsprachenunterrichts auf grund der Wirksamkeit und Empfänglichkeit bei den Kindern. Die ganze Arbeit ist in drei Teilen gegliedert : die Theorie und die Methodik, weiter das Forschungsprojekt und zuletzt die Zusammenfassung mit der Projektevaluierung. Anschließend folgt das Literaturverzeichnis und die Bildunterlagen mit anderen Hilfsmitteln, die beim Unterricht benutzt wurden.

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CHAPTER I. TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

1. Games and game-like activities as a tool for teaching very young learners

This paper deals with using games and game-like activities in the pre-school education of foreign languages, with practical application in teaching English at kindergartens. Generally, it will attempt to find answers to the following questions: Do games and game-like activities in TEFL to very young learners, if used appropriately, represent the most natural and efficient approach available; and if so, why? Is it advantageous and appropriate to start learning a foreign language in the age of early childhood? If so, does it bring any significant efficiency if compared with older learners, e.g. after puberty? Answers to these questions will be presented in accordance with an extensive investigation into the current methodology literature, dealing with TEFL to very young learners. A compendium of current approaches and theories of Dunn, Phillips, Reilly and Ward, Courtain and Pesola, Cameron and other methodology experts will be presented and consequently discussed in the theoretical part of this paper. These will include the role of motivation, specific needs of very young learners and their consequences in the demand for different approaches. Thereinafter, the theories of acquiring or learning a foreign language, the theoretical framework of terminology concernign games and plays, and finally it will attempt to support the view that in the pre-school education not only immediate aim of learning a foreign language is concerned but more importantly that a life-long approach toward learning and studying can be laid. All of the theories will function as a foundation for the thesis, as they give support to using games and game-like activities in the primary education curriculum. The methodology part of this paper will present an application of several theoretical principles in a concrete environment of pre-school education. It will attempt to give clues in classroom management, where planning of stages, classroom language and classroom organisation will be presented. A discussion dealing with extensive use of games, rhymes, songs and art and craft activities will follow. In Chapter II., the Professional project will be presented in relation with the theory and methodology that has been discussed prior to its actual implementation in the project. Examples of complete lesson plans and their consequent commentaries will be included and evaluation appended. Finally, within the conclusion part of the paper, a relationship between

hypothesis, model and theory, that is the relations between theory and practice will be summarised.

As stated above, this paper deals with teaching very young learners. In order to introduce some of the terms used within this paper, I would regard defining of the age range and the introductory definition of the game-like activities a necessary presumption for further development of the topic. Among many methodology theorists, the exact setting of this age group differs, but always within more or less similar borders. That is why, on the score of this paper, the definitions which are best matching the purposes of this Professional Project were chosen. To be specific, the definition of Opal Dunn, concerning the age group has been adopted, because Dunn, together with a number of other experts, agreed on the age range beginning with the children's pre-school education (i.e. four to five years of age) up to as late as ten or even eleven years. Concerning the terminology of game, play and game-like activities a common definition cannot be responsibly decided for, particularly because in this area a universal compliance in terminology has not yet been achieved and the terms are very often used interchangeably. Some clues will be given in the section Game and play – what is the theory?, but in order to present the reader a minimal insight into the dilemma, the application of the methodology principles will include use of songs, chants, rhymes, music, art and craft activities, games with rules and also principles from the Total Physical Response (TPR) theory.

1.1. Personal experience

During my teaching practice and/or my teaching in the kindergarten, whenever I had the chance to teach (very) young learners I took advantage of it. Very young learners are extremely positive about acquiring new knowledge and thus teaching them a foreign language can be fun both for the students and the teacher. For more than two years I have been teaching English at the pre-school education facilities (i.e. kindergartens). I had the possibility to teach learners who were just about to leave the facility and thus they were in most cases ready for the transition to a regular elementary school environment. On the other hand; I also had the possibility to teach very young learners, children of approximately four years of age, who still had considerable problems with using their mother tongue properly and efficiently and thus had much greater problems with learning a foreign language. In these classes I have come to

experience that even a one-year difference in age between the learners makes an enormous difference in classroom dynamics, functioning of activities and consequently the acquiring of foreign language. It is necessary to mention that age is not the only crucial factor that makes classes of very young learners such heterogeneous. If compared with classes of considerably older learners, e.g. twelve years of age, the ability of group of equally aged very young learners to maintain well in the learning process was far more diverse than with the older ones. According to my experience, there were distinct divergences between learners within one age group, which resulted from their different level of cognitive, social and physical development. This heterogeneity, particularly in cognitive development, has its reflection especially in children's language abilities. Lyne Cameron adverts to the relationship with learners' mother tongue by saying that "children will come into foreign language learning at the earliest stages bringing with them differently developed skills and learning abilities in their first language" (Cameron, 2001, p.13). For this reason, teachers of young learners need to be aware of this phenomenon and reasonably need to adapt their teaching methods. Opal Dunn suggests teachers to bear in mind that "young children until about the age of eight are still dependent on adult support for much of what they do....Since the individual differences and especially cognitive differences between young children of the same age are so great, to teach a class as one unit does not give a child the individual attention he needs" (Dunn, 1983, p.12).

2. Advantages to starting young with foreign languages

A great number of theories that promote early start with teaching foreign languages for different reasons exist within the methodology literature. One of the supporting arguments mentioned most frequently, is that young learners do not pretend their interest in learning new language, as they simply are or are not interested. Teachers then quickly find out whether their endeavour encounters children's real interests and thus their teaching has the meaning it should have. The other, very important reason, given by most of the authors dealing with teaching very young learners, is that early start with foreign languages is easier at this age because of the ability to become highly proficient and learn correct pronunciation. Kathleen Marcos expresses her views on the topic in an article published on the KidSource TEFL internet server, where she claims that:

"Most experts agree that the earlier a child is introduced to a second language, the greater the chances are that the child will become truly proficient in the language. A February 1996 Newsweek article made the claim that 'A child taught a second language after the age of 10 or so is unlikely ever to speak it like a native'. This statement is supported by linguists and has been proven in extensive research studies. In addition to developing a lifelong ability to communicate with more people, children may derive other benefits from early language instruction, including improved overall school performance and superior problem-solving skills" (Marcos, 1996).

Unfortunately, teaching a foreign language in the age of children's pre-school education has not been a common routine in the Czech Republic up to quite a recent time. During a period of forty years under the rule of communist government, there have only Russian language been compulsory taught at the basic schools, with certain exceptions, of course. Moreover, the idea of teaching a foreign language at the kindergarten was not developed and realised much. On the other hand, in the "western world", an indispensable number of experts (Scott, Ytreberg, Dunn, Moon, Bee, Halliwell and others) have declared that teaching a foreign language in the early years of primary education has its purpose, and what is more, that the results of such early exposure to the foreign language bring more effect than with older learners. According to the experts' theories, the advantages of starting to learn a foreign language can be derived mainly from learners' immense ability to absorb new stimuli – to be open towards learning a language. Opal Dunn (1983) describes the very young learner's natural positive attitude towards learning by saying that "Young children, if they are normal, want to learn" (Dunn, 1983, p.1). Not only to mention the children's natural positive approach towards learning, there are other advantages, which support the idea of early start with learning a foreign language. Harley et al. [1995, in Cameron (2001, p.17) name especially oral skills, as "...children who have an early start develop and maintain advantages in some, but not all, areas of language skills. Listening comprehension benefits most, with overall better outcomes for an earlier start; pronunciation also benefits in the longer term..." Generally, the importance of creating a good basis of correct pronunciation is being emphasised in a vast majority of the theories.

However the young children are ready to absorb new language, a certain amount of motivation is always needed. Motivation plays an extraordinary role in teaching foreign languages to very young learners and in this case, game and game-like activities serve as the

natural source of it. Theories, dealing with motivation and generally advantages of starting with foreign languages in an early age will be discussed in detail afterwards. Since very young learners are the target group of this paper, an overall characteristic of their learning and development will be discussed in the following section.

2.1. Characteristics of very young learners and their learning

Very young learners have some common characteristics with other age groups (e.g. need of motivation and real-life language use, etc.) but on the other hand they differ in various other aspects of the learning process. Teachers of young children have picked up a challenging aim to achieve – to teach learners, whose acquisition of L1 is still not complete and thus the acquisition of L2 may be, in some aspects, more difficult than with learners with developed abstract thinking. Specifically, the ability of abstraction enables the older learners to analyse and understand the grammatical body of a language. With this on mind, teachers of very young learners need to be ready to adapt their teaching techniques to their target group. Teachers need to know exactly what their students are like, what needs do they have and how these can be satisfied. The teacher should ask himself following questions: what can I expect my students are able to do? What type of tasks can they successfully cope with and what support do they need for it? Answers to these questions can only be achieved by thorough and permanent examination of their students' needs. However, a theoretical framework is definitely worthwhile and can lead the teachers in finding specific problems and consequently solutions for them. 6

As declared in a number of methodological theories (e.g. by Dunn, Scot, Ytreberg, Reilly, Ward, Phillips, et al.), very young learners are primarily characteristic by: learning through oral language, and by their capability to develop good oral skills, pronunciation and intonation when they are provided a good model. Another important feature of their learning is that reception long time precedes production of the language. Vanessa Reilly and Sheila Ward (2000) advert to "...remember that young children may spend a long time absorbing the language before they actually produce anything. [therefore] it is not a good idea to force them to speak in the target language as this can create a lot of emotional stress." (p.7) Such principle implies that there must not be any pressure put on the learners, and especially during

the initiatory stages so that the classes are an enjoyable experience both for the teacher and the children.

Wendy Scott and Lisbeth Ytreberg (1990, pp.1-25) describe a characteristic feature of young learner's needs by pointing out that young learners want to talk about what they are doing or what they have done or heard. This characteristic implies the need for real-life language use. Very young learners want to talk about situations they encounter in their real life.

Children of this age are also very logical, i.e. that what teacher says first, must happen first, e.g. the instruction – before you turn off the light, put your book away – means: first to turn off the light and then to put away the book.

Concerning their school performance, they are often more enthusiastic and lively as learners than older children, they want to please the teacher and at this age they are more interested in delighting the teacher rather than their peer group.

In an activity, they are able to keep themselves motivated, even absorbed, but they also lose interest very quickly, especially when they find the task difficult. This is closely connected to young children's concentration span, which is very short and there is a demand on the teacher to prepare their lessons very carefully, with emphasis on variation in activities. A good way to prevent young learners from getting bored might be a sophisticated variation in activities, where e.g. two tasks, demanding learner's intensive concentration never follow one after another. It would be more effective to let the children produce some physical endeavour afterwards, so that the change in type of activity is so rapid that they can easily transit to a following task, which again requires certain amount of their absorption.

A very positive fact about teaching young children is that they do not carry any negative attitudes left over from previous school experience. They really want to learn, as they are curious and keen about everything, including learning. Yet, teachers of very young learners will definitely encounter several negative aspects of their students' immaturity. One of them is young children's selfishness and a lack of will to co-operate with their colleagues. Teachers may experience situations where one child pushes another one over just to get a toy. Their behaviour is sometimes accompanied with no respect towards others' feelings. Young children are sometimes reluctant to share, as they are self-centred up to the age of six or

seven. This also brings out their inability to see things from someone else's point of view. However, the reluctance to co-operate can sometimes be caused by an unclear point in activity. The children simply do not know what they are supposed to do, and what is more, they do not find out by asking as adults do. Children would rather pretend to understand or they understand in their own terms, because they would seldom admit that they do not know something. A repetitive and detailed verification of understanding the goals of an activity is then a necessary control mechanism, taken by the teacher. Connected with co-operation there is the idea of competition. Generally, people are competitive but it would not serve the purpose of learning a foreign language to change the learning process into a competition. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) suggest avoiding rewards and prizes, and recommend creating an atmosphere of involvement and togetherness, since young children like the feeling of belonging. In order to promote this, grouping and co-operation should be established, even though, with respect to young children's individualism, which means that no extortion of their involvement in group activities should be practised. The atmosphere in the classroom should be as positive as possible (pp. 9-10). For the reason that "once children feel secure and content in the classroom, they can be encouraged to become independent and adventurous in the learning of the language. Security is not an attitude or an ability, but it is essential if we want our pupils to get the maximum out of the language lessons" (Scott and Ytreberg, 2000, p.10).

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2.2. Differences between learners – acquiring and learning

As mentioned above, the differences between learners, if age is taken into account, are mainly to be derived from their different level of cognitive, physical and social development. Such differences, according to linguistic theorists, result into the *acquisition* and *learning* distinction. These terms are used to describe different techniques that learners of L2 use to learn the language. A famous linguist - Stephen Krashen in his first hypothesis [1981, in Courtain and Pesola (1998, p.60) explains the difference between acquiring and learning the language through an example of children and their parents. While children would be acquiring the foreign language, their parents would be learning it. Stephen Krashen [1981, in Dunn (1983, p.3) further describes this difference in detail and generalises by saying "The good language learner is an acquirer; he may or may not be a conscious learner" According to Krashen [1981, in Dunn (1983, p.3), young learners are acquirers. They acquire the language subconsciously in situations, where speakers communicate naturally. On the other hand, the

process of learning takes place consciously. Stephen Krashen points out that in this system “[learning] is helped greatly by error correction and the presentation of explicit rules” Krashen [1981, in Dunn (1983, p.3). In this approach, the fluency has been acquired in the interpersonal communication and the formal rules need to be learned consciously. Adult learners therefore have two independent but interrelated systems for gaining ability in another language. In contrast with very young learners, they have both the acquiring and learning ability. In connection with the two different systems of learning a foreign language, Opal Dunn (1983, p.3) mentions recent researches which maintain that acquisition of the mother tongue can be on one hand identified as Gestalt (i.e. learnt by wholes) and on the other as analytic or creative. In the Gestalt theory, the language is made up of prefabricated routines or patterns and these are memorised as whole utterances. On the contrary, the analytic approach considers the language as a system, which develops in a word-by-word manner and the utterances are consciously constructed by the speaker. Opal Dunn (1983), in application to teaching very young learners maintains that:

“In the initial stages of learning, prefabricated language is more used; however, all learners develop use of creative language which eventually dominates. Research indicates that for many Language 2 learners, especially children, Gestalt speech (prefabricated language) serves as a short cut to allow social interaction and interpersonal communication with a minimum of linguistic competence. The analytic or creative mode begins to predominate as learners attempt to express specific and possibly individual ideas” (p.5).

This finding is strongly supported by the *Critical Period Hypothesis*, which represents the view that children’s learning can be roughly divided into two crucial periods. The dividing point in this hypothesis is the puberty. Supporters of the Critical Period Hypothesis argue that “young children can learn a second language particularly effectively before puberty because their brains are still able to use the mechanisms that assisted first language acquisition. The Critical Period Hypothesis holds that older learners will learn language differently after this stage and, particularly for accent, can never achieve the same levels of proficiency” (Cameron, 2001, p.13).

Opal Dunn (1983, p.7) illustrates this theory by demonstrating how quickly do young language learners acquire L2 and how error-free their speech and pronunciation is. So that

sometimes it is almost indistinguishable from the speech of native speakers, and all of this, in spite of no formal grammar instruction. In comparison with adult L2 speakers, who usually retain their mother tongue accent, young children who acquire L2 before puberty, do not encounter such problem. Dunn believes that it is greatly caused by the children's marvellous ability to imitate.

3. Games and game-like activities in the pre-school education curriculum

As stated in the previous section, the learning of very young learners differs in several important aspects and thus, there are areas of work in which teachers, if they want to be successful, must be more precise and take greater care than with older students. This paper intends to promote the exceptionality of extensive use of games and game-like activities in teaching a foreign language to young children and therefore some essential facts about the role of games and game-like activities in the learning process ought to be stated. David Vale and Anne Feunteun (1995) name several pros and cons in using games in language teaching and the role of play in children's learning in general. First to be mentioned is the key role of play in the learning process of children, but also the absence of play in contemporary EFL course books. The authors write that: "Although play obviously has a key role in the emotional, social, intellectual and language development of children, it has a relatively minor role in the more formal classroom" (p.222).

Games are an indispensable source of motivation, interest, and enjoyment. The importance of motivation and interest should never be underestimated when teaching young children, because this age group, even though internally highly motivated, loses interest very quickly and sometimes needs a strong reason for participating in an activity. Children's most obvious motivation for learning through games is the fun and excitement that they experience during the lesson. If an activity is to be functioning well, it needs to be attractive for the participants. However, if an activity is fun for children, there might be a comparably higher level of noise and disorder. Some teachers consider games to be the first step to loss of control over the classroom. On the other hand, games or plays themselves can efficiently function as means of class control. In this case, "Motivation and interest in play can have a key role in maintaining a natural and mutually respected code of discipline" (Vale and Feunteun, 1995, p. 222).

The suspicion over using games and game-like activities in the teaching process can also be spread among the teachers' colleagues and mainly the parents who may consider the play a waste of time or just a time-filler. Vale and Feunteun (1995) advise that the teachers who encounter such doubts should use the technique of intensive informing. They suggest that "Parents must [sic] be kept informed of the relevance and reasons for play. Unconvinced parents will also need to see concrete evidence (i.e. written or spoken by their child) that language learning is taking place" (p. 222). Vale and Feunteun see possible reasons for such doubts in the way the parents were educated and also in the parents' obsession with learning as much as possible.

"Many parents are over-anxious for their children to 'learn' as much as possible at school in as short time period as possible. They may overlook the value of play in the learning process (and their own negative learning experience in a formal learning situation) in favour of the more traditional language learning activities such as choral drills, copying from the board and completion of repetitive exercises" (Vale and Feunteun, 1995, p.222).

3.1. Game and play – what is the theory?

Within this paper, no substantial distinction will be made between the terms *game* and *play*. Besides, a great number of experts use these terms in their theories simultaneously, for not using one of them in a specific context; i.e. they are not differing between them on purpose. However, in some cases, the word *play* may be used for the factual description of the activity, performed by the subject, i.e. the child, whereas the term *game* can be in some cases used to name a form of play with rules. According to Garvie [1979, in Dunn (1983, p63.)] "Games are play activities that become institutionalised". Nevertheless, even in attempts to classify games and plays into categories, the authors very often merge game and play and use the terms within one section of a text interchangeably. In order to enhance the theoretical framework of this paper, several classifications of game/play will further be presented.

3.2. Classification of games

An example of general classification of games into various categories, according to their level of maturity, can be found in the work of Bühler [1935, in Fontana (1997, p.52)], where games are divided into four major groups. Bühler differentiates between *functional*, *pretend*, *receptive* and *constructive* games. Another, but quite similar classification is presented by Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998, p.98), who claim that there may be several forms of child's play. In some of them, practising of physical functions in their more complex forms is experienced. Langmeier and Krejčířová call this type *functional or activity* game and specify that it can include simple repetitive movements with or without an object. Papalia (1990) gives more examples: "babies bang a side of a crib or shake a rattle, purely for the pleasure that they derive from the motion... [or] We can see it in the four-year-old who runs around the room to no apparent purpose or the adolescent who drums rhythmically on the table" (p.373). Other whiles, the games are concentrated on constructing new things from a specific material – building a sand castle or a figure from plasticine. In this case, Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998, p.98) suggest the name *realistic or constructive* type of game. In other cases, where children use objects in their transferred meanings and transform the world around them according to their imagination, e.g. they pretend that a stick is a baby or a clout represents a feather-bed, these games can be called *illusionary*. And when children play off a shop assistant or a princess, mother and father, etc. they gain experiences with social roles which they observe or examine but cannot perform by themselves, then these can be called *mission or part* type of games.

The categorisation of games differs from author to author, depending on what he or she takes as a criterion for the differentiation. The general dividing of games as presented above can serve us to move over to the use of *language games* in classes of very young learners, the main contents of this paper. Langran and Purcell (1994, pp.1-2) define the term language game as "a device to create a situation in the classroom which gives learners the opportunity to use language they have already learnt in a relaxed way, with maximum possible free expression in order to fulfil a simple task, solve a problem or communicate a piece of information. Games range from the very simple with strictly limited structures for beginners to fairly complicated simulations used with advanced learners for revision work". Langran and Purcell see the primary function of a language game as a way of revising a language already learnt, but on the other hand there exist theories where language game can

serve as a tool for introducing a completely new language. These theories see the advantage of a language game in the very relaxed and natural way of presenting new knowledge and thus a very efficient especially for very young learners. An example of such theory are the words of Khan [1991, in Brumfit (1995, p.149)] who not only considers the language game a source of revision but also appreciates it as a "technique for familiarising children with new language and giving them the confidence to produce that language".

Opal Dunn's (1983, p.72) attitude towards using games in the learning process confirms Khan's view, as Dunn suggests more extensive use of language oral games for young beginners and consequently suggests dividing these games into three groups, according to their position and function within the lesson. Dunn differentiates between *starting games*, which should be played before another game to find a leader, etc. Then she mentions *phase one quick games*. These are to be played in the first phase of the lesson (lesson phases will be discussed later) and should last only a couple of minutes. These games are played to consolidate a point or change in the atmosphere. And finally, *phase three games* are longer type of games, played in the final phase of the lesson. These games include movement (see Total Physical Response) and are used to relax tension, built by learning a new language in the previous phase and to consolidate a language point taught in phase one and two.

3.3. Motivation and its sources

The fact that for every single human activity a certain amount of motivation is needed and beneficial has been thoroughly explained within the psychological and methodological literature. With learning a foreign language the relevant role of motivation has been very well described and emphasized over almost all of the methodology books available, and nowadays we cannot imagine an author who would overlook the importance of appropriate source of motivation for learning. This paper is focused ^{on} teaching English to very young learners by using games and game-like activities as a tool for it. However the games are attractive for young children, the role of motivation always needs to be taken into account when designing a lesson plan.

As stated in the previous section, play, games and game-like activities have an enormous role in young children's social, intellectual and language development. Now, let us

concentrate on the general concept of play and game and their role in very young learner's lives and let us also discover how the motivation is closely connected with the fact of notionless learning. First thing to be mentioned is the rather different character of play in the pre-school age if contrasted with older children. Mišurcová and Severová (1997, p.42) describe the young children's game as an activity that can become concentrated on any type of objects: children can be playing not only with toys, but also with different things which are surrounding them, i.e. with animals, vegetables, other children, with their own body, etc. This definition can give us the idea of how different the playing activities can be in this age, in contrast with e.g. the early teenagers' age group where games with definite rules prevail. To sum up the ideas of Mišurcová and Severová, anything that surrounds the child can possibly become an object of their play, including the child itself – i.e. the subject of the play. This results in the enormous variability of young children's games and the variability itself relates closely to the motivation that children have. Mišurcová and Severová (1997, p.42) suppose that the source of motivation does not always need to be the same for every child but that most of the games are motivated by children's developmental needs. These needs stimulate children to execute the very diverse activities and during practising them they familiarise and learn something new; by themselves and with pleasure. And precisely the diversity in games' contents serve as presumption for the fact that games can significantly contribute to universal development of the child. This principle is connected with its application in language teaching, where Mišurcová and Severová (1997, p.42) present a hypothesis in which they claim that the function of learning in games may be connected to the fact that in games children do not struggle to achieve any concrete results, but that their interest lies first and foremost on the actual practising of the games. This statement can be further sustained by e.g. Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998, p.97), who support this view by saying that game is an activity which is being practised only because it is pleasurable and brings the child a satisfaction by itself, without any extrinsic goal.

These two hypotheses prompt us that for children of pre-school age the primary source of motivation for learning can lie in the fact that these children do not learn a foreign language to know or learn it, but because they like learning it by means of game. Mišurcová and Severová (1997, p.44) replenish these theses and emphasize that the exceptionally important feature of games, motivated by developmental needs is that in the process of playing, learning and developmental changes happen unwillingly, i.e. without notion and deliberate effort.

3.4. Creating a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language

As expressed in the previous section, very young learners come motivated to classes of English, because play makes learning an exciting and amusing experience. That is why an important feature of teaching young learners, which teachers come across during their lessons, needs to be mentioned again. It is the children's enthusiasm on one hand and total weariness on the other. Very young learners simply let teacher know whether they enjoy the activity – and thus it is meaningful – or not. Teachers can get the immediate reaction towards their teaching. It certainly gives them a notion of what is the activity (or their teaching in general) worth. This amazing spontaneity is one of the typical features of very young learners. It has a deeper meaning for the teacher, since learning a foreign language in pre-school education should be as enjoyable as possible. Not only because boring lessons do not have the effect as classes, where children learn in a notion-less way; but what is more important, "It is at this first stage of learning English that foundations for what may be a life-long interest in English language and culture can be laid" (Dunn, 1983, p.1). This crucial finding can be supported by a number of other methodologists' theses, of which, the ideas of Sarah Phillips are ones that I especially would like to emphasise. Phillips (1994) accentuates that "...if an activity is enjoyable, it will be memorable; the language involved will 'stick', and the children will have a sense of achievement which will develop motivation for further learning" (p.8). To convey her theory, Phillips claims that "This cyclical process generates a positive attitude towards learning English, which is perhaps one of the most valuable things that primary teachers can transmit to children" (Phillips, 1994, p.8). Therefore, establishing a positive attitude towards learning a foreign language is, according to many methodologists, probably the most important objective for teachers of pre-school foreign language education.

4. Methodology of TEFL to very young learners by means of game-like activities

In the methodology part of this paper, a discussion and review of current methodological theories dealing with teaching English to very young learners by use of game-like activities will be presented. In the first section, Classroom management will be discussed in detail and this topic will include the use of classroom language, the importance of modifying it to the pupils' level. Examples of modified classroom language, divided into several categories

according to its use, will be presented afterwards. In the following section, Time management and planning of lesson stages will be discussed, with emphasis on utilising routines as a tool for creating the feeling of security with young children. The Classroom management will be concluded with Classroom organisation where principles of classroom lay-out and an ideal model will be presented. In the following part of methodology section, Principles and techniques dealing with introducing and managing games will be discussed, together with extensive use of Rhymes, Chants, Songs and finally Art and Craft activities.

4.1. Classroom management

To begin with, the classroom management plays a crucial role in the overall success and efficiency of the lesson. Especially with classes of very young learners, where games and game-like activities are used for majority of activities and thus a majority of time, a careful and complete classroom management is a necessary presumption for avoiding loss of control to take place. Classes of very young learners differ in this aspect from classes of older learners. With young children, a great deal of physical activity is being practised (resulting from young children's needs), together with lots of clamant activities (singing, chatting and shouting during the games) and such lively classes of course require a precise control and guidance. Besides, the time management plays a crucial role in planning lessons for young children, mainly because of their inability to concentrate long on one type of activity. This is determined by young children's very short concentration span and can also be very individual. The need to take great care in precise time planning requires that teachers should pay a lot of attention to correct variation in lesson stages and their transitions. Principles of time management and lesson stages will be discussed later in corresponding sections.

4.2. Use of English – the classroom language

In this section I would like to focus on the appropriate amount of foreign language use in the classroom. In a great number of general theories prevails a strong support for the principle "as much as possible" and I would consider it necessary to explain and eventually adapt this principle to lessons of very young learners. First of all, a basic principle, which clarifies the use of English in classroom, is that the language will be primarily used for

communication. This key principle determines all of the applications of further principles and should never be neglected. Secondly, since communication is the main goal for teachers of English in young learner's classes, then communicative environment can only be successfully created when there is the atmosphere of security (i.e. that the children are not afraid to communicate). However, using English in all situations and for every purpose can sometimes lead to creating a feeling of insecurity and thus result in a block in communication. Teachers always have to bear in mind that very young learners are still much dependent, need a lot of security, and they are still developing their mother tongue proficiency. If an English-only lesson becomes a frightening experience, or if children seem frustrated, the teacher should definitely switch to mother tongue. Sarah Phillips in this respect thinks not only of frightening the children, which is of course the worst possibility, but also mentions the lack of efficiency in practising the activity. For her, the question whether or not to use the mother tongue in the English classroom is an open one. She specifies her feeling by saying that:

“...[however] it is essential to use as much English as possible in the class, there are times when the use of English is counter-productive. It is often more economical and less frustrating for all concerned if you give instructions for a complicated activity in the children's mother tongue, or check the instructions you have given by asking the children to repeat them in their own language” (Phillips, 1994, p.8).

This principle applies especially to those classes of entire beginners, where efficiency in the classroom management can sometimes become problematic and the comprehension of instructions needs to be monitored very thoroughly. For these reasons, teachers should decide on which purposes and under which conditions the use of children's mother tongue will be acceptable and thus useful. Sarah Phillips concludes her opinion on using L1 in English classes and adds that:

“What is important is that the children are given clear guidelines on when they are expected to use English and when their first language is permissible. Children need to be aware of which activities are specifically intended to develop their spoken skills; they should be encouraged to use only English in these. On the other hand, if they are working on a reading text that requires logical inference, it is not reasonable to expect them to be able to do this in English” (Phillips, 1994, p.8).

On the contrary, Opal Dunn suggest a slightly different attitude towards use of English in elementary level classes and supports the immediate use of L2. Dunn suggest that because children acquire the foreign language by taking part in activities, “[Their] need to communicate in English is immediate and [thus] from the first lesson activities should take place in English” (Dunn, 1983, p.44). Because Dunn supports the immediate use of English, she naturally completes her theory with practical facilitation of the principle. Dunn writes that “In order for activities to take place in English, even from the first lesson, the teacher needs to rely heavily on prefabricated language for class organization. . . .[where] This language consists mainly of prefabricated routines” (Dunn, 1983, p.44). The language used for classroom organisation is also mentioned by Vaness Reilly and Sheila M. Ward, who claim that “Children can pick up a lot of language through the normal day-to-day routine of what we do in class. [Therefore] Greetings, instructions, etc. should all be carried out in English” (Reilly and Ward, 2000, p.16). Everyday organisation and running of the classroom are in fact one of the most realistic communicative situations for young learners and with the support of gestures and body language, the message can be transferred well.

So far, the purpose and the amount of the prefabricated language have been mentioned and now the form of this specific language is to be discussed. Some authors (e.g. Courtain and Pesola, Chastain) refer to this language as “motherese,” “care-taker speech,” “teacherese,” or “foreigner talk.” Courtain and Pesola (1998) present some of the characteristics of this speech, which are: a somewhat slower rate of speech, more distinct pronunciation, shorter, less complex sentences, more rephrasing and repetition, more frequent meaning checks with the hearer to make sure that he or she is understanding, use of gesture and visual reinforcement and finally greater use of concrete referents (p.64). Examples of the prefabricated language which follow and its use in the lessons of very young learners have been adopted partially from the *Zig-Zag Island* teacher’s book by Alison Blair and Jane Cadwallader (Oxford University Press, 2001) and also from other methodological textbooks (e.g. *Very Young Learner* from Vaness Reilly and Sheila M. Ward, OUP, 2000 and *Beginning English with Young Children* by Opal Dunn, MacMillan Publishers, 1983). The language use has been divided into several categories, according to the purpose. The main principle is that the level of language needs to be very well tuned to the level of students. Opal Dunn (1983) amends that to work out the right sort of language to use, “teachers should bear the following points in mind:

1. Children acquire structures in a relatively predictable order.

2. Situations in the classroom are controlled and give opportunities for the exaggerated use of prefabricated language, repetition, transfer and the recycling of language.
3. Techniques for suitable language can be copied from the way in which parents communicate with their children..." (p.53).

According to Dunn (1983), new language items can be introduced by: "first using language with concrete objects or visual aids, [and second] by consolidating the language in an activity or game" (p.53).

Examples of the prefabricated language follow. Parts of the language are stated in brackets where this implies that this part is not necessary and should be used after managing the simplified structure. Words in square brackets follow as examples of concrete use. All of the language is recycled throughout the whole course as this feature helps to establish appropriate routines.

Examples of language used for *giving instructions* (by the teacher) and *starting an activity*:

- *Look (at me) / Listen (to me)*
- *Open your books*
- *Look at page [five]*
- *(Are you) ready? / Let's start*
- *Listen and point / Listen and say the chant [Touch your ears...]*
- *Colour the [numbers, animals, areas that have a dot, etc.]*
- *Play the game [How many parrots?]*
- *Sing the song [I'm Harry Hippo]*
- *Listen and mime*
- *Circle and count [the monkeys] / Circle the [eight] differences*
- *Match and colour [the parrots]*
- *(Be) Quiet, please*

Examples of language used for *clarification* and/or *sustaining an activity or requests*:

- *I don't understand*
- *Try / Listen / Say (it) again*
- *What's this?*

- *What are you doing?*
- *What colour is it/this?*
- *Can I have (a) [pencil/red (one)/scissors/paper]?*
- *Give me the [blue pencil] (please)*
- *Show me [your picture]*

Examples of language used for *praising* (by teacher):

- *Well done!*
- *(That is a) nice [work/picture/drawing]!*
- *(Very) good!*
- *Good (work)!*
- *Great (job)*
- *(That's) beautiful!*

Examples of language used for *ending an activity*:

- *(Have you) finished?*
- *Has everyone finished?*
- *Stop [working/colouring/drawing]*
- *Close your books*
- *Put your books away*
- *Give your books to me*
- *Collect the [pencils/scissors/papers]*
- *Tidy the [classroom]*
- *(See you) next [time/week]*

Examples of language used for *socialising*:

Greetings:

- *Hello (everyone/children/Peter)*
- *How are you?*
- *(I am) fine, (thank you)*
- *Good morning*
- *(Good) bye!*

Apologising:

- *(I am) sorry*

- *Excuse me, (please)*
- *(That's) all right*

Examples of language used for *agreement and disagreement*:

- *Yes (that's right)*

No (try again, please)

4.3. Modifying language level for young beginners

Within this section, techniques of modifying the language level will be presented. These techniques help the teacher efficiently transmit the information, and concerning the students, to understand it completely. From the first lesson, language items should be as simple as possible. Gradually, the teacher should expand them and introduce new and more complex language, but there is a premise that children have understood the first language items completely. To introduce new language and expand the structures requires careful planning of course. To help the students understand new language, Opal Dunn (1983) suggests that "...facial gestures and gesture made with the hands, similar to the type of movements which accompany speech to very young children, can be exaggerated ... to help understanding" (p.49).

The principle of gradual expanding the amount of new language that the children are exposed to, have been thoroughly explained in Steve Krashen's *Comprehensible Input Hypothesis* (Krashen, 1982 [in Courtain and Pesola, 1998]). Krashen maintains that:

"the most important factor in the amount of language acquired by a learner is the amount of comprehensible input to which that learner is exposed. Comprehensible input is understood to be the amount of language which the learner can fully understand, plus just a little more: $i+1$. The 'i' represents the level at which the student is now; ' $i+1$ ' is just a little beyond...[Courtain and Pesola believe that] for Krashen, the learner must always be challenged, but never to a point at which frustration sets in" (p.60).

Modifying the language level is considered very important in the methodology theories, however, teachers should not only modify the language level but they also should use techniques of *repetition*, *transfer* and *consolidation*.

Repetition has an important place in young children's lives and can be found outside the classroom. Children when they are organising their games in the playground, very often chose to play the same game over and over again. In comparison with older children and adults, this repetition of activities does not bore them but on the other hand, it gives them a feeling of satisfaction and achievement.

Transfer is then another form of repetition because language which has been used in one activity can be transferred into another, while some parts of it could be changed and the rest just recycled. Opal Dunn (1983) writes that "By transferring language, teachers and children manage to use a small amount of familiar language for maximum communication" (p.54).

Teachers should be aware of the fact that it is not enough for young children if they meet parts of the language once or twice. To be successful in use, young learners need further opportunities to consolidate the language before they actually use it. Dunn (1983) suggests following forms of *consolidation* of new language: for example games, a copying activity, repetition of a rhyme or repeating an activity. Dunn then mentions that the hesitation about repeating the same activity is an adult way of thinking and concludes that children simply enjoy repetition (p.54).

4.4. Time management

As stated in the section above, young children like to repeat what is familiar and thus want to e.g. hear a song or a chant again and again. The lesson planning then should take repetition into account and teachers should not be afraid of it. The exact planning of stages within a lesson largely depends on the amount of time that the teachers have for their lessons and also on the frequency in which these lessons take place. Reilly and Ward (2000) mention that "If your lessons are more than fifteen minutes in length, you need to keep the children's interest by changing activities every five or ten minutes. This is why it is important to have a wide variety of activities" (p.14). With regards to the length of lessons, Dunn (1983) adverts that

the appropriate length of a lesson depends on various factors, of which students' age is one of the crucial. She suggests that lessons should not be too long nor too short because "Lessons which are too short do not give children enough time to get 'warmed up'...[That is why Dunn believes that] Lessons which are very long can be broken by a snack time after Phase Two [will be referred to later], before leading to Phase Three. Ideally lessons for seven years old children, for example, should last forty-five minutes and should be more frequent than once a week" (p.29). My personal experience with a little younger children (five to six years old) was that a thirty-minute lesson was just enough and only seldom it was appropriate to extend the lesson up to forty or forty-five minutes. This extra time should only be used for finishing e.g. pictures or some sort of a physical activity, preferably outside the classroom.

4.5. Routines

Young children like to know what is going to happen next, what they can expect. This even helps their learning as it gives them a notion of security and confidence. Dunn (1983) points out that "The security of knowing what comes next enables young children to concentrate on the activity in which they are involved, free from the worry that they will not understand what to do next" (p.26). That is why *routines* should be established from the very beginning of the teaching.

Once children get used to a certain scheme or pattern of the lessons (i.e. the lesson framework), teachers then find it a lot more easier to organize them. When children are able to predict what stage is going to follow, they are likely to predict the situations to come but also the language that will be used in them. The lesson framework is then basis of a routine used in each lesson. Reilly and Ward (2000) even suggest that "You can have signals which indicate a change of activity. For example, a whistle might indicate an active game, a piece of calm or classical music the prelude to a story, a clap the introduction to a rhyme or chant. It does not really matter what your signals are but once they become an established routine, it will be easier to organize the children" (p.14). Generally, routines are a great help in establishing a productive atmosphere and thus largely contribute to the efficiency of teaching/learning.

4.6. Lesson stages

As mentioned above, the lesson framework has an important role in connection to time planning. It gives children the sense of security because they know what to expect next and for the teacher it has the account of easier and more efficient control over the classroom. The whole lesson of course needs to be divided into several smaller units and many theorists suggest using a three-phase system of a lesson. Chastain (1988, p.325) calls these three phases: *preview*, *view* and *review*. Chastain (1988) also emphasises the reasons for planning by saying that “Inseparably associated with the concept of teaching is the concept of purposes, goals and objectives. To teach, one must teach *something* to *someone*. Once the teacher sets up goals, he must begin to develop plans for achieving the most efficient sequence of learning activities for arriving at the stated goals” (p.335). From this statement, Chastain (1988) derives that careful planning enables the teacher to move towards the chosen goals and that “Careful planning is [therefore] crucial to successful teaching, and it is doubtful that anyone can be a good teacher unless she is aware of her objectives and plans the classroom activities accordingly” (p.335).

Together with Chastain, Opal Dunn (1983) supports careful planning and also suggests dividing the lesson into smaller units while using the three-phase system. Dunn gives specific examples of how these phases should be arranged and what they should include. Before dividing the lesson into three stages, Dunn (1983) mentions the phenomenon of beginning and ending a lesson or session and accentuates the social function of greeting people and saying goodbye. Dunn believes that it is very important to have a personal contact with each individual child and for an experienced teacher, this close contact enables him to get an idea of child's mood and eventually to encourage the child in the beginning of a lesson. At the end of a lesson, the teacher uses this contact to tell the child a few words of praise and comment on his participation. Dunn also mentions that young children are keen on this moment of personal contact and that this special time is of great importance to them and can show up in their motivation. (p.28)

After the actual welcome, *phase one* sets in and Dunn (1983, p.28) suggests that this phase “begins by revision of rhymes, songs, etc in a type of ‘warming-up’ activity, which helps children get used to hearing, understanding and using English”. Dunn also mentions the lay-out of the classroom for this initial stage. She suggest that “children sit informally on the

floor on a mat round the teacher, who sits on a chair, slightly elevated so that the children can see her face and especially her mouth" (p.28). This lay-out is important because it enables children to see the teacher's mouth and hear what she says clearly. This introduction into a lesson is then followed by introducing some new language items and some revising of familiar ones. In this part of the lesson, activities can be done by whole class or within groups or pairs. Dunn suggest this stage to be managed by teacher and only later on, when children get used to the way teacher works, some of the activities can be managed by children themselves.

In *phase two*, also called the calm period, activities include colouring and generally working with materials. As for the lay-out, "children sit at their own tables or desks and work in pairs, in small groups or as individuals....the teacher goes round the class talking to the children in turn about the activities they are doing" (Dunn, 1983, pp.28-29). It is important that during this phase children are working at their own speed and by themselves, where the teacher only occasionally supports them with few words of encouragement and help to sustain children's interest.

Phase three is obviously the last phase of the lesson and Dunn (1983) reminds that "By the end of the lesson or session the children are getting tired. They become restless and often want to move around" (p.29). For this reason, the last phase is designed to give the children an opportunity to participate in games or activities which can include handwork and physical activity. After children take part in a lively activity it would be a good idea to calm them down again by using e.g. a familiar story.

Reilly and Ward (2000, p.15) suggest a possible lesson plan as well. The lesson is divided into 6 stages but if compared with the dividing suggested by Dunn, the framework remains the same and only some of the activities are divided into smaller units. Reilly and Ward suggest that the lesson could start with a *familiar song*, and then continue with introduction of *new language*. After this a *craft activity connected with the new language* could be implemented, in order to set the new language during a physical activity. For the same purpose a *song, rhyme, or chant connected with the new language* is preferable. Towards the end of a lesson, the children might get tired and therefore a *familiar active game or activities with Total Physical Response* can be the best way to relax the learners. And finally, as suggested above, a *familiar story* could conclude the lesson, in order to calm the

children down and provide them a comprehensive piece of target language. (p.15) Of course, the time for saying goodbye as mentioned above should never be missed out and together with saying goodbye, few words of encouragement and praising would be more than convenient.

After describing the three-phase model of a lesson, I would briefly like to discuss some of the principles dealing with starting, sustaining and ending an activity. These principles, together with examples of concrete steps, should help the teacher run his class smoothly, and establish a sense that all activities follow in a natural order. For *starting* an activity, Opal Dunn (1983) suggests that “the teacher can ‘set the scene’ by:

- a) reviewing related activities done previously
- b) showing examples of work done by the children on previous occasions
- c) capturing the children’s interest by explaining the new activity and showing them related material.” (p.45).

To *sustain* an activity, Dunn (1983) suggests teachers to watch each child carefully, plus help and participate when necessary. A comment in order to guide children or sustain their interest would also be beneficial. Dunn reminds that “Young children need to feel that the teacher knows what they are doing and that she is available so that they can show their work to her or discuss it with her” (pp.46-47). In order to provide the children with a possibility to get in contact with the teacher when needed, Dunn advises to move around the classroom or sit in some easily accessible place, where children can reach her without any problem. Dunn warns against the formal position of the teacher – behind the desk, as this may create a barrier for communication.

Finally, to *end* an activity, Dunn (1983) suggests that “Before putting things away at the end of an activity, it is good idea for teachers to show the class what different children have achieved. As children gain oral fluency, they can show their work themselves and explain what they have done” (p.47).

4.7. Classroom organisation

This section will discuss the principles of grouping and ideal classroom equipment and lay-out. Of course, the reality is very often far from the ideal, sometimes teachers teach their lessons in classes where other subjects are taught but in this case, many authors suggest that it is important to have a special place just for yourself and your subject. It is a place where the children's work can be displayed and other English related stuff presented. These authors suggest creation of the so called "English corner".

Concerning the classroom equipment and physical lay-out, the ideal, according to Opal Dunn, is presented by Figure 1 (see Appendix 1, p.76). Discount the ideal classroom, there should always be some place for physical activity, since very young learners simply need such type of activity for their learning. On the other hand, a place, where e.g. telling stories, or practising a chant, could be done is also very useful. The different types of places for different purposes serve as atmosphere makers. It is atmosphere that is very important for the children since they need a lot of help to make transition from their mother tongue to L2. Dunn (1983) suggests creating such atmosphere in a classroom by using "pictures, posters, notices and books in English or by playing songs on a cassette" (p.30). As mentioned in the section above, the "warming-up" period at the beginning of phase one should also help to create the atmosphere and get children into the mood for using English. It is due to the relaxed and comfortable nature of this first phase that children transit to use of English.

With regards to the physical lay-out of the classroom, Opal Dunn (1983) presents a list of very useful equipment for a young beginner's classroom. The equipment and the lay-out is in fact a description of the ideal classroom as represented by Figure 1 (See Appendix 1, p.76). The ideal classroom should meet the following specifications:

- 1) An area where children can sit on a mat or carpet round the teacher's chair. This place is used for transition in phase one.
- 2) Desks or tables which provide a flat top for writing, or handwork. Desks can be pushed together to enlarge to surface.
- 3) An area in which children can play games, sing songs, say chants, etc. It is an area where activities from Total Physical Response could be practiced.

- 4) A blackboard or whiteboard which should be low enough that even small children are capable of using it.
- 5) An exhibition area for pictures, homework, and other children's products.
- 6) Equipment for handwork including crayons, round-ended scissors, paste, stapler, etc.
- 7) A cassette recorder or other audio device for providing children a listening experience.
- 8) A book corner

The ideal lay-out of the classroom as presented above (plus see Figure 1) could facilitate teacher's work, e.g. in terms of maintaining discipline. The reasons are obvious; when teacher notices that his pupils need a change of activity (e.g. from silent colouring to a physical activity), he simply relocates the whole class (or a group) into a different area, which is suitable for such activity. The teacher does not need to rearrange the whole classroom as it would consume a large amount of time and may further distract children's concentration. However, ideal physical arrangement of the classroom is just a presumption for smooth and efficient running of the class. Sometimes, teachers also need to "arrange" the class and use smaller units, i.e. groups and pairs. With very young learners, this might be quite problematic, because as stated in the theoretical section of this paper, young children are still rather individualistic and sometimes dare to co-operate. Reilly and Ward (2000) comment on this problem by saying that:

"Children of this age are not used to pair or group work and the activities will generally be whole class, choral-type work led by the teacher or done on an individual basis. However, it is important that children of this age learn to co-operate. Games, role-play, and joint efforts...all contribute to this end [That is why] Although some of the work will involve whole-class activities such as choral work, question and answer, chanting and singing, in other activities, such as crafts, the children will be working individually" (pp.15-16).

Solutions for grouping very young learners are not easy to find. But there is one general rule to be applied to every teacher's act – do not force the children to any type or form of activity, since this could only bring negative effects in terms of breaking the communication and the relationship. Even theorists do not agree on the use of grouping and

some of them do not recommend using groups and pair-work at all. Others suggest use of grouping carefully and advert to young children's individualism and that there is a need to decide for grouping after a thorough consideration. Sarah Phillips (1994) is one of these authors, and writes that "Working in groups may be new to the children and they may at first find it difficult, as children need time to develop the ability to take responsibility and work without constant supervision. If this is the case, start with pairs and tightly controlled activities, and gradually introduce larger groups and freer activities" (p.10). Opal Dunn (1983) concludes her view by saying that "...unless children are used to working with other children, they may be unable to benefit from a group situation....[children if placed in groups or pairs] continue to get on with their individual task. In these cases they should be allowed to continue as individuals. In time, they will probably join in naturally" (p.37).

4.8. Introducing and organising games – giving instructions

In choosing games for young children, teachers face a problem whether a game is appropriate for this age group, as many games require player's participation which is too advanced for his stage of development. Therefore, Dunn (1983) counsels that "It is best to select games which have similar cognitive, physical and emotional levels to the games the children already play in Language 1" (pp.63-64). Dunn then writes that very young children enjoy cooperative games, because these involve whole class and allow the children to participate as much or as little as they feel able. As mentioned before, games, where strong competitive characteristic prevails are more popular with older children and are not appropriate for very young learners. This may be caused by young children's inability to lose, however this feature improves as they grow older. Very young children enjoy much more playing (e.g. taking a turn) than the actual winning.

For successful use of games, it is necessary to make children familiar with their rules and their functioning. According to Opal Dunn (1983), "Once children have learned to play a game or a type of game, they can concentrate on using the game language" (p.65). In order to understand the principles of a certain game, to know exactly how to play it, children need to know all the rules. Therefore, if it is the first time a game is played, the teacher needs to organise and manage everything totally. As children are becoming familiar and gradually gain a certain level of oral fluency, they can take the role of a teacher and direct the game. The

teacher may then become a participant in the game, but always needs to be ready to give a word of advice or to become a referee. In connection with participation, Dunn (1983) maintains that "Some young children do not want to participate in games. It is better not to insist but to let them watch or help the teacher until they are at the correct stage of 'readiness' for participation" (p.70).

It is necessary to stress again the importance of providing children exact rules because unclearness can cause a total malfunction of the activity and can sometimes lead to negative attitude towards playing games. Dunn (1983) declares that "When children are not sure what to do, chaos can result,...or there can be some confusion whereby a child thinks he has won, but in actual fact he has broken the rules inadvertently and been accused by the other of cheating. This can hurt a child so much that he refuses to play games for some time" (p.70). Another negative result from not understanding the rules can exteriorise in discipline troubles. In this case, when child does not understand the game, and cannot therefore participate fully, it is a good idea for the teacher to play one or two turns with the child. Connected with discipline problems, there are "results" of some types of games. Where there is someone dropped out of the game, it is good to provide him with some type of activity (e.g. colouring a picture, reading a book, etc.). For such activities, a special corner should be reserved so that the dropped-out player does not disturb the others but on the other hand the child must not feel excluded. Such activity is then a good task to be occupied with.

When explaining rules, some teachers may find it very difficult to use only Language 2. Dunn (1983) then believes that "The first time a game of a specific type, for example a card game, is introduced, teachers may find it necessary to explain it in Language 1. However, once one of a type of game has been played, it is usually no longer necessary to use Language 1, when introducing another game of the same type" (p.71). Hence, in some cases, explanation of rules in children's mother tongue is acceptable. On the other hand, when using Language 2 for managing and organising games, teachers need to rely heavily on prefabricated language and especially language routines. These routines can be used for introducing and sustaining different games of one type, and they are continually enhancing. What also helps very much in introducing new games in Language 2 is children's previous knowledge and experience. Dunn (1983) believes that "Children enjoy playing their national games in English. Since children already know how to play these games, they have only to learn linguistic labels in English" (p.65). An example from my own teaching practice could be

the English *Memory Game*, which is in Czech environment known as *Pexeso*. This game has a big language potential and usually it is not necessary to explain the rules at length since all the children know this game and play it in Czech.

The last note on this subject is the question of when to explain the rules. Dunn mentions that some teachers find it better to introduce a game by playing it and during the first “trial” play to explain rules when there happens the situation where explanation is necessary. Dunn (1983) then contends that “To explain all the rules of a game at the beginning without concrete examples is too confusing for young children” (p.71). The reasons are rather obvious, since young children are not capable of abstraction, and understanding a theory without seeing it in practice requires the ability to abstract. However, a certain and necessary amount of instructions, which help young learners to orientate themselves in the game, are valuable and later on when they see the actual functioning of the game, another necessary instruction should be supplied to complete their understanding.

4.9. Use of rhymes and songs

The basic fact about *rhymes and chants* is that they are mainly constructed from a prefabricated language and prefabricated phrases. For this reason, young children learn rhymes very quickly and easily and they seem to enjoy learning and reciting them. Dunn (1983) expresses her support for using rhymes by saying that:

“Young beginners seem to feel that when they can say a rhyme, they can speak a lot of English quickly rather like an adult and this is something that they appear to want to do....Rhymes introduce children naturally and effectively to the complete sounds of English as well as to stress and intonation. They are also a way of giving children a complete text with a complete piece of meaning from the very first lesson....If rhymes are specially selected, they can be used to introduce new language or to consolidate” (p.80).

As stated in the section dealing with lesson phases, it is useful to begin each lesson with a special rhyme time – an opening part of the phase one. During this phase, children are sitting around the teacher and can see his mouth and therefore can imitate well. This rhyme

time opening should become a routine, i.e. that it should always have the same form. Practising familiar rhymes or songs at the beginning of each lesson gives children the notion of self-confidence and motivates them for further learning. After a successful “warming-up” period, children are ready to move on to learning a new material. Not restricting the use of chants very much, chants does not have to be used for “warming-up” only, since new language can be introduced with them as well. According to Reilly and Ward (2000) the potency of chants to help remember words have been known long before. They report that “Religious practices have long realized the mystic power of chanting. When words are linked to rhythm and music they seem to have more emotive and personal significance and so are remembered better” (p.23). Some authors mention that when working with rhymes and chants, children will be happy to repeat the same structure again and again and by repeating it they consolidate the new language. Especially for English, a stress-time language, the use of rhythm in teaching is very natural, because the rhythm forces the speaker to put the stress in the right place and to be aware of strong and weak forms. The natural use of rhymes in teaching can also be supported by findings of Reilly and Ward (2000) who point out that “If you listen to children playing in the yard, it will not be long before you hear something like this: ‘Na, na, na, na, na, I’m better than you-ou’, chanted in a sing-song voice....[This is because] Children find it quite natural to turn almost anything into a chant” (p.23).

Now let us concentrate on the way rhymes and chants should be introduced and taught. Opal Dunn (1983) suggests the following procedure:

“When introducing a new rhyme, the teacher should repeat it first, clearly and slowly, being careful not to distort the speech patterns by, for example, using strong forms instead of weak forms for *the* and *a*. Illustrations can be used to explain the meaning of the rhyme and...teachers can give a rough translation once in children’s mother tongue” (pp.82-83).

After saying the chant for the first time, Dunn suggests that the teacher should repeat the rhyme again and then together with a selected group of children. Dunn (1983) warns that “At this stage of learning children should not be expected to repeat rhymes without the lead being given by the model speaker” (p.83). Dunn also points out that, except for some very gifted children, most of the others learn only certain words of a new rhyme during the first lesson. These are generally information words. The following chant is an example, presented

by Dunn (1983, p.83), and in the chant, underlined words represent those, which different classes of beginners were unable to learn after the first lesson.

One, two three,
Clap with me
Clap, clap, clap
Clap like me.

However, after repeating the same chant again in the next lesson, most children were able to say the complete rhyme. Dunn (1983) concludes her findings by declaring that “Learning is undoubtedly helped if the new rhyme is repeated again once or twice, in chorus with the children, when they come together at the end of the lesson just before saying goodbye” (p.83).

The last point about use of chants and rhymes is related to reading. Dunn (1983) draws our attention to a fact that “Many children teach themselves to read through rhymes. This is done with the help of flash cards. First they are introduced to flash cards of words in three or four rhymes they know well. Then they put the flash cards in sequence to ‘write’ the rhymes. Finally they are ready to read the rhymes in the book” (p.85). This process then leads to continuous development of their “reading” ability because “The advantage of learning to read through rhymes is that since children know the text so well orally, they quickly pass from reading word by word to reading complete phrases, using correct intonation, stress and pronunciation...” (p.85).

With *songs*, the situation is quite similar to use of rhymes and chants. A number of authors suggest using special songs for didactical purposes, where e.g. the patterns of pronunciation are not distorted and the language content is suitable. Songs are another very popular activity among small children, as singing is as natural as playing games or saying rhymes. For the purposes of teaching a foreign language, songs may fulfil the role of a vocabulary builder, together with setting correct pronunciation. Nevertheless, there are some differences between songs and rhymes. Opal Dunn (1983) mentions that “It should be remembered that it is more difficult for children to transfer language from songs than from rhymes as they have first to put the language into spoken form. To help children over this difficulty, it is a good idea to sometimes ‘say’ songs instead of singing them” (p.85). Other

authors agree with Dunn and suggest that it is a good idea first to let the children recite the words and later on add a melody, even if it might be just simple “la-la-la”. If the song has some frequently repeated or strong sounding words, children will soon start joining in on such words. Concerning the amount of singing in one lesson and number of pupils involved, Reilly and Ward (2000) believe that:

“It is better not to try to do too much in one session. The first couple of times, you can play the song and sing it once or twice and encourage the children to join in. There will always be some children who do not sing and it is not advisable to insist on it. If the song is catchy enough and simple enough, they will usually want to sing it” (p24).

4.10. Art and craft activities

Art and craft activities are very important in the pre-school curriculum. These activities provide children an opportunity to fulfil their art needs and within the classes of very young learners, art and craft activities play the role of a comprehensible language input. To be able to complete some art or craft activity, children need to listen to the instructions carefully. These instructions should be in the target language, and be modified to children’s language level. The instructions should always be accompanied by a lot of demonstration. The amount of instructions must not be very large and the process should rather be in step-by-step instructions, with examples, supporting every single step. Reilly and Ward (2000) also mention the importance of free activities, as “Children need and enjoy [e.g. free painting, because] It develops the children’s independence and allows them the freedom to choose what they draw” (p.25) And from the language teaching point of view, Reilly and Ward explain that “Although there is no specific language being taught, the teacher can go round asking children questions in English about their painting, for example, *Who is this? What is he doing? What colour are you going to paint the...?*” (p.25)

For art and craft activities, teachers need quite a lot of equipment, ranging from crayons, papers, brushes and paints to scissors. It is advisable that each child has their own set of crayons because young children may be reluctant to share with others. On the other hand, sharing the equipment may be a good source of language, because when pupils need a colour that is being used by someone else, they have to ask him by using prefabricated structures

(e.g. *Give me the blue pencil, please*, or *Can I have the scissors, please?*, etc.) Concerning the scissors, it is necessary that for young children, only special scissors with round edges are used, in order to avoid injury. For art and craft activities, teachers do not have to use only new quarts and papers, but also recycled materials such as old cardboard boxes or other packaging. These materials can be used for wide variety of activities and do not always have to be adapted, since sometimes printings can be cut out and glued to other materials.

The works which children produce during the art and craft activities should be displayed because it gives them a feeling of achievement. Therefore, it is a good idea to reserve a certain area in the classroom for displaying pupils' works. Moreover, it is advisable to invite the parents to a classroom, when they are in the facility to pick their children up, to present them the physical outcomes of learning. Parents should not be informed only by being invited to the class but teachers should also let the children take home their pictures which have been displayed for a certain time.

5. Hypothesis / Thesis

This Professional Project is going to support the following thesis: Games and game-like activities represent the most natural and efficient tools of TEFL in classes of very young learners; namely because their appropriate use significantly contributes to non-conscious acquiring of the foreign language. Hence, the Project intends to demonstrate that using game-like activities in the environment of pre-school foreign language education should be the most spontaneous, natural and therefore efficient approach available. The thesis is based on a number of experts' theories, in which the non-conscious attribute of learning a foreign language in classes of very young learners is emphasised. The theorists advert to the different nature of acquiring the foreign language by young children and thus believe that the process of learning must not be evident, e.g. via drill techniques, but on the contrary that it needs to correspond with this age group's needs. Since games and game-like activities represent a principal contents of young children's day-to-day occupation, then the reasons for teaching a foreign language through means of their most natural needs becomes apparent. What is more, this spontaneous method of teaching may positively influence the learners' general attitude towards learning in the future. The game in pre-school education does not only serve as a tool for teaching the language but also makes the learning fun and enjoyable and thus helps with children's universal development. Vaness Reilly and Sheila M. Ward (2000) believe that "Games help children to acquire language in the natural way that native speakers do. The language is used as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, and the children are motivated to learn because they are enjoying themselves. Games also teach social skills such as co-operating and obeying rules" (p.26).

CHAPTER II. PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

1. Development of the Project

The development of this Professional Project is based on Cameron's, Dunn's, Phillip's, Reilly and Ward's, and other methodology experts' theories which all support the idea of extensive use of games and game-like activities in teaching English as a foreign language, with emphasis on utilization in young learners' classes.

Since lessons of English in the kindergarten will be the very first contact with learning a foreign language that young children will encounter in their education, it is necessary to make this experience a positive one. As mentioned in Chapter I, the aim of teaching English to very young learners consists not only of establishing the language knowledge and setting good pronunciation; however these aims are very important. One of the main goals that teachers in very young learners' classes should always bear in mind is that by exposing these children to the experience of learning for the first time in their lives, the teachers may be forming children's attitude towards learning in general. This phenomenon can of course bring in possible risks. The worst possible reaction could be that children after a negative experience gain a deprecatory attitude towards learning, which could last up to the basic school, with harmful effects on pupil's school performance. Not so devastating but also very negative impact could be creating a communication barrier between the teacher and the learner and in such case the efficient transmission of didactical information would be endangered. For these reasons, teachers, who decided to teach young children, should always be aware of specific needs which determine the learning process in this age group; the process, which should be as natural and pleasant as possible. Concerning the natural process, it is game and play that represents a real-world activity for young children. Since teaching of a foreign language should never be isolated from the real world, it is necessary to choose such techniques and topics for teaching, which best correspond with the characteristics of the target group.

In other words, creation of the positive attitude towards learning and establishment of good learning habits, together with basis of correct pronunciation and oral proficiency, should belong among the most significant aims of teachers who are teaching English to very young

learners. In relation to the experts' views, the basic questions for development of this Professional Projects were:

- a) Can the efficient engagement of games and game-like activities in the learning process help and support the idea of non-conscious learning in classes of very young learners?
- b) Is the exclusive use of games and game-like activities universally applicable to all phases of the learning process?
- c) Are there any negatives accompanying the use of games and game-like activities?

Answers? →

The thesis of this Professional Project is based on those views of methodology experts which suggest that when teaching a foreign language in the facilities of pre-school education (i.e. kindergartens), the use of means of games and game-like activities (e.g. rhymes, chants, activities from TPR) represent the most efficient and natural approach available. The efficiency is then seen in the way young children acquire the second language and the naturalness in the fact that games are the most spontaneous activities that children of this age perform. The whole learning process is hence defined by the non-conscious nature of children's learning, because while playing they do not realise that they are learning something. The foreign language in these classes then apparently functions only as a tool for playing, and not the goal.

1.1. Methods

With reference to methodology experts' theories which focus on TEFL in young learners' classes, and in order to support the thesis of this Project, I tried to design a model of lesson plans that would best fit the purposes of my teaching in the kindergartens. The aim was to design such activities that would support the idea of non-conscious learning and, at the same moment, that would satisfy the demand of maximal enjoyment. The aim resulted from a presumption that children, at any moment of the lesson, should not realise that they are being taught a foreign language. The idea was to create such activities, which provide the children an opportunity to use the language only as a tool for active participation in games and game-like activities. All activities expect children's active involvement and engagement. According

why not?

to Opal Dunn (1983) "Children acquire language by taking part in activities, and to take part in activities, they must want and need to communicate. The need to communicate in English is immediate..." (p.44) During language games, the participants of course communicate. The need to communicate, as Dunn mentions, is created by their need to participate in an activity, to be involved in the game. As previously described in the section, where sources of motivation were discussed, the function of learning in games is probably connected with the fact that in games children do not struggle to achieve any concrete results, but that their interest and motivation for playing lies on the actual practising of the games.

Regarding the structure of lessons, I tried to design the plans with reference to experts' suggestions of which the activities' variability and time balance are mostly emphasized. All lesson plans follow the same lesson framework, since the use of routines is very important with young children. The significance of using routines and following the same lesson frameworks has been emphasized by Dunn (1983) who claims that "The security of knowing what comes next enables young children to concentrate on the activity in which they are involved, free from the worry that they will not understand what to do next" (p.26).

By following the suggested lesson frameworks, systematically and exclusively using the games and game-like activities as a basic tool of teaching English in classes of very young learners, I believed that I would:

1. create the atmosphere of security and togetherness in the classroom, which is a necessary presumption for the learning process, or generally, for any kind of activity with the children
2. provide the children with conditions, sources and motivation for communication
3. provide the learners with an enjoyable and pleasant experience of learning a foreign language through fun, which would later on lay a good basis for further learning.

I chose to evaluate the results of the model by the following methods:

- a) Observation of the classroom atmosphere by analyzing children's reactions towards the activities, materials used, other classmates, and the teacher.
- b) Analysis of the reference of theories to their practical implementation in the Project.
- c) Analysis of the efficiency of chosen activities and materials, via observation of their functioning in the lessons and via discussion with the learners and their parents.

1.2. Materials

Materials which I have been using for my teaching almost exclusively come from the set of Zig-Zag Island course, by Alison Blair and Jane Cadwallader, illustrated by Jean Pidgeon and John Haslam, published by Oxford University Press in 2001. This course is designed for children of pre-school age and the set contains: Class book, Teacher's book, Cassette, Flashcards, and Posters.

The Class book is a colour, fully illustrated book, divided into six thematic parts: numbers, colours, members of family, toys, parts of face and fruit. The whole book is conceived as a story of two children, Tom and Katy, who arrive at a Zig-Zag Island, where they learn about the topics, with help of four animals which inhabit the island. The animals (*Polly Parrot*, *Lindy Lion*, *Micky Monkey* and *Harry Hippo*) guide the characters (and the learners as well) through the island. Each thematic part is divided into several lessons and the usual schema is that there is a "theoretical" part, where children make activities such as *listen and point* or play language games, where counting or pointing to a specific area of a picture is practised. On the opposite side, there is always a "practical" part of the lesson, and this includes drawing, colouring, matching, drawing a path, etc. These two pages are closely connected as both cover the same topic and require the same language. At the back of the book, there is a "fully practical" part, consisting of 24 pages of various cut-outs, always representing a topic which has been covered in the "theoretical" part of the class book. The cut-outs range from Zig-Zag book of Numbers (Family, Colours, etc.) to e.g. a face mask of Harry Hippo or a bookmark with symbols of animals' imprints. The cut-out section is an inseparable part of the class book and the products are consequently used in games.

The Zig-Zag Island course is designed to provide young learners a lot of visual aid for their learning. For this reason a set of *Flashcards* and two *Posters* are included. The Flashcards are a set of pictures, where all of the characters and items, which appear in the book, are painted. The Flashcards are used for a great variety of activities and games. The basic purpose is to visualise every single item (characters, animals, numbers, fruit, colours, etc.) so that the children always have both visual and oral stimuli. The Flashcards can be used in all of the games, chants and songs. Sometimes they function as a support (e.g. in songs and chants) and sometimes as a game item (e.g. in a guessing game). There are two posters, of which the first one is a magnified picture of the Zig-Zag Island, where children can trace the progress of their characters and the second one is an Action poster, where children can see the persons of Tom and Katy with symbols of activities (e.g. *Stand up, Sit down, Stop*).

The cassette contains a large number of listening exercises (pattern of *Listen and point*) which are connected with the pictures in pupils' class books. Except for the listening exercises, there are many chants and songs.

1.3. Description of the target group

Practical implementation and testing of the model took place at two kindergartens in Liberec: at the kindergarten "U Bertíka" (Purkyňova Street) and at the kindergarten "Mateřídouška" (Vzdušná Street). For testing of the model, it was beneficial that I had the opportunity to work with two different groups of children, among whom there were particular differences. Even within the groups, there were significant differences in pupils' age, and as mentioned in Chapter I. even a one-year difference within the classes of very young learners is relevant to the learning performance. In the following paragraph, the pupil's group from Bertík kindergarten will be described and after that the description of the later group from "Mateřídouška" kindergarten will be supplied.

Concerning the kindergarten "U Bertíka", this was my second-year lasting cooperation and I was familiar with the environment of the facility and the staff as well. Children, who attended the English course, were mainly from the final form (if forms taken into account in the setting of kindergartens). At the year of implementation of the model, three pupils from the lower form also entered the course. The year range then broadened to the extent of two

and a half years, which is at this age group quite a large variance. The lowest age was four years (there were 2 pupils of this age from the lower form) and the highest was six and a half years, at the beginning of the course. The average age of the pupils was then a little above five years. The number of students varied during the course, but the minimal number was 12 and the maximal 14 pupils. The change in number occurred after the first semester, when the two pupils of the lowest age decided (or rather their parents after consulting the matter with me decided) that the children's age is still very low and that they are not able to participate much in the group. However this matter may appear as a failure, the result was that parents of these children decided that it would be better for both sides to wait at least one year before their children will be able to attend to course. The reasons for giving up the course were of developmental nature. The two children still had distinct problems with pronunciation in Language 1 and their concentration span was drastically lower than of the older pupils. It also revealed me that such young children are even less able to co-operate with other students and thus they were unable to maintain in several activities. The group was quite heterogeneous even though the majority of children were on approximately the same developmental level (concerning cognitive, physical and emotional level of development). During the second semester of the course, the diversity in children's performance decreased considerably but still the group was of mixed ability.

At the beginning of the course, the children had absolutely no experience with English and with learning a foreign language, ^{ed} in general. Therefore, their level of English competence was none and the pupils need to be considered as absolute beginners. When planning the course design, I had to take into consideration the children's current level of physical and mental development, with adequate specific needs. Specifically, I had to realise, when designing an activity that very young children are not always willing to co-operate and that there might be problems with e.g. sharing tools for art and craft activities. I had to bear in mind that their concentration span is very short and for such reason, the activities must not be long. And most important of all, I always had to realise that the activities must be fun, must be enjoyable and that the children should not recognise that they are being taught. For the last reason, I decided not to behave in an authoritative and formal manner and hence I adopted the role of children's "uncle". This matter of calling adults in the "aunt and uncle" way is a very common routine in the environment of kindergartens, especially in those where alternative approaches and methods are being practised. In the kindergarten "U Bertika", there was such environment and in addition to the English course, the children practised several others

Purpose

activities, such as Yoga exercise with another “uncle”. In my opinion, the non-authoritative approach has its reason in the pre-school facilities. As stated in the previous chapter, the basic condition for efficient language acquisition is the secure and communicative atmosphere in the classroom. Children should feel that the teacher is someone, who would always help them, who they can rely on at any moment. The necessary rate of natural authority will just as be present since very young children consider the adults in this position as a natural authority. My personal experience persuaded me that with this age group it is possible to be a teacher, a game partner and a friend at the same time, while not losing the sense of authority needed for managing the class.

The practical testing of the model, in both kindergartens, was executed during 8 months, within 20 lessons, with each lesson lasting approximately 30 minutes. The lessons took place once a week.

The second teaching took place at the “Mateřídouška” kindergarten, which is the same type of facility of pre-school education. Both kindergartens have a partnership relationship, which includes corporate activities. With this kindergarten, it was my first-year experience but since I had the experience from the previous year at the kindergarten “U Bertika”, there were no problems concerning communication with the staff and the parents as well. The group at the “Mateřídouška” kindergarten was less heterogeneous, if compared with the first one, since there were no such differences in pupils’ age. The group had twelve pupils and all of them were from the final form. The age range was not significant, since there was only half a year distinction between the pupils. The approximate age was then five and a half years. Of course the group was of mixed ability as I later on discovered. There were 2 pupils, whose cognitive development was a little bit delayed and these pupils had serious problems with *general* knowledge which is common to the last grade of kindergarten. The problematic areas included numbers and colours, but as the course developed, these problems partially disappeared. However, it was necessary to include such diversity in designing the lesson plans and more time needed to be spent on practicing the basic skills. None of the children was capable of *what?* neither reading nor writing (and this was common to the first group as well) and few children were able to write their names in block letters. If compared with the first group, the diversity in this one was different, because as I later discovered, there was one pupil, who had serious problems within the family and the problems clearly reflected on her learning

How?
performance. Obviously, I took this fact into account and evaluated her progress with adapted criteria.

Considering the model of my behaviour (i.e. not a formal authority) and the teaching style, the principles were the same as in the first group. The level of pupil's English competence was also the same (i.e. absolute beginners) and the frequency of lessons was common to the first model, which means, that lessons took place once a week. Each lesson took approximately 30 minutes and the total number of lessons per year was 20. The practical testing of the model was parallel to the first group.

probably yours **2. Lesson plans and their commentaries**

Note: The following lesson plans were not edited in their chronological order.

With regards to the methodology experts' suggestions, I partially used Language 1 for explaining the rules and giving instructions, since at the beginning, my pupils had absolutely no English competence.

2.1. Lesson plan No. 1 – Numbers

Aim of the activity:	To practice and consolidate numbers 1 to 5
Objectives:	Pupils <u>actively recognise</u> and are able to use the numbers 1 to 5 correctly in various activities (e.g. chant, song, game)
Time needed:	30 minutes
Language level:	Beginners
Group of students:	kindergarten "U Bertika"
Age of the students:	4,5 – 6,5 years
Number of students:	14
Lesson language:	Hello, Listen and say the chant, Are you ready? One more time, Stop, Open your books, Take the scissors, Cut the cards, How many (parrots, monkeys, hippos, lions)? Close your books, Come here, Sing the song, Stand up, Sit down, Good bye.

Material needed: Flashcards with numbers 1 to 5
Tape recorder + cassette
Class books
a pair of Scissors for each pupil
Rubber band for each pupil
BlueTack

Lesson phases

Phase 1

Opening/warming up – chant One, two three, four, five

[5 minutes]

Greeting the children and telling them to sit down on the mat in the classroom's corner. The class starts with a revision of chant – One, two, three, four, five. (See Appendix 2, p.77 for transcription). Children sit in a circle, teacher slowly and clearly recites the chant and children after the first recitation, follow his instruction *Listen and say the chant*. The chant is practiced twice. In the middle of the circle, there are flashcards with numbers 1 – 5 and during the recitation, teacher points at the corresponding flashcards. The practice is done through aural, visual and oral perception. *W D*

Art and craft activity – number cards

[5-10 minutes]

During this activity, children are going to cut out cards with numbers 1-5, which will be used in a game and a song, in the following phases of the lesson.

Teacher explains that they will be cutting out the number cards which will be later used in a game. Children are asked to open their books on page 55. Two flashcards with numerals 5 are used to indicate the page number. Teacher asks two children to distribute scissors to everyone. Teacher shows the correct page and checks whether everybody has the right one opened. Teacher then explains that first they will be cutting out the whole page and then slitting the page into 6 cards (See Appendix 3, p.86 for the Zig-Zag Book of Numbers). Comprehension of this instruction needs to be checked and therefore the teacher demonstrates the first step by himself and cuts out the whole page and explains that he cuts the page by following the dashed line, with the symbol of scissors. After children have cut out the whole page, the teacher repeats the second part of the instruction which is that they will be slitting the page into six separate cards. This time it is necessary to emphasize that when slitting the page into

cards, children will be following a blue dotted line. This is a complication, because originally this line was designed for folding, but for the purposes of other activities (e.g. memory game or a card game) I decided to have separate number cards. After the children have cut-out all number cards, teacher asks them to write their names, or writes them himself, on the last card, where there is no number, but only a horizontal line and a symbol of a tree. All cards are then collected, with the one with name on top and joined together by the rubber band. For this operation, teacher's help is usually necessary.

Phase 2

Game – How many?

[10 minutes]

For specifying of how many animals are there in the picture, children use their number cards and shout the number.

Children are sitting in their desks and teacher distributes each child ^{only boys?} his class book. Teacher explains that they will be playing a game with number cards and that they will be counting animals that are hiding in a picture. Children are asked to open their books on page 8 (See Appendix 3, p. ⁸⁰81 for the picture). Teacher shows the corresponding Flashcard with numeral 8 and since children are not supposed to know this number in English, it is sometimes necessary to help children find the correct page. After teacher checks that each pupil has got the right page opened, he asks the children to tell him what animals they can see in the picture. After this introduction, teacher explains that he will be asking them how many parrots, monkeys, lions or hippos they can see in the picture. Each time he asks them, children should shout the number and should also show the appropriate number card. After this preliminary explanation of rules, a trial round takes place. Teacher asks himself (but at the same time the whole class) *how many parrots are there in the picture?* After a while (during which he is evidently counting the parrots by pointing at them and saying the numbers aloud) the teacher shouts the correct number and shows the whole class the appropriate number card. The next time it is a real round and the teacher again asks *How many parrots?* Since children already know the correct number, the responses should be correct. If at this stage some children do not seem to understand the task, the teacher should repeat the instruction and demonstrate once again. This game is not a competitive one, because some children may reply correctly after several turns. If a child shouts incorrect number or holds a wrong card number, the teacher repeats the correct answer several times and holds the correct flashcard, until everybody has got the right number card raised.

After finishing this activity, children are asked to close their books and two children collect them. The game ends after approximately 10 minutes, when the level of mistakes should decrease considerably. Moreover, the children have been sitting and concentrating for reasonably long time and thus it is advisable to change the type of activity completely.

Phase 3

Song – Number one I can see...

[10 minutes]

This song combines the principles of Total Physical Response theory with children's knowledge of numbers and animals. It is an activity that should relax the children after a concentration demanding tasks.

Teacher asks children to move to the area for playing games and executing other physically demanding activities, since some free space will be needed. Teacher then explains that they will be singing a song about numbers. Children are instructed to form a row and each child is given a number card (i.e. number cards 1-5 are distributed among the pupils in a random order. In case there are more than 10 children present, at least 2 children have the same number card). Teacher then asks the pupils to sit down and have a look at the number cards they just received. Pupils are explained that in the song, numbers appear and their task is, when they hear the number that is on their card, to stand up and show the corresponding card. There are flashcards with numbers 1-5 stuck on a wall, facing the children and below the numbers, there are flashcards with characters appearing in the song (For transcript of the song, see Appendix 2, p.77). For example, below number 2, there is a flashcard with Polly Parrot, below number 3 a flashcard with Mickey Monkey, etc. Besides, there is a picture from the class book (See Appendix 3, p.82) stuck alongside the flashcards where combinations of all characters are displayed. Before the song is performed for the first time, it is necessary to check whether children understand the instructions and thus the teacher should randomly call numbers and indicate the concerned children to stand up. This demonstration can be done e.g. by first sitting on the ground and after calling the number, showing the children the corresponding number card and at the same time standing up. As soon as the children seem to have understood the instructions, the song can be played. At the end of the song, all children should be standing. The song should be played two or three times, because repetition, together with physical response is usually enjoyed by the children.

As a follow-up, the teacher can play a *robot game*, which is a simple command-giving game, with the same principle as presented in the previous song. Teacher is giving two types of commands: *Stand up* and *Sit down*. The performer of the command is again chosen by calling a number and at the same time, by showing a corresponding flashcard.

Comments on the lesson

The lesson took place after we have been working with a new language item (i.e. numbers 1-5) for two previous lessons. For this reason, I expected the activities to be more or less successful as the pupils seemed to know all of the numbers and used them quite well.

The opening activity was a routine, because I always used a previously known chant or a song for warming-up. During the first time recitation, children responded rather individually and followed the number flashcards on the mat. The second recitation was done in chorus and no children seemed to have any difficulties with the numbers. The chant took approximately 5 minutes and after finishing it, the pupils moved to their desks, while I was distributing them the class books. Instructions for the art and craft activity were quite easy to follow, because every step I accompanied by clear demonstration of the task and finally, children could see the whole process of creating the number cards, as well as the final product. However the instruction seemed precise to me, two pupils started cutting the page in reverse order (i.e. horizontally), but this was no problem, since the page was to be cut into pieces in the next step. One pupil did not realise that he is holding (and consequently cutting) two pages at the time and as I later realised, this happened regularly with other pupils and other activities. The only prevention I could think of, was to check the number of pages by myself before the cutting, which was quite time demanding. After the whole page has been cut out, I explained the second step – slitting the page into separate cards and demonstrated the step. The two youngest children had major problems with cutting out the cards straight and therefore I helped them with this task. All cards have been cut out and I asked the pupils whether they were able to sign their name on the odd card. Three pupils replied in the affirmative and the rest of the class relied upon me. As the last step, I helped 6 pupils with joining the number cards with a rubber band, since this task required a sense for delicate movements' co-ordination.

After everybody finished producing the number cards, pupils remained in their desks and I asked them to open their books on page 8. However the pupils did not know the number in English, most of them were able to find the page, except for the two youngest ones, for whom I had to find the appropriate page. Children's task was to look at the picture and later on to answer the question *What animals can you see in the picture?* There were no problems with finding all animals, partially because the pupils knew all of them from previous lessons. Some children noticed that the animals appear several times in the picture and therefore I continued explaining that exactly this is going to be their task – to answer the question *How many (parrots) are there in the picture?* Afterwards, I demonstrated the task in a trial round, while counting aloud and pointing at parrots. Pupils counted with me and even before I finished the counting, several children shouted the correct number at me. Because all the children seemed to have understood the instructions and were looking forward to playing, the first real round was performed. During the play, a majority of children answered correctly and only sometimes they showed incorrect number card. As the game was in process, the level of incorrect answers was decreasing and finally, in the sixth round, there was only one wrong answer. Even though the game was successful, in terms of students' involvement in the activity, by the end of the sixth round, the children seemed to be losing concentration and started talking in Language 1. One pupil also stood up and asked me to leave for a toilette and consequently two other students joined her request. That is why I realised that it is more than time to change the type of activity because the atmosphere in the classroom became full of chattering and shuffling.

After the whole class was gathered, I instructed the pupils to form a row in the playing area. As a motivation element I explained the children that the following activity was going to be full of action and that it is a song with physical exercise. Children seemed to be highly motivated and even before the activity started, few pupils began to jump like frogs. The rest of the class joined spontaneously and I decided to take advantage of this type of movement by all of a sudden giving the children commands which will be used in the song. First I asked them to *Stop!*, which was a familiar command for suspension of whatever activity and then I continued in a robot-like voice and alternated the three commands: *Stand up! Sit down! Stop!*. This intermezzo took about 3 minutes but it was worthwhile because the tension from the previous still activity was eliminated. The last command I gave them was to *Stand up and stop!* And while standing in a row, I distributed each child one number card. There were 14 pupils, which means that there were always 3 pupils with the same number card, except for

the last number with two pupils. The children were still in the command *Stop!* and this meant that they could not move and speak. Children considered this command-giving game as a fun, because they pretended to be robots. A practice of commands in association with numbers then took place as I pointed at a number, called it aloud and gave the command. For example, *Number four, sit down!* Children were very enthusiastic and when they heard *Stand up!* they rather jumped up. Then I explained that in the song, they will hear about animals and children who are sitting on number trees (the notion of a number tree has been known to them from previous lessons). The pupils seemed to have understood the principle of standing up when they hear the number that is on their card and therefore I played the song for the first time. During the first playback, I always pointed at the corresponding number, performed the command (i.e. I stood up) and pointed at the children who were to stand up. Only few children understood and that is why only few stood up. I had to stop the tape and explained the activity once again, this time completely in Czech. When checking the pupils' comprehension of the instructions I perceived that children when they were listening to the song were more concentrating on the animals than the numbers. At this point I realised that it was not good to mention the animals and that I should have more emphasised that they should be listening for numbers. The song then has been practised two more times and each time, the efficiency was not sufficient enough. Each time the song has been played at least 3 children did not react to their number and kept seated. Therefore, after the second playback, I decided to quit the activity. Moreover, the time was nearly up and the pupils seemed rather exhausted. I finished the lesson by praising their performance in that day's lesson and saying goodbye with adding that I look forward to the next lesson.

Conclusions and evaluation

I learned from this teaching experience and especially from the last phase of the lesson that it is extremely important what activities the teachers of young learners choose and how they adapt them according to their own teaching conditions. The last activity was originally designed as a "seated" activity, where children are working with their class books. I adapted the idea to a TPR activity and the results were not satisfying. On the other hand, the first two phases of the lesson were very successful and all pupils seemed to enjoy all activities. Chant, at the very beginning of the lesson, highly motivated children and helped in recycling the previously learned item – the numbers 1-5. The following art and craft activity reminded me that it is advisable to check children's comprehension even during the activity by systematic

monitoring and also that if cutting out is involved, it is always necessary to check the number of pages that children are about to cut. Since this was not a first lesson, the diversity in children's performance became more and more apparent to me and hence I noted which children need more help in art and craft activities and specifically in what types. The game *How many?* functioned very well and children were involved a lot in playing it. The instructions were clearly comprehended and even in the trial round children successfully answered my question. The only problem was timing of the activity because I did not realise that we have been playing the game for more than 10 minutes and that children were losing concentration. For future learning, I realised that it is better to finish an activity even before it has reached, or very soon after its peak. The last phase appeared to be perfectly relaxing the children, or at least until the song has been practised. The command-giving game was an activating element and children were looking forward to singing. Probably, the problem with the song was in giving instructions and primarily in unsuitable adaptation of the game, since elements of TPR could have been integrated in other way and thus better. However, the children were not disappointed with the last phase, as I later found out by asking them, and the lesson as a whole was an entertaining experience.

2.2. Lesson plan No. 2 – Colours

Aim of the activity:	To present a new language item – colours: red, yellow, blue, pink, green and to partially acquire the new language in an art and craft activity and a game.
Objectives:	Pupils are introduced a new language item and the gradual familiarisation is done via the art and craft activity and tactile perception in a game.
Time needed:	30 minutes
Language level:	Beginners
Group of students:	kindergarten "Mateřídouška"
Age of the students:	5 years
Number of students:	10
Lesson language:	Hello, Listen and sing the song, Are you ready? Stop, Open your books, Listen and point. Take the blue/red/yellow/pink/green pencil, Match and colour the parrots. Close your books, What

colour is it? Come here, Play the game, Catch and name, Good bye.

Material needed: Flashcards with colours: pink, green, blue, red, yellow
Tape recorder + cassette
Class books
5 coloured balls (in appropriate colours)
Colour pencils or crayons (appropriate colours)

Lesson phases

Phase 1

Opening/Warming up – song I'm Harry Hippo...

[3 minutes]

As a warming-up activity I decided to use children's favourite song I'm Harry Hippo because the new language item was going to be introduced and I knew that this song will motivate children.

After greeting the children, teacher asks them to form a circle in the playing area and informs the pupils that today they will start with a familiar song I'm Harry Hippo (See Appendix 2, p.78 for transcript). This song is accompanied by children's exercise because when an animal occurs in the lyrics, the children imitate its movements and also imitate its voice. This song is played only once and its primary function is to motivate children for further learning.

Phase 2

Introducing new language item - Listen and point exercise

[10 minutes]

For introduction into a new language item, I decided to use a Listen and point exercise because children got accustomed to this method and thus it became a routine. During this introductory lesson on colours, children are not expected to learn all of the colours, but rather to pick up some items. Later on, in subsequent lesson, the new language will be consolidated.

Teacher asks children to sit down to their desks and distributes class books. Pupils are then supposed to open their books on page 12 (See Appendix 3, p.83 for the picture). A combination of flashcards 1 and 2 is advisable and helps with finding the appropriate page as

well. Verification of correct page is then necessary. Teacher asks children what they can see in the picture. For description of the content, answers in Language 1 are acceptable. However, it is good to elicit pupil's previous knowledge of the characters' names and in this case, English should be used. The description of the picture functions as a motivation and at the same time as a presentation of the topic to be covered. Teacher then asks children what do they think is the topic of the lesson. Again, use of Language 1 is acceptable. After the introduction into the topic, teacher explains that they are going to listen to the tape and at the same time, they will be pointing at corresponding items in the picture (i.e. parrots of different colours). Before the listening activity starts, a demonstration should take place and the teacher should call one or two colours and point at corresponding parrots. After the demonstration, the first listening should take place. During the first listening, the teacher shows flashcards with colours that are mentioned in the listening. Children have the possibility to check whether they pointed at the correct parrot or if they do not know, they just follow the teacher's guide. During the second and third listening, the model is the same because when learning a new language, children need to know that there is always some help available. 2,

Art and craft activity – Match and colour the parrots

[5 minutes]

This activity is to provide the children with a creative contact with the new language items. The activity is done in pairs because co-operation may be helpful and also because the pencils are in sets and children could ask for colours by using the new language. 83 ?

The class is divided into pairs and teacher distributes a set of colour pencils to each pair. Children are then instructed to take a look at the opposite page (See Appendix 3, p.85 for the picture), and of course the teacher shows the page to the whole class. Children are asked to look at the green parrot and decide why there are green lines going to the two partially coloured parrots in the bottom. After children make out the principle, teacher asks them to take pink pencil and shows everyone the pink pencil. Together, the whole class is trying to find corresponding pictures in the bottom and then these parrots are coloured. After the demonstration, teacher asks the pupils to finish the activity. During the colouring, teacher monitors the class and eventually provides help. Within the monitoring, teacher may ask some children a question *What colour is it?* and if the pupils do not know the answer, tells them. After the activity is finished, the teacher asks the children to collect the colour pencils and to close their books.

Phase 3

Game – Catch and name

[7-10 minutes]

The last activity is done in the area for playing games. It is an activity in which a movement and thus tactile perception are involved. Hence the game should be functioning as a pre-consolidation of the new language items.

Teacher explains the children that now they are going to play a game. Children should know that games are always performed in the playing area. If they do not react, the teacher should ask them to move there. Pupils form a larger circle, so that everybody has got enough space around them. Teacher then shows children the coloured balls and asks them to make a guess about the game. Children usually come at the principle of throwing and catching and therefore the teacher praises them and holds up one ball and calls its colour. Then he throws the ball to some pupil and repeats the colour again. After repeating it, the teacher indicates that the receiver should say the colour as well and consequently to throw the ball to another pupil. It may take some time, before the pupils co-ordinate throwing and saying the colours, but after several rounds, the principle should be clear enough to change the colour.

Comments on the lesson

This lesson was designed to introduce new language items, to practice them and to start their consolidation in a game activity. The beginning of this lesson was done through a familiar and popular song. The idea was to warm the pupils up and to motivate them for learning a new language. Children liked this song very much especially because the singing is accompanied by motion, gestures and imitation of animals' voices. Important encouragement was that the pupils were able to sing almost all of the lyrics. We have been singing the song twice and children seemed to be pleased by the fact that they are able to sing an English song by themselves.

After the warming-up period, the actual acquisition of new vocabulary started by practising the *Listen and point* activity. This model has also been known to the pupils as we have done the same type of activity when introducing numbers. The pre-activity description of the picture was also a common routine and thus children described the whole picture without any problems. Some children concentrated on counting parrots, while others described the environment of the parrots' classroom and named several objects (e.g. bell,

black board, chalk, etc.). When I asked them to concentrate on the parrots and asked them to find the difference between them, the whole class started shouting that they are of different colours and thus I informed them about the lesson's topic. For the actual description of the picture, Language 1 was used and only when I asked them to name at least the characters' names (Tom and Katy, Polly Parrot) they used English. This was quite surprising for me and I realised that pupils' spontaneous use of English, at this stage, still needs to be elicited a lot. The main listening activity was successful in terms of high motivation of the pupils and also in terms of efficiency. Pupils were able to follow the tape and to point at appropriate colours. Of course they were looking at the flashcards but at this stage, it was necessary and also beneficial for the acquiring. The *Listen and point* activity took more time than I expected, especially because the introduction of the topic was more time demanding. On the other hand, such thorough introduction was necessary since the topic was completely new to the pupils and was going to be covered in the following four lessons. For this reason I consider the time spent on it as worthwhile. The activity was performed in two rounds and after the second one, I decided to move forward to the art and craft activity where children were supposed to match and colour the figures of parrots. what?

Because we have spent more time on presenting the new language I decided to reduce the time for colouring. After children made out the principle of matching and colouring, and after I demonstrated the process on the example of the green parrot, children started working in pairs and continued matching and colouring other parrots. After 5 minutes, when children had finished 3 parrots and after I checked through the whole group's progress, I asked the pupils to finish the parrot they have been currently working on and set the rest of the exercise to be done as a homework.

There were approximately 10 minutes left and thus I just announced that the last activity to be done is a game and wondered for children's reaction. I was pleased that 2 or 3 children immediately moved to the playing area and others, after they realised, followed them. This demonstrated me that children were becoming more and more familiar with the lesson framework, which was a positive finding. The last activity was designed to start consolidation of the new language by involving aural/oral and mainly tactile perception into the practise. After children formed a circle, I showed them the coloured balls and let them make a guess about the game. Pupils immediately found out and were obviously pleased that the game was going to be operational. In the first round, when I demonstrated the task, children were more

concentrated on throwing and catching rather than on the language. But since I called out the name of the colour after each throw, the children started first to repeat and then to produce the language on their own, and in a non-conscious manner. The game lasted for more than 10 minutes and pupils were not willing to finish it, even though I explained them that the lesson was over and other activities were waiting for them. All pupils were enthusiastic and only when I promised that we could play the game next week, the lesson was finished and children were expressing me their feelings, that they enjoyed the game very much and were looking forward to next week's lesson.

Conclusions and evaluation

There were four important findings revealed for me in this lesson. The first one was the perfectly functional principle of the lesson framework and the use of routines. Since the very beginning of the lesson, children knew what phase was going to follow. This was apparent with the song at the beginning, and especially with the game in the last phase. Children knew where to move next and that they do not need class books, etc. The second finding was also connected with the warming-up song. The song did not have any direct connection to the new topic (except for characters' names) but because I knew that children were keen on singing it and that they were able to sing most of its lyrics, I decided to use it as a strong encouragement and motivation for learning new language. The third experience relates to the timing of activities and setting priorities to them. After the listening exercise, I could see that there would not be enough time for the final game and that this game has a more important role in the lesson plan than the art and craft activity. The pupils would be sitting for too long if I let them finish all of the parrots and then not enough time would remain for the game. The change in type of activity was needed and thus I consider my decision to be efficient one. And finally, the last finding is probably the most important one, as it supports the idea of non-conscious learning. During the last game, after the children automated their movements while using the foreign language, and thus became concentrated on the game itself, the language became only a tool for playing the game. In the next lesson, we were playing the game again, with partially modified rules -- a receiver who does not call the colour has to make a knee bend. And with this slight modification, the language as a tool was even more obvious because to be successfully involved in the game, the participants were even more motivated to use the language and thus it became a means for playing.

2.3. Lesson plan No. 3 – Micky's family

Aim of the activity:	To practice members of family, plus to recycle the knowledge of numbers and colours.
Objectives:	Children are able to use recycled language (numbers and colours) in connection with relatively new language items (members of family) and are able to use it in various activities (game, song)
Time needed:	30 minutes
Language level:	Beginners
Group of students:	kindergarten "U Bertika"
Age of the students:	4,5 – 6,5 years
Number of students:	12
Lesson language:	Hello, Listen and say the chant, Are you ready? One more time, Stop, Open your books, Take the scissors, Cut the cards, Who has got 1/2/3/4/5 banana(s)? Who has got a red/green/yellow/pink/orange/purple plate? Mum/dad/sister/brother/baby/Tom, Close your books, Come here, Sing the song, Jump up, Fall down, Good bye.
Material needed:	Flashcards with numbers 1 to 5, Flashcards with colours: red, green, yellow, pink, purple, orange Flashcards with members of Micky's family: mum, dad, sister, brother, baby Tape recorder + cassette Class books Scissors for each pupil Rubber band for each pupil Blue Tack

Lesson phases

Phase 1

Opening/Warming-up – chant Mum, dad, sister, brother, baby [3 minutes]

The opening activity is a familiar chant and within the chant, a language concerning the members of family is recycled for further use in a game and a song.

The lesson starts with a chant Mum, dad, sister, brother, baby (See Appendix 2, p.79 for the transcript). This chant provides the children with an opportunity to recap the members of Micky's family and to introduce the lesson's topic. Chant is performed on the mat, where children are sitting in a circle. Flashcards with all members of the family are placed in the centre of the circle, so that everybody could see the pictures and the teacher is able to point at them during the recitation. The chant is practiced two times.

Phase 2

Art and craft activity – family cards [5 minutes]

In this activity, children will produce 6 cards with all members of the family. These will be used in a game that follows.

Teacher asks the children to move to their desks and meanwhile distributes the class books. Children are asked to open the books on page 65 (See Appendix 3, p.87 for the family cards). Two flashcards with numbers 6 and 5 accompany the instruction and the teacher monitors whether each child has found the correct page. Teacher then explains that they are going to cut out the family cards and distributes the scissors. As with every cutting-out activity, it is necessary to divide the instructions into 2 parts: first to explain that the whole page needs to be cut-out by following the dashed line. After this instruction a demonstration by the teacher is necessary and consequently the children cut-out the page (again check whether pupils' are cutting-out only one page). After everybody has got the separate page, the teacher completes the instructions by explaining and demonstrating the process of slitting the page into 6 separate cards. Children follow and teacher is monitoring and at the same time providing the children with help when needed.

Game – Who has got 1 banana?

[10 minutes]

The family cards created a short while ago will be used in the game for visual control of the correct answers.

When all of the children have their family cards ready, teacher asks them to turn to page 24, where there is a picture for game Who has got 1 banana? (See Appendix 3, p.85 for the picture). As usual, the number of page is accompanied by two flashcards and teacher's monitoring. Children are asked to describe the picture and use of English is elicited by teacher's questions (e.g. about members of family, colours and numbers of bananas). Teacher explains that they are going to play a game in which Micky Monkey is asking Katy a question: *Who has got 1/2/3/4/5 banana(s)?* Children are then explained that the teacher is Micky Monkey and he is asking them the same question. A trial round takes place and the teacher asks in a monkey-like voice *Who has got 1 banana?* He asks the children to count with him and after the children seem to know the answer, the teacher shouts *Dad and sister!* and at the same time he shows the corresponding family cards. After the trial round, the teacher is asking about the rest of bananas and then a variation comes, when the form of the question is changed and teacher asks e.g. *Who has got a red plate?* As a last phase of the game, the teacher combines the two questions together and asks e.g. *Who has got 3 bananas and a pink plate?* and by adding this extra information, the children have to concentrate on two features. This stage may be too demanding especially for the youngest players. The game is finished either when all of the combinations were exhausted or when the activity starts losing attraction.

Phase 3

Song – 5 little monkeys sitting in a tree

[10 minutes]

This song is practised as the last activity of the lesson plan because it should function as a tension relaxation. Pupils were sitting still for almost 15 minutes, and even though the game involved certain amount of action, a rapid change in the type of activity is convenient. This song includes physical exercise and at the same time it consolidates the language items from previous activities and lessons.

Teacher asks children to move to the playing area and divides the class into two groups. One group with 5 children represents the members of Micky's family (mum, dad, sister, brother and baby) and the other group as a whole represents Micky Monkey. Each member of the Micky's family is given a flashcard with corresponding picture (e.g. mum's

flashcard is given to a pupil who represents mum) and all family members stand up on a low bench (not more than 30 centimetres of height!). The other group which represents Micky Monkey stands opposite to them. Teacher explains the children that they are going to sing and perform an action song, where one group consists of members of Micky's family (and consequently names them) and the other group represents Micky Monkey. First of all, the teacher paraphrases the lyrics of the song (See Appendix 2, p.79 for transcription) and checks children's comprehension by asking in Language 1. *The idea of the song is that in the first strophe, there are 5 monkeys sitting in a tree, Micky jumps up and one of the 5 monkeys falls down. The strophes are then repeated until there are no monkeys left.* The thorough explanation of the story is necessary because the children need to know when and why some of them are jumping and the others are falling down. After the explanation of the song's story, the teacher plays the tape once, with no action performed yet. The reason is to let the children recognise individual strophes and to identify their time of action. During the first listening, the teacher sings as well and points at those pupils' characters who are just appearing in the song. Before the action takes place, it is necessary to demonstrate the exercise. The Micky Monkey group is during the song in a crouched position and only when they hear *Micky jumps up!* they perform the action (i.e. they jump up). The representatives of Micky's family are standing on a low bench and when they hear their character's name e.g. *sister*, followed by *falls down*, they perform the action by jumping down from the bench and falling on the ground, where they remain until the song is finished. After the song is practised once, the children swap their positions.

Comments on the lesson

This lesson was very successful in terms of children's interest in the activities and the level of enthusiasm that they expressed. The first phase of the lesson – the chant – got the lesson started and because in the chant, a monkey-like style of recitation is used, the children imitated the voices and sometimes accompanied the recitation with characteristic movements. The activity was full of fun and thus determined the whole lesson.

The art and craft activity – cutting out of the family cards – started in an organised and smooth way. I only had to find the correct page for several students, but some of the others even co-operated and helped with finding it. During the cutting, many children demanded that the chant should be practised once again and therefore I adopted the role of a monkey speaker

and the children repeated after me in chorus. This fact did not lengthen the time spent on the actual cutting and after 5 minutes the cards were ready to use. After I announced that the cards will be used in a game, the children automatically started to move to the playing area and I realized that it is not a problem to perform the game on a (carpeted) floor, even though the original plan was to sit in desks. This adaptation was really not a problem, since children took their books with them and formed a circle.

After everybody found the page with picture of a monkey family, sitting by the table, a spontaneous discussion began, concerning what the activity was going to be about and what is on the picture. Some pupils suggested that they will be counting the bananas, while some remembered that I mentioned the family cards and that they will be playing a card-game or a memory game. The latest suggestions were adequate because in the previous lessons, I often used the number/colour cards for playing a memory game or a simplified card-game. This time I had to partially disappoint them but I elicited their interest when I praised them that some of the guesses were very close and that counting, recognition of colours and of family members will be involved and that the family cards will be used for co-indicating the answers. After introduction to the game's topic, I explained the rules and gave examples of the language used in the activity. After the explanation a trial round took place and I asked a question *Who has got 1 banana?* together with the whole class I counted all the bananas and called the two characters – *dad and sister!* At the same time I raised the corresponding family cards and let the children check if it was correct. After the trial round, the game was practised in 3 more rounds and then I integrated the other question, concerning the colour of the plate. Again the game was played in 6 more rounds and finally I combined the two questions. After asking the pupils *Who has got three bananas and a pink plate?* some children replied in correct answer (i.e. baby) but there were some who did not understand the task and repeated their previous answers. Seeing that the instructions were not clear, I stopped the activity and re-explained the principle. However, in the next round, there were 3 pupils (among whom, the youngest ones), who were not able to combine the two information together and repeated *baby and brother*. In every following round, I corrected them but the results were almost the same. I deduced from this experience that even a two-year difference in age can make the distinction in such activity. From this point of view, I have to evaluate the last phase of the activity as partially unsuccessful because I did not presume that the youngest children will not be able to cope with its difficulty.

The last activity included a lot of physical exercise and children were pleased when I told them that we will be singing a song in which they will be playing monkeys. The organisation was at first time a little bit chaotic, because children's enthusiasm was eminent. However, after a while, the class was divided into two groups (the advantage was that the number of pupils was ideal) and both groups stroke their positions. After explaining the story and giving instructions, the first playback was performed. The children were listening carefully because I explained them that it is necessary to concentrate on the proper moment in which the action is to be performed. After the first listening, both groups practised their action, on my commands, and consequently the song has been played for the second time. Amazingly, there was nobody who failed to catch the proper moment in the song and thus no one failed to perform the action. Sometimes, the excitement was so intense that I had to calm the class down. The song was then played once again, with roles exchanged and the time was just up. As in several previous lessons, the children were asking me to repeat the song in the next lesson, because, as they said, they experienced much fun in playing it.

Conclusions and evaluation

As mentioned in the lesson comments, the attendance of fun and excitement in all of the activities provided this lesson with enormous attractiveness for the pupils. Even though, there appeared problems in several moments of the lesson when e.g. the youngest learners were not fully capable to cope with difficulty of the task, which was designed with reference to the majority of group, the whole lesson was a success in terms of demonstration of the crucial role of classroom's atmosphere and children's full involvement. Concerning the failure to modify the activity level to all pupils' abilities, I can see the solution in a careful planning ahead and while designing the activities, taking into account that in some stages, the activity may be split, according to individual capabilities.

From this teaching experience, I learned that the element of fun and excitement is one of the best motivational factors in teaching very young learners. The level of motivation was very high from the very first activity and what contributed most was the topic of the lesson. Children naturally identified with the characters of a monkey family and seemed to be largely involved mainly because of imitating the animals' voices and movements. Since children were maximally involved in the activities and thus did not concentrate on the language consciously, the acquisition and consolidation of the language items has been natural and

hence efficient. This finding has generally substantiated the maximal use of games and game-like activities in classes of very young learners and hence supported the thesis of this paper.

CHAPTER III. CONCLUSION

1. Discussion of conclusions

The thesis of this Professional Project declares that the extensive use of games and game-like activities represents, within the process of TEFL in young learners' classes, the most natural and hence effective approach available. The thesis is supported by a number of experts' statements, in which the role of games and game-like activities is considered as crucial for creating a secure and a communicative atmosphere in the classroom. This presumption facilitates that the learning process is done through activities which are enjoyable and furthermore that such atmosphere enables the learners to be involved in the communication. Such learning conditions should result in a non-conscious matter of acquiring the foreign language. *not mentioned before*

The practical model was based on the previously stated principles. By implementing the model in the settings of pre-school facilities, an attempt to investigate its justifiability in practice has been undertaken. When designing the model, the point was to follow the principles, stated in a number of experts' theories dealing with teaching a foreign language in young learners' classes. In accordance with these theories, the model's implementation in practice and its consequent evaluation attempted to:

- a) verify and substantiate the justifiability of the thesis or to condemn it
- b) demonstrate that the extensive use of games and game-like activities is beneficial in terms of high-level efficiency of the learning process

After the model was executed in a one-year duration at two kindergartens, the results of observations and evaluations of the model's functioning indicated that the statement maintained by the thesis can to be verified as justifiable. The support for this statement was provided by a number of extended analyses of the lessons' observations, by interviewing the pupils and their parents and by relating all of the findings to the theory.

Detailed results of the lessons' observations were presented in Chapter II in the section of Lesson plans and their commentaries. Nevertheless, the general conclusion is that, with certain exceptions, the model as designed in the lesson plans was functioning well. The efficiency of the model can be demonstrated on the classes' progress during the year of testing and especially in their positive attitude towards learning a foreign language. The last point will be further discussed in the findings from interviews.

In order to gain relevant feedback on the learning experience, I used the method of interviewing both the children and their parents. It is necessary to realize that children of this age are on one hand giving you the most authentic feedback (during the lesson) and on the other hand that the reliability of other information (after the lesson) may sometimes be questionable. To demonstrate this ambiguity, a specific example will be presented: during an art and craft activity a pupil suddenly left the desk and when I asked him about the reason, he answered me that the activity is boring and that he does not like it. After the lesson was over, I always asked the pupils about their positive and negative experiences from the lesson. Specifically the pupil, who left the desk, told me that he really enjoyed the whole lesson and had a lot o fun. In my point of view, the reaction changed because the last activity was an action game and the whole class was involved in enthusiasm. That is why the negative experience from the previous activity was surpassed by a more actual experience, which was highly positive. For this reason, I sometimes interviewed the pupils immediately after the activity was over, in order to gain reliable information. The reason for interviewing children's parents was to acquire the insight into how the pupils report on the lessons when they are not in contact with the teacher and thus their feelings should be expressed absolutely freely. When interviewing the students after particular activities, their views were for example that:

-- the activity was fun and when I asked them about the reason, they added that they were simply playing a game or singing a song which obviously is a source of enjoyment;

-- they did not realise that they were being taught because I was playing the game with them and thus I could not be teaching;

-- are not afraid of using English (after I asked them whether they are ashamed if they do not know something) because nobody laughs at them if they do not know or make a mistake

-- most of all they like when they can pretend to be animals, speak like animals and do the corresponding movements

-- they are looking forward to learning a foreign language at the elementary school

Of course not only positive appraisals were included in their answers and what appeared most frequently was that:

-- the activity was too short and that is why they did not have the chance to demonstrate all of their results (e.g. from an art and craft activity)

-- in the game, there were some very successful players (e.g. in a memory game) and the others could not compete with them

-- the lesson in general was too short

While interviewing the parents, I asked them several questions concerning their view about the course. Specifically, I asked them about the intensity of the course, the methods used and most importantly, about the children's evaluation of the course. The parents provided me with a great variety of information and the most frequent answers were that:

-- they would welcome if the frequency and thus the intensity of the course was far more higher

-- they consider the methods used for teaching as very efficient ones because children when return home they were willing to demonstrate the songs, chants or products that they have created in the lesson

However there were no direct observations from the sides of classroom teachers, I was also provided with a valuable source of evaluation of the course in afterwards discussions. The teachers emphasised that the concerned pupils were always looking forward to the lesson and since the beginning of the day when the lesson took place, these children were chatting about what the lesson would look like and what activities would be involved. After the lesson,

many pupils presented the results of the art and craft activities to the teachers and other class mates as well.

My personal point of view is that the Professional Project fulfilled its aim and hence supported the thesis. The outcome of the Project lies mainly in the findings that if appropriate materials and methods are used for teaching a foreign language to very young learners, the efficiency of acquiring the language is considerably high. The expression 'appropriate materials and methods' in the case of young learners' classes may, in my point of view, be specified by using such activities where the children do not realise that they are learning the foreign language. This primarily relates to the activities where children's natural needs and interests are being satisfied, and among which the games and game-like activities undeniably belong.

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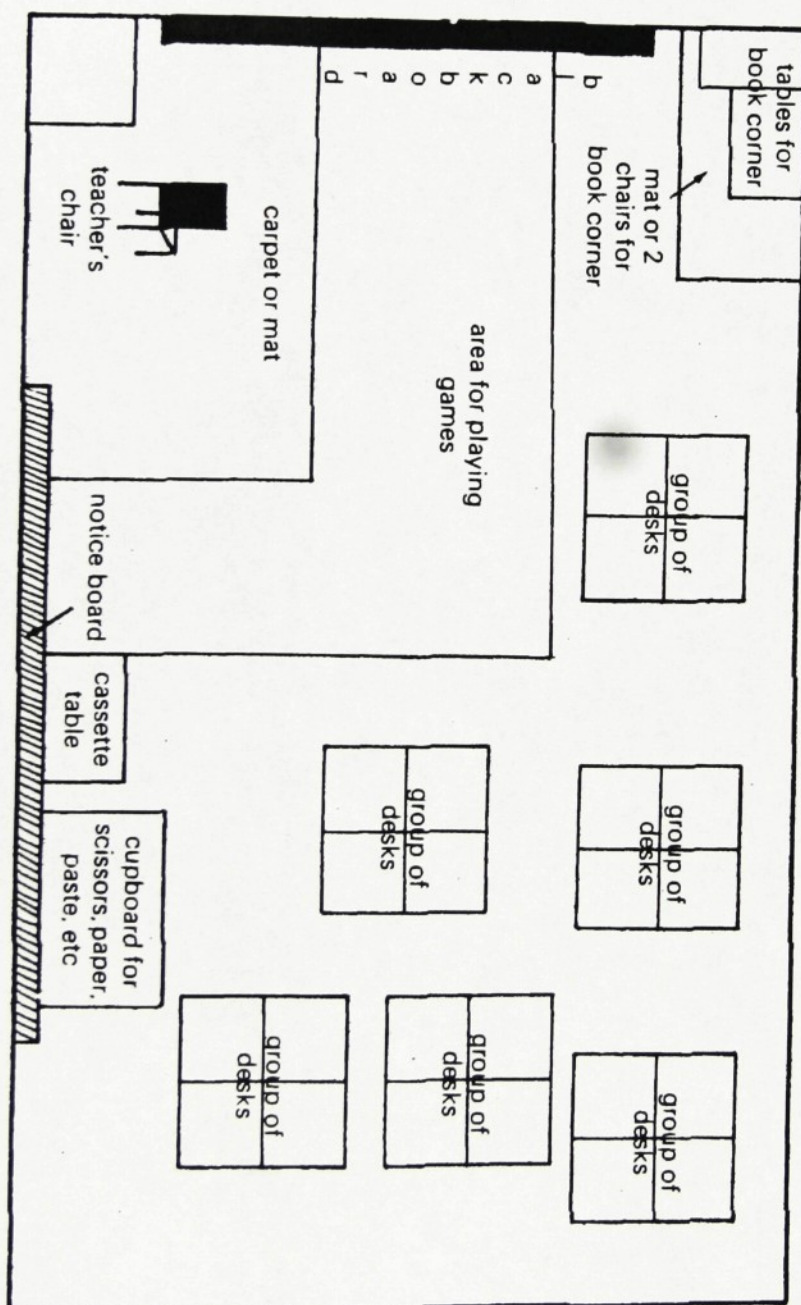
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1.1. Appendix 1

Figure 1

Taken from *Beginning English with Young Children* by Opal Dunn, published by MacMillan Publishers Ltd., 1994. page 32



1.2. Appendix 2

TRANSCRIPTS OF AUDIO MATERIALS (CHANTS AND SONGS)

All texts were transcribed from a cassette, included in the Zig-Zag Island Course set by Allison Blair and Jane Cadwallader, published in Oxford by Oxford University Press, 2001.

Note:

(T) - Teacher

(C) - Children in chorus

Chant: One, two, three, four, five

(T) Listen and say the chant - One, two, three, four, five.

Are you ready?

(T) One, two

(C) One, two

(T) One, two, three

(C) One, two, three

(T) One, two, three, four

(C) One, two, three, four

(T) One, two, three, four, five

(C) One, two, three, four, five

(T) Five number trees

(C) Five number trees

Song: Number one, I can see...

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Number 1. I can see

Tom and Katy in a tree.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Number 2. I can see

Polly Parrot in a tree.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Number 3. I can see

Micky Monkey in a tree.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Number 4. I can see

Lindy Lion in a tree.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Number 5. I can see

Harry Hippo in a tree.

Song: I'm Harry Hippo

(Harry) I'm Harry Hippo. Hippo, hippo.
I'm Harry Hippo and I'm your friend.

(Lindy) I'm Lindy Lion. Lion, lion.
I'm Lindy Lion and I'm your friend.

(Micky) I'm Micky Monkey. Monkey, monkey.
I'm Micky Monkey and I'm your friend.

(Polly) I'm Polly Parrot. Parrot, parrot.

I'm Polly Parrot and I'm your friend.

Chant: Mum, dad, sister, brother, baby

(T) Listen and say the chant - Mum, dad, sister, brother, baby.
Are you ready?

(T) Mum, mum

(C) Mum, mum

(T) Dad, dad

(C) Dad, dad

(T) Sister, sister

(C) Sister, sister

(T) Brother, brother

(C) Brother, brother

(T) Shhh, shhh, baby, baby

(C) Shhh, shhh, baby, baby

Song: Five little monkeys sitting in a tree

Five little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Five little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Micky jumps up.

Dad falls down.

Micky, Micky Monkey,

Please calm down.

Four little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Four little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Micky jumps up.

Mum falls down.

Micky, Micky Monkey,

Please calm down.

Three little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Three little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Micky jumps up.

Brother falls down.

Micky, Micky Monkey,

Please calm down.

Two little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Two little monkeys sitting in a tree.

Micky jumps up.

Sister falls down.

Micky, Micky Monkey,

Please calm down.

One little monkey sitting in a tree.

Five little monkeys sittin in a tree.

Micky jumps up.

Baby falls down.

Micky, Micky Monkey,

Come with me.

1.3. Appendix 3

VISUAL MATERIALS

All pictures were taken from the Ziz-Zag Island class book, by Allison Blair and Jane Cadwallader, published in Oxford by Oxford University Press, 2001.

Picture 1

Zig-Zag Island class book, p.8

Relates to the Lesson plan No. 1, game – How many?



Picture 2

Zig-Zag Island class book, p.10

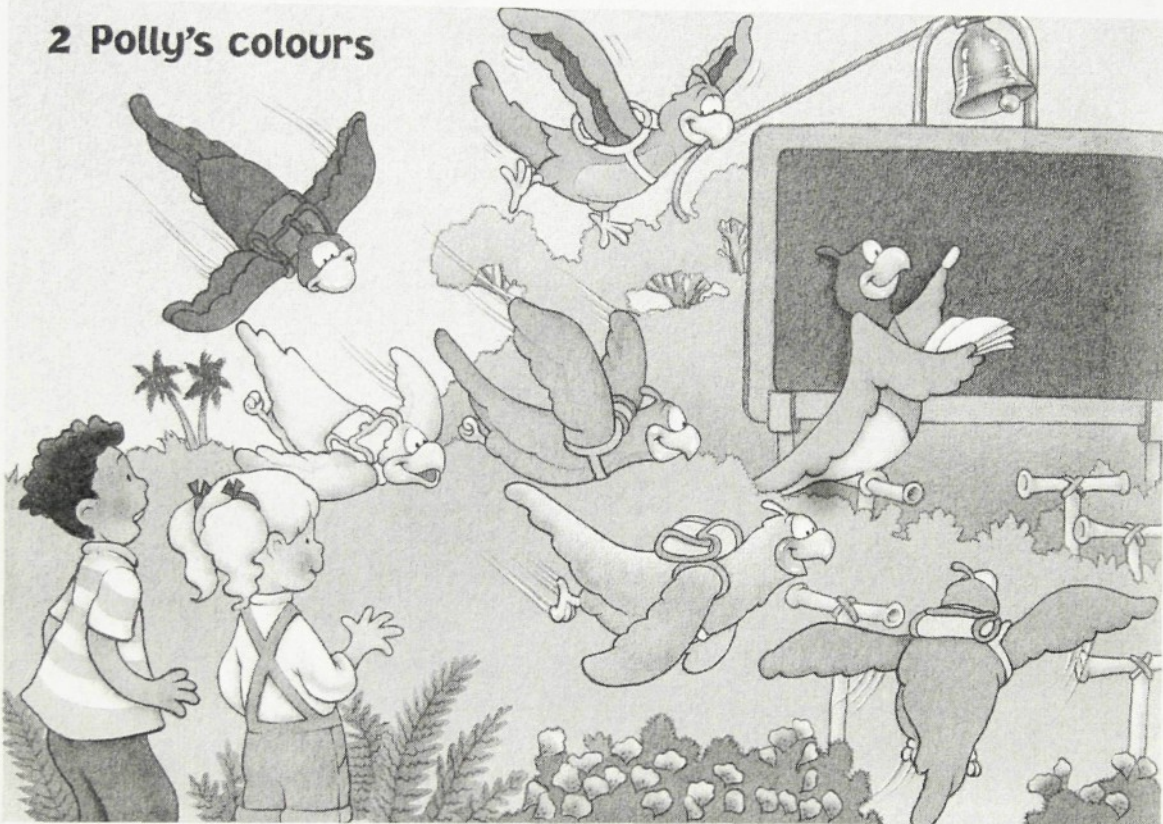
Relates to the Lesson plan No. 1, song – Number one, I can see...



Zig-Zag Island class book, p.12

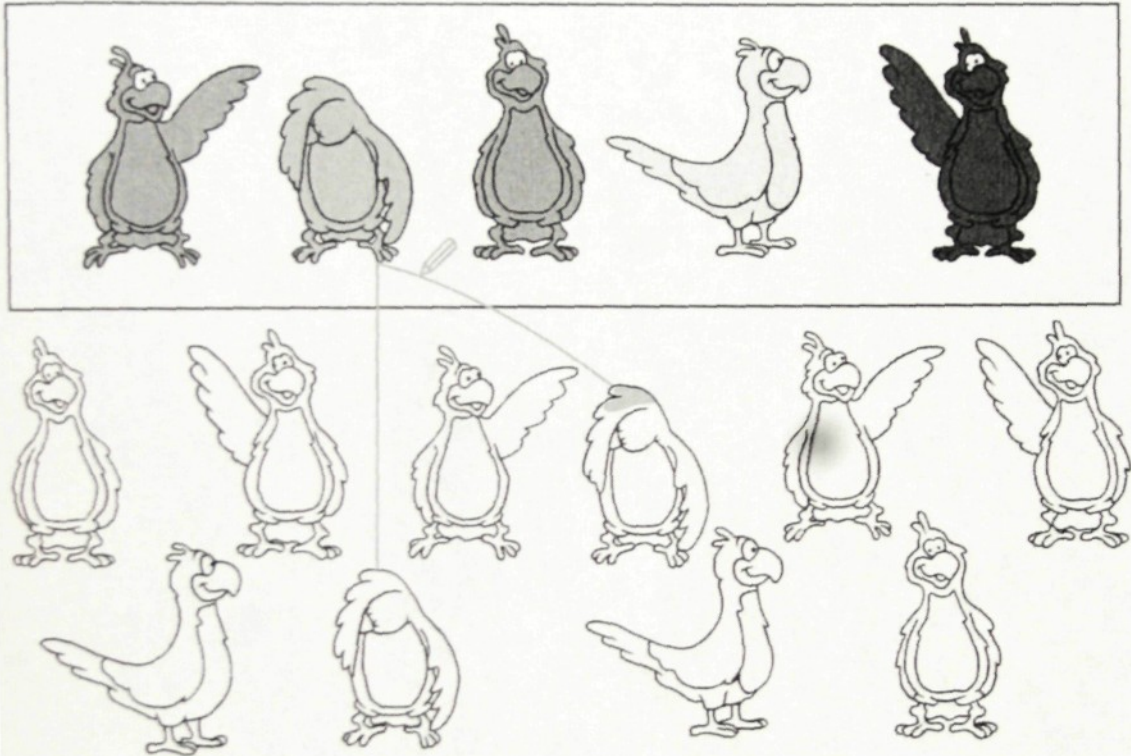
Relates to the Lesson plan No. 2, listening activity – Listen and point

2 Polly's colours



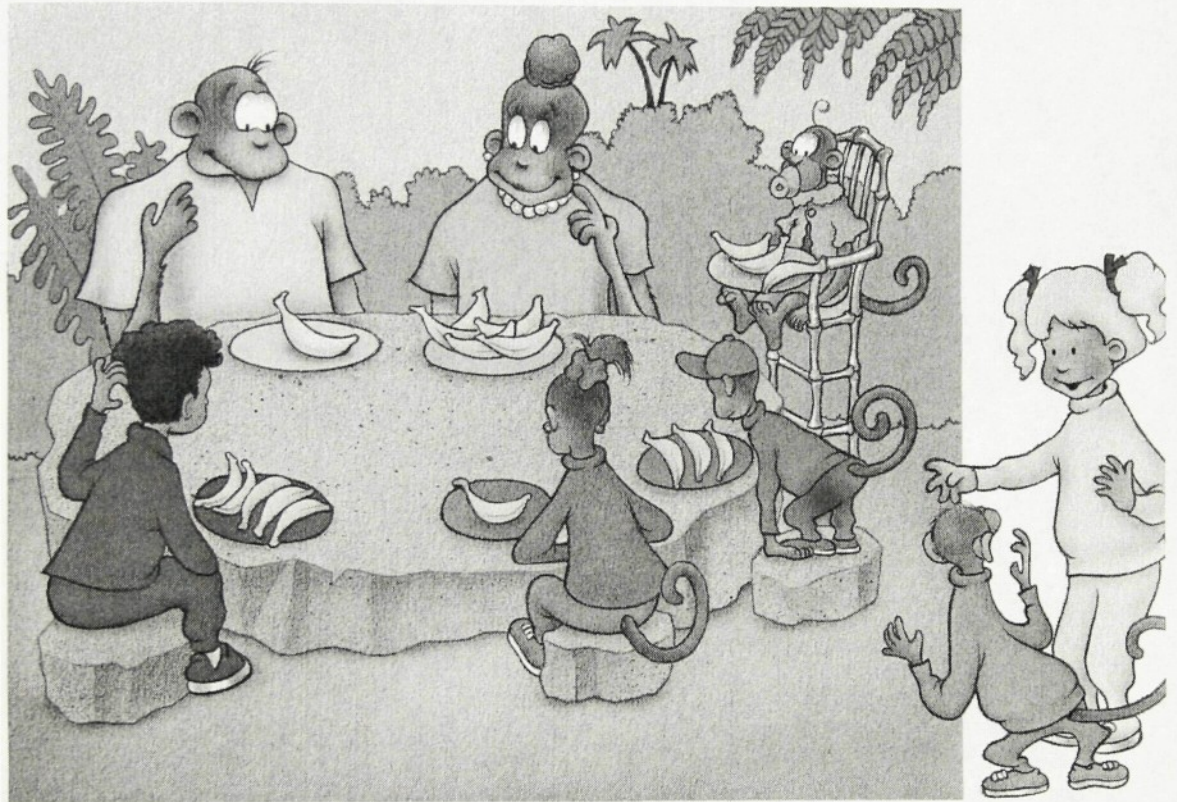
Zig-Zag Island class book, p.13

Relates to the Lesson plan No. 2, art and craft activity – Match and colour the parrots



Zig-Zag Island class book, p.24

Relates to the Lesson plan No. 3, game – Who has got 1 banana?

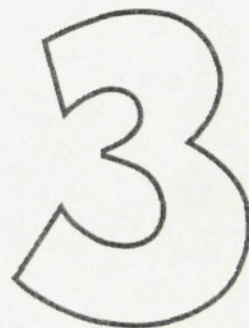
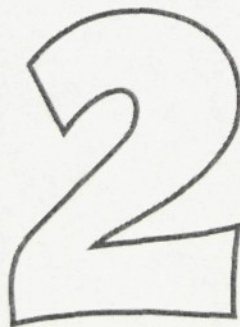
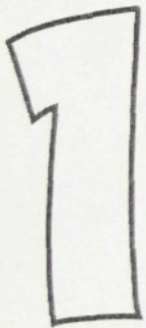
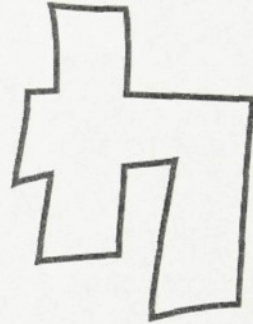


Picture 6

Zig-Zag Island class book, p.55

Relates to the Lesson plan No. 1, art and craft activity – Number cards





Picture 7

Zig-Zag Island class book, p.65

Relates to the Lesson plan No. 3, art and craft activity – Family cards

