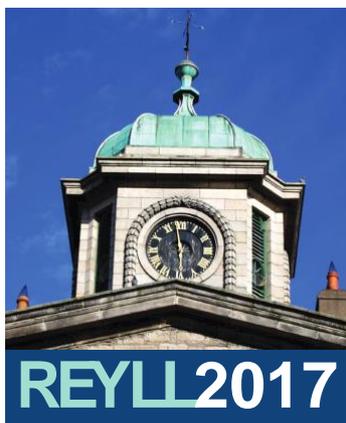


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Supporting teachers to implement a pre-primary programme – Changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes

Gail Ellis

British Council, France

Gail.Ellis@britishcouncil.fr

Abstract

The integration of a foreign language into early childhood education is becoming more and more widespread. Yet there is a lack of specific teacher training and no clearly-defined pre-primary foreign language pedagogy to guide and support teachers. This article presents data from a recent initiative by a provider of out-of-school English classes in Europe to support teachers in implementing a pre-primary programme and in developing pre-primary foreign language pedagogy. This formed part of a wider change-management and innovation process looking at higher efficiencies and effectiveness, and bringing together in one coherent approach best practice throughout the region in the teaching of English to pre-primary children. The pre-primary programme is underpinned by the pedagogical principles of the UK's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework and the HighScope approach to early childhood education with its overarching 'plan-do-review' structure for learning sequences which values children's voices and agency. Initially, there was some apprehension amongst teachers due to a lack of experience of teaching pre-primary children and some resistance from others who believed that young children are not capable of reflecting on their learning or of making choices about their learning. An important feature of the change-management process was the implementation of a normative-re-educative approach and the provision of ongoing training and professional development. This involved teachers in the adaptation of the organisation's global statement of approach to English language teaching to an age-appropriate version for a pre-primary context in order to develop pre-primary foreign language pedagogy. It also encouraged teachers to re-examine their existing beliefs and attitudes in order to recognise children's reflective capacities given appropriate support and

scaffolding, and to rethink the power dynamics in the adult-child relationship moving to one of more shared control. Data from surveys conducted with teachers at the initial stage of the programme and 18 months later provides evidence which shows that, over time, teacher's beliefs and attitudes have changed. Conclusions are drawn from the experience of the project and the factors influencing changes in teacher's views are discussed.

Keywords: pre-primary, foreign language pedagogy, change-management, innovation

1. Context: pre-primary foreign language learning in the EU

Early childhood education is growing in national education systems around the world as more countries are developing and expanding systems to educate children in formal and less formal settings in the years before primary school. Pre-primary refers to the education and development of children from 0 to entry into a national primary system, which takes place at age 6 in many systems and at ages 5 or 7 in others. Many of these systems are introducing a foreign language, often English, as part of their curriculum. As Rixon (2013, p.13) states in her survey of policy and practice in Primary English language teaching worldwide, the 'enthusiasm for English learning is frequently cascading into early years teaching'.

The European Commission (2012, p.8) vision of a multilingual Europe states the long-term objective that 'every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue.' As a result, early childhood education programmes are increasingly including foreign languages, although in most EU countries they are not yet a compulsory part of pre-primary curricula. For example, in France a national strategic review of language education (Halimi 2012) recommends the establishment of sensitising children to other languages at pre-school. In reality, many children today speak a language at home that is different from the language of schooling and so are already growing up with at least two languages. In addition, English has become a priority on many family language plans as parents view English 'as a basic life skill and career enhancer for a child's future in a globalised world' (Ellis 2014, p. 124), thereby contributing to children's bilingual or multilingual repertoires. This, in turn, has created demand for private, fee-paying, out-of-

school English classes as parents believe that the early years are the best time to initiate an exposure to foreign languages.

2. Challenges

There are a number of challenges when delivering out-of-school, English classes.

2.1. A shortage of appropriately qualified and trained pre-primary foreign language teachers

Many teachers are trained to teach English as a foreign language to adults or older children, and young learner extension courses do not usually include pre-primary. There is a lack of specific teacher training and no clearly defined pre-primary foreign language pedagogy. Although teachers may bring some experience of the early years classroom they often lack an understanding of the different stages of child development identifiable within the 3 – 5 age range. They may not possess the skills, knowledge or attitudes to support English language learning and other development. These teachers need on-going support and training.

2.2. Parents view English as a 'subject'

Parents want and pay for discrete English lessons for their child once or twice a week. However, it is well documented that 'Traditional sequential and subject-specific approaches are not effective in promoting children's learning in the early years, whereas a holistic approach that sustains children's overall development across several domains is more effective, as it is supportive of children's learning strategies ... and is focused on meaning-making' (Van Kuyk 2006 and Bennett 2013 quoted in European Commission 2014, p. 43).

Parents therefore need to be informed about how children best acquire languages (Ellis 2018, p. 136), the pedagogical approaches and materials used, the aims and outcomes of a course, and how to support their child at home. Their expectations also need to be managed as some may have unrealistic expectations in terms of achievements, i.e. how much and how fast their child can learn. It is quite common for parents to expect their child to become 'bilingual' after a year of classes which may not constitute more than thirty to sixty hours tuition. Parents need to understand that foreign language learning is a long process requiring perseverance, effort and continuity, as these parents are also likely to blame a school for a perceived lack of progress if such results are not achieved. It is also important for teachers to understand how children learn in their local education system and when literacy in the language of schooling is introduced, as well as to be aware of children's daily educational experiences. Knowledge

of the local educational context is helpful since parents' views as to what makes for effective teaching and learning will have been influenced by their own educational and cultural background.

2.3. The role of the adult

In early childhood settings where children spend an extended period of time, there will be a balance between unstructured, informal and independent experiences and more structured, formal and adult-dependent opportunities for learning, as this mix provides the most effective conditions for children to explore, discover and learn. However, in an out-of-school context where children attend lessons which last from 30 minutes to 2 hours once a week there is limited time for child-initiated activities, although opportunities can still be provided. Parents expect structured and teacher-controlled lessons, so the balance tends to be towards more adult-dependent opportunities for learning.

3. Aims of the study

The main aims of this study were to:

- support teachers throughout a change-management process which included the implementation of a new pre-primary programme in an out-of-school context from September 2016;
- overcome initial resistance to this change and to the pedagogical approach which values children's agency and views the child as an active and capable learner;
- involve teachers in the development of a framework for pre-primary foreign language pedagogy;
- analyse data from teacher surveys and to identify the factors which influenced changes in teacher views, beliefs and attitudes; and
- identify the change-management strategies deployed which facilitated change.

4. Theoretical underpinning

4.1. Managing change and innovation

Papers on innovation in language education began to appear in the 1980s, with contributions from Kennedy (1987, 1999) and White (1988). More recently, interest in the topic of innovation has grown particularly in general education (Fullan, 2007) and also in language education, as evidenced by Tribble (2012) and Hyland and Wong (2013). Innovation is an 'attempt to bring about educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by

implementers as new or different' (Carless 2013). These include introducing new pedagogical approaches, such as task-based language teaching; changes to teaching materials; advances in technology such as online learning and materials and lowering the start age of foreign language learning in education systems. Two examples of major innovation in the field of early childhood education include the introduction of the EYFS in 2008 in the UK to provide a framework to deliver consistent and high quality environments for all children in pre-school settings, and the introduction of the Early Bilingual Education Project in Spain (Dobson et al. 2010; Reilly 2012).

An understanding of the principles and practice of the management of educational change are essential in order to bring about successful innovation. The following principles adapted from Carless (2013) can be used to facilitate change:

- A realistic time frame which seeks to facilitate early, small-scale success which generates momentum and positive sentiments.
- Teachers are involved from an early stage and feel ownership. These teachers may themselves act as change agents or become champions.
- Effective continuous professional development and support are built into a change management programme.
- The innovation is contextually and culturally appropriate.
- Problem-solving strategies are built into the project to manage challenges arising.

4.2. Pre-primary programme

The programme is informed by the guiding principles of EYFS framework and the HighScope approach (Hohmann et al. 2008). The EYFS expresses concern for the child as a social agent and active learner, as the list of the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning of the most recent EYFS handbook (Department for Education 2017, p. 10) shows:

- playing and exploring,
- active learning,
- creating and thinking critically,

and its overarching principles (2017, p.6):

- a unique child: observing how a child is learning,
- positive relationships: what adults could do, and
- enabling environments: what adults could provide.

The HighScope approach (Hohmann et al. 2008) provides a flexible structure and routine via the ‘plan-do-review’ cycle of activities which emphasizes shared control and active learning and focuses children’s attention on what they are doing and how they are doing it. It shows faith that very young children can reflect on and express their views about their own learning given appropriate support and scaffolding. It also recognizes children as active learners with agency who are capable of reflection and decision-making from an early age.

A spiral curriculum, structured around the child-centred themes of Me, My day and My world (Figure 1), builds on children’s living experience. Each theme represents the child’s life and is connected and interconnected, growing outwards as the child develops and their experience expands to the more unfamiliar, wider external environment, enabling them to see themselves as part of a larger and diverse community. The main themes are repeated from year to year so language is recycled and reinforced via new sub-topics at a higher level thereby building on children’s previous knowledge.

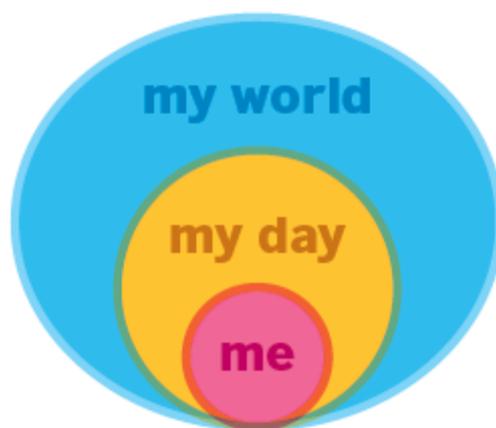


Figure 1: A spiral curriculum

The ‘plan-do-review’ cycle provides a routine structure for each lesson into which can be integrated other routines at different times throughout the lesson depending on the length of the lesson. See Figure 2.



Figure 2: 'Plan-do-review' cycle

An additional stage, Home link, ensures parents are informed about the lesson. At the end of each lesson parents are given brief summaries of the lesson content and suggestions on how they can support their child's learning at home. Parents are encouraged to integrate an 'English at home time' into their family routines, to consolidate, extend and maximise their child's learning.

To summarise, the programme aims to deliver quality and effective teaching which links the learning of another language to early childhood education and to a child's holistic development by moving away from a subject-specific approach, and which motivates children from the very beginning of their language learning journey. It responds to children's individual needs and potential recognising that children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways (Moylett and Stewart 2012). These aims comply with the three components of the teaching act, the teacher, teaching methodology and materials and resources, as defined by Andúgar and Cortina-Pérez (2018) and which should be adapted to learners' needs and interests.

5. Methodology

5.1. Managing change

As part of a wider change-management programme looking at higher efficiencies and effectiveness, the provider developed a statement of approach to English language teaching to achieve consistency and greater unification throughout its network of teaching centres, as previously each centre had produced its own statement. A working group conducted baseline research which involved a critical review of existing statements to identify the features that make an engaging statement such as language and tone, clarity, focus, extent and cultural appropriateness in order to inform the development of the single statement. The newly-developed statement was reviewed and verified by an external consultant and then approved by an internal English Steering Group. It came into effect in centres as from September 2016.

The final statement is summarised in an overarching paragraph with additional paragraphs describing the organisation's purpose, its diversity, inclusion and safeguarding policies, and its teachers. It informs customers (existing and potential) about the organisation's pedagogical approach and shapes their expectations. The core consists of a set of 11 sub-statements (Table 1 Column 1) covering the different aspects of what makes teaching and learning effective. These focus on the processes of learning and are ranked in the top 20 of Hattie's (2012) list of influences which have a high impact on achievement.

Monitoring and evaluation via an online global survey completed by 785 staff in March 2017 showed that the statement was being widely used and had been received positively as reflected in the comments below:

“It is very useful since it helps better shape the way to success and achievement.”

“It's a comprehensive and clear statement of our methodology and approach that is very welcome.”

“It reflects what we already do, not dictates it, it is a useful thing.”

I would like to see the statement extended with another layer of sub-statements, exemplifying how each applies to the different age groups we teach (early years, primary, secondary).

As can be seen from the last comment, teachers wanted age-appropriate versions of the statement. A top-down strategy had been used to develop the statement but as teaching does not conform to a 'one-size-fits-all' or a prescriptive way of working, our aim was to produce a pre-primary version that encompasses the many different ways in which teachers work as clarified by Ofsted (2015):

Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities: communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and monitor their progress. (Ofsted 2015, p. 11)

The following quote harmonised with our objective to accommodate individual teacher preferences but at the same time outline a common pedagogy:

Ofsted does not have a preferred style or approach to teaching or play. Those working in schools and settings, rather than inspectors, are best placed to make the important decisions about how children learn. However, Ofsted does define the elements of early years practice that make up teaching so that there is a common ground and degree of transparency when making judgements about the quality of teaching. (Ofsted 2015, p. 11)

When developing the pre-primary version of the statement, renamed framework, we adopted a problem-solving model of innovation to involve teachers in its creation. This 'emphasises the collaborative, consultative character of the innovation process, and matches the precepts of a normative-re-educative strategy' (White 1988, p. 141). As part of an INSET session, through reflection and group discussion, teachers produced concrete examples of how each sub-

statement could be put into practice in their pre-primary classrooms (Table 1, column 2). This ‘task and person culture’ (White 1988, p. 138) provided a productive context for the development of the framework. The personal involvement was motivating for the teachers and they took ownership as they could see there was a clear outcome that would be of benefit to themselves, their learners and parents.

The examples produced, although quite brief, provided an excellent ‘bottom up’ starting point to flesh out the teacher’s initial interpretations which were expanded to provide more detailed exemplification for each sub-statement (Table 1, column 3). The framework was rolled-out in September 2017.

1. Global Statement of Approach to English Language Teaching – sub-statements	2. What this looks like in a pre-primary classroom – teachers’ adaptations of the sub-statements	3. Framework for a pre-primary foreign language pedagogy (final version)
Teachers set and negotiate realistic goals with and for their learners.	No pressure, children work at own pace. Give children choices regarding songs, games, type of participation.	Teachers help children to become aware of the lesson goals to make learning meaningful. Teachers listen to the voice of the child and use this to steer learning experiences and to encourage children to make choices in order to take the next steps in their learning.
Teachers inform learners of the aims and purpose of learning activities.	Show children what they will be doing. At the planning stage of the lesson, use a visual timetable. Use a learner diary and overview.	Teachers share and explain learning aims so children know what they are going to do and what they are going to learn. Learning aims are based on the teacher’s observations of the class and matched to the needs of the children. Children are encouraged to direct their own learning, within the theme in order to personalise their learning when they are ready.
Teachers create a positive and inclusive learning environment where learners learn with and from each other and feel confident using English in the classroom	Use routines so children know what to expect.	Teachers develop positive relationships and quality interactions with each child. They observe their well-being and involvement in activities and value and celebrate each child’s individuality. Teachers listen to and support children so they gain confidence in understanding English, and familiar routines provide exposure to repeated language and opportunities to use English with each other in the classroom.
Teachers make	Themes of Me, My day, My	Teachers use child-centred themes to secure the child

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lessons engaging, personally relevant and appropriately challenging.	World Start off easy and relevant. Important to know the children.	in the familiar of their own personal lived experience and then lead them to the more unfamiliar, wider external environment, enabling them to see themselves as part of a larger and diverse community, when they are ready.
Teachers help learners develop intercultural awareness and understanding.	Exposure to traditional songs/stories Use authentic materials, images, songs.	Teachers use familiar play-based activities, craft, movement and drama and children's lore such as songs, rhymes, games and stories from around the world. Children's diverse backgrounds are valorised.
Teachers help learners develop a positive and persevering attitude towards their English language learning.	Providing a safe, nurturing learning environment. Encouraging, 'have a go', no negative comments.	Teachers establish a positive learning environment in which children feel at ease and feel valued and confident to 'have a go'. Teachers praise children's accomplishments and respect their efforts in order to develop their motivation, perseverance and resilience.
Teachers use a variety of resources and technologies to meet their learners' needs	Storybooks, arts and crafts, songs and chants, games Variety of input materials Accommodate learning differences and preferences	Teachers use a wide range of multimodal resources and activities such as picturebooks, videos, flashcards, realia, songs, rhymes and chants, art and craft, dance, movement, drama, exploratory play and games to make learning meaningful and enjoyable and in order to develop the whole child.
Teachers help learners identify the strategies that suit them best to become more successful and autonomous language learners.	Routines. Classroom behaviour. Developing learner strategies and autonomy. Asking children what comes next. Giving children choices. Asking children to be the teacher.	Teachers structure lessons around a predictable routine to help children understand the different stages of the lesson and predict what will happen next. This helps children feel safe and relaxed and to become more responsible, independent and confident learners.
Teachers use assessment to promote and measure learning.	Use assessment <i>for</i> learning. Ongoing observation of the children and using this to inform the next lesson. Classroom praise. Work children produce. Reporting to parents.	Teachers base assessment both on systematic observations and on interactions with children in a range of activities. Assessment is also based on the teacher's knowledge of each child, of child and language development and how to set up the very best conditions for children to learn. Teachers build up an accurate picture of each child to inform and plan next steps and improve learning.
Teachers give timely	Parents meetings	Teachers report regularly on children's participation

and constructive feedback on learning and progress.	Giving praise. Ongoing feedback.	and progress. They use encouragement to recognise children’s accomplishments and efforts and to support their interest in learning. Parents receive regular feedback via informal chats with the teacher, lesson summaries, class visits, examples of children’s work, parent teacher meetings and progress reports.
Teachers encourage learners to reflect systematically and regularly upon their learning and progress.	Scrapbooks Use reviewing games. Child is the teacher. Use end-of-lesson routines. Recycling language.	Teachers respect children as active participants in their learning. At the beginning of a lesson, teachers review and recycle learning to help children make connections and build on what they already know. During a lesson, teachers help children to maintain focus on their activities. At the end of a lesson, teachers help children review their own progress and learning. Children build up their own records of their learning.

Table 1: Development of a framework for a pre-primary foreign language pedagogy

5.2. Data collection for monitoring and evaluation

Online surveys conducted in November 2016 and January 2018 aimed to gauge teachers’ satisfaction with the pre-primary programme and with the support they had received to deliver it. The surveys were completed by 34 teachers working in Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain. All participants have English as their first language or are highly proficient speakers of English. Years of experience of teaching English in pre-primary ranged from 20% who had only one year experience to 45% who had five or more years’ experience. Most had a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) qualification, 22 had completed the NILE Teaching English in Pre-Primary Education online course, one had a PGCE in Early Years had 26 had attended in-house induction and training sessions. Responses from the November 2016 survey revealed some resistance to the pre-primary programme

“I don't understand the reason why we have to adopt a different programme when as far as I'm aware, our centre has a very successful product for this age group.”

and some misconceptions about the underpinning pedagogy:

“While routines are useful and important in terms of classroom management and creating a safe and welcoming environment for learning, ‘plan-do-review’ is an overly rigid structure not always suited to early years”.

Several teachers felt that children were too young and not capable of reflecting on their learning and expressing their views or of making choices about their learning.

“I’m all in favour of reflection and making children aware of struggles but not sure if the children we teach will understand the concept.”

“This is very difficult for young children and relative to their age and attention spans.”

“I think the children in our context are too young and lack the maturity to be able to do this.”

Others felt it would not be possible to give children opportunities to make choices about their learning or to move away from teaching discrete language items to an approach which develops the whole child. There was also a lack of understanding about the need for children to sometimes use their own language as a part of the natural process and evidence of learning, as well as how the L1 can be used strategically and judiciously as a resource to support the learning of another language. There was a strong view that only English should be used in the classroom.

“I think the general feeling amongst teachers in my centre is NOT to use L1”.

The January 2018 survey aimed to find out if teachers’ understanding of the pre-primary foreign language pedagogy since the introduction of the framework in September 2017 had evolved. Responses give evidence that the framework is providing useful guidelines for effective teaching and for encouraging whole child development in addition to language acquisition as we can see from the responses to the question, *‘In what particular ways does the framework support you in delivering effective teaching and effective learning?’*

“It provides guidelines and an ideal standard for the lessons.” T5

“It provides a framework of what pre-primary teaching should be in our organisation.” T9

“It is wide-ranging and encourages the use of varied content. The fact that the emphasis is on child-centred learning through play makes it easy to plan lessons that are enjoyable for the children and for the teachers as well”.

“It helps us to see how what we do in pre-primary can fit into our organisation’s teaching methodology as a whole.” T15

“It gives useful advice on how to encourage holistic learning rather than focusing on the language alone, e.g. exploratory play, encouraging children to “have a go”. T20

“It reminds me to review their learning each lesson.” T23

“In trying to address children’s holistic development as well as language input.” T28

Responses to the question in Figure 3, show a marked change in beliefs and attitudes with the majority of teachers now viewing children as capable commentators on their own learning.

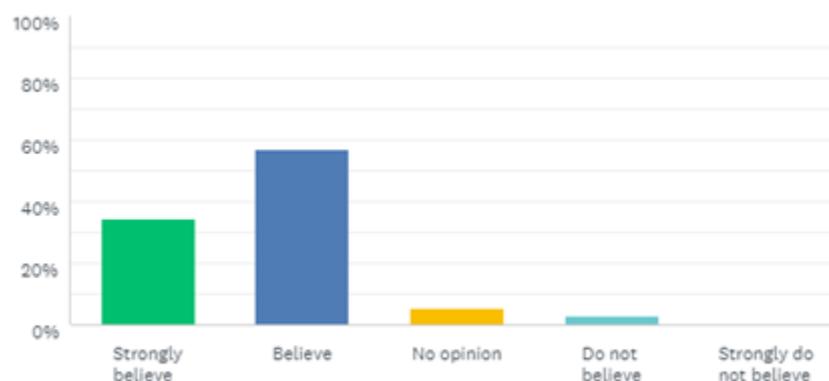


Figure 3: ‘Do you believe that, if given suitable scaffolding and support, children under the age of 6 are capable of becoming reflective and resilient learners whilst still enjoying their time in the classroom?’

Teacher 7 explains how she applies the ‘plan-do-review’ routine in the form of a visual timetable, *“We include this routine in every lesson. I show the structure of each lesson using routine cards in a clock-like circle on the wall. At the end of the lesson, we sit in a circle and I ask them to show the other children what they did (i.e. what is in their Scrapbook). The children may say something in their L1 about what they did.”* Teacher 19 also refers to the use of the children’s own language and comments that this is natural for this type of reflection. *“Yes, however as this is done in Spanish (which I have absolutely no problem with, in fact I feel it is only natural for the children to express themselves in their mother tongue) it may (and does) clash with parent expectations of the children only using English while in our classes.”* Both teachers now recognise and accept the children’s need to use the L1 for this

reflective part of the lesson as this allows greater participation, provides richer data and is more efficient in the early stages of foreign language learning. It also valorises and empowers children's voices via a translanguaging approach. Transcripts of review sessions show that children use both languages by incorporating key words in English such as the names of routines and activities and vocabulary related to the topic of the lesson, usually nouns. To avoid any misunderstanding, parents need to be informed about this judicious use of the home language and of its purpose.

Responses to the question in Figure 4 show that teachers are now building in plenty of opportunities for child-initiated activities even if the balance tends to be more adult-led due to the short duration of the classes in an out-of-school setting.

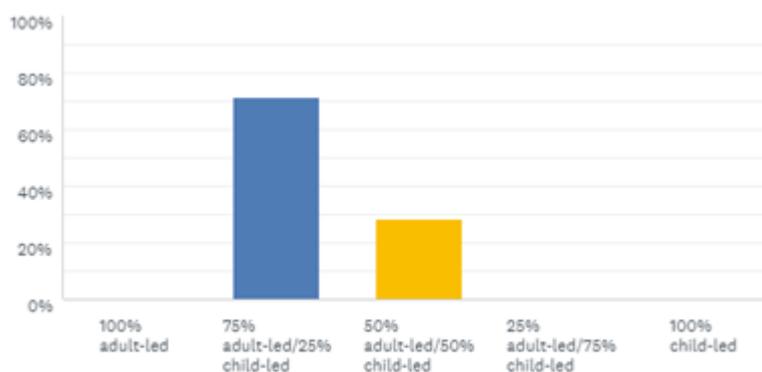


Figure 4: “Depending on the length of your lessons, what percentage of time do you allocate to adult-led and child-led activities?”

Teacher 25 refers to parental expectations as discussed earlier, “*In our context (monolingual groups of 12 children/ 2 adults, language school as opposed to nursery), the only child-led activity would take place in the second half of the lesson, and normally is a puzzles/plasticine© or colouring activity/craft (which are quite restricted). I personally don't see how parents would be happy and pay for the courses if the percentage was higher.*” However, comments provide evidence that teachers are giving children more opportunities to make choices about activities, songs, materials, using own language, and are handing over control giving them independence and freedom in order to personalise and to take ownership of their learning. Teacher's comments are summarised in the word cloud (Figure 5) reflecting a democratic, learner-centred classroom where children can give their opinions and teachers listen to the children.

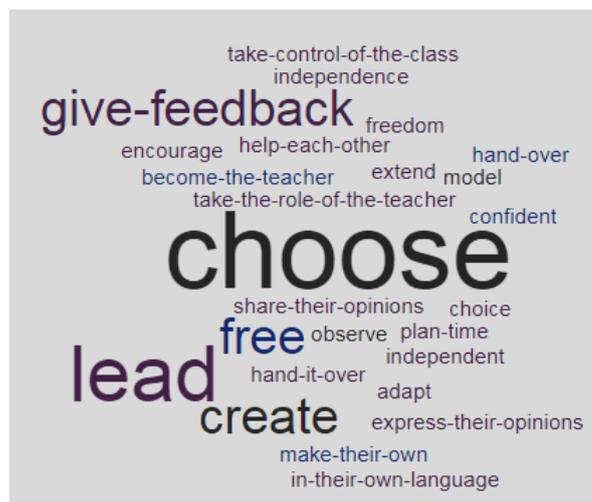


Figure 5: Comments reflecting a democratic, learner-centred classroom

In response to the question, ‘*The ‘plan-do- review’ routine provides a structure to integrate reflective activities at the beginning of a lesson and as part of plenary/circle time at the end of a lesson. In what particular ways do you encourage children to reflect upon and talk about their English language learning?*’ teachers’ explained the many different and creative ways the framework is informing their teaching, especially to support children’s agency and to develop them as reflective and independent learners as well as to encourage parental involvement.

“I start the lesson with a review game and follow the same routine every lesson so children know what the lesson ‘menu’ looks like. I schedule time at the end of the lesson to say what they liked/found difficult/want to do again.” T6

“We review what we have learnt in the beginning. I give them options for “homework” and they choose which one they want based on what they want to practise/review over the weekend. The lesson summaries home motivate many children to show their parents’ their work, and most parents say that their child is excited to share what they have done. They ask their parents to review with them on the way to the lesson since they know the first thing we do in circle time is review the previous lesson”. T11

“I ask if children liked what they did after an activity or lesson. I also get them to remember the contents of the lesson with the routine cards. When appropriate, we

look at everyone's work at the end of the lesson and comment positively on each one.”

T25

“At the end of the lesson I usually have a review activity using the flashcards or the activity that the children have made. This encourages them to talk about what they have learnt, enjoyed etc.” T31

The following comments, however, reflect the need for on-going support and development to fully implement the approach as well as to understand the strategic use of the children's L1 as part of the learning process.

“I find it easy to do the plan and do stages of lessons but struggle to review what we have covered in class. My children really like knowing what they are going to be doing in class”. T2

“In all honesty this is an area for development but I encourage them to actively think about what words they know and not for example use Spanish.” T7

“I would need training and ideas to encourage this particular routine. I wouldn't know how to implement it without using L1.” T19

“I would need further training in inserting more child-led activities into an EFL setting.” T27

In response to the question, *‘In what particular ways do you ensure that your lessons meet the needs of the children in your class?’* responses show a much greater awareness of how to help children make connections and build on what they already know and respecting all children as active participants in their own learning.

“I ensure that there are things they are more likely to be interested in by being more relevant to their lives, e.g. things themed around snow when it is snowing. I ensure that all children have an equal voice/turn regardless of their level and confidence.”

T18

“I make sure to only teach things in such a way that they can make a direct connection between the target language/the use of the target language and their own experiences.” T29

Finally, Figure 6 reflects teacher's enthusiasm, satisfaction, passion, reward and fulfilment for teaching pre-primary children through the use of overwhelmingly positive and powerful adjectives, nouns and verbs as summarised in the word cloud.

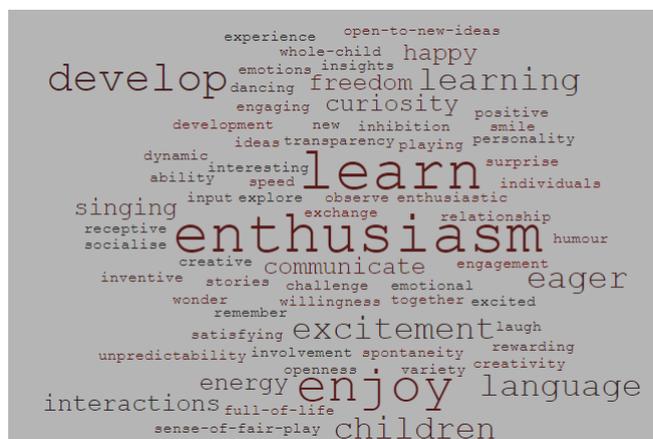


Figure 6: 'What do you enjoy most about teaching early years children?'

6. Main findings and discussion

It can be seen that by applying the principles and practice for the implementation of innovation stated above (Carless 2013) helped facilitate change. The following factors contributed to influencing changes in teacher's views:

- Data from surveys was acted upon in a timely manner so that procedures were put in place to respond to teacher's desire to have age-appropriate versions of the statement. This generated momentum and positive sentiments amongst teachers as reflected in the following comment:
"It has brought teachers closer together. The teachers have a greater understanding of pre-primary teaching. Teachers share ideas more and there is a strong collaborative ethos in the department".
- A normative problem-solving approach to change-management was adopted to involve teachers early on in the creation of the framework. This emphasised the collaborative, consultative character of the innovation process and fostered engagement and ownership resulting in some of the teachers acting as champions.
- Teachers were supported throughout the change-management process by ongoing professional development and their perceptions monitored via online surveys and

acted upon. An important aspect of the training was to encourage teachers to rethink their own theories and constructs of children and of childhood in order to recognise children's reflective capacities given appropriate support and scaffolding. Implementing the 'plan-do-review' routine also led many teachers to re-examine the power dynamics in the adult-child relationship moving to one of more shared control. As Teacher 18 commented, *"I've greatly changed my teaching practice from one where the teacher does most of the talking based on a pre-planned agenda to a flexible one that demands and allows more participation from the children and their imaginations."*

Over time, the teachers have changed 'their beliefs and habits' (Fullan 2007:25) by coming to a better understanding of the underlying pedagogy of the pre-primary programme. They have developed the skills and confidence to implement an approach which supports children's agency.

7. Implications for practice

When implementing change programmes, the importance of good organisational management such as planning and design is important in successful innovation. Effective management provides the circumstances whereby innovation arises and is taken up and successfully embedded and disseminated. However, change-management is a gradual process and the time it takes for new practices to become embedded and for beliefs and attitudes to change should not be underestimated. Monitoring and evaluation allows for adjustments to be made during the process demonstrating flexibility in response to any problems arising. Furthermore, as reflected by the comments above, teachers need ongoing pedagogical support, and opportunities to re-examine their constructs of the child in order to recognise the child as a competent and active member of the classroom with agency and capable of reflecting on their learning.

The framework for a pre-primary foreign language pedagogy can be transferred to any language valued by early childhood settings such as foreign languages, regional languages, languages spoken by the children at home, etc. and to any foreign language learning context (mainstream, after school, family learning) because it is informed by effective early childhood education models and language acquisition theories as it is:

- based on what teachers already do in a quality early years contexts
- facilitates the integration of a foreign language in the early years
- the foreign language is not seen as an isolated ‘subject’ but as part of the holistic development of the child.
- recognises children as active participants in their own learning and adults and children share control in the learning process
- fosters tolerance and inclusion and celebrates diversity.

The framework does not take for granted that foreign language acquisition is easy for children in a drip-feed, out-of-school context. On the contrary, it is hard work, requires effort and continuity. The framework defines a pedagogy which supports teachers in implementing a pre-primary programme which ensures a structured and systematic approach and ‘a common ground and degree of transparency when making judgements about the quality of teaching’ (Ofsted 2015). It allows children to be active participants in their own learning and to reflect on their play-based activities in order to become aware of their learning and their progress and views children as capable and central to their own learning. It gives all stakeholders - children, parents, teachers, academic managers and school heads, the tools to implement a foreign language programme in our ever-evolving multilingual society.

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