ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG EFL LEARNERS
IN THE HUNGARIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Hild Gabriella

Supervisors: Nikolov Marianne, DSc
            Lugossy Réka, PhD

Pécs
2014
Assessment of Young EFL Learners in the Hungarian Educational Context

Hild Gabriella

Pécs

2014
Témavezetői nyilatkozat a dolgozat benyújtásához

Alulírott NIKOLOV MARIANNE és LUGOSSY RÉKA nyilatkozunk, hogy HILD GABRIELLA doktorjelölt

ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG EFL LEARNERS IN THE HUNGARIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT című doktori értekezését megismertem, nyilvános vitára bocsátását támogatom.


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témavezetők aláírása
Doktori értekezés benyújtása és nyilatkozat a dolgozat eredetiségéről

Alulírott
név: HILD GABRIELLA
születési név: MÁNYI GABRIELLA
anyja neve: ÖNODY ERZSÉBET

ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG EFL LEARNERS IN THE HUNGARIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT című doktori értekezésem a mai napon benyújtom a(z)

NYELVTUDOMÁNYI Doktori Iskola

ALKALMAZOTT NYELVÉSZETI Programjához.

Témavezetők neve: DR. NIKOLOV MARIANNE és DR. LUGOSSY RÉKA

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my supervisors Nikolov Marianne and Lugossy Réka. I would like to thank you for your patience, kindness and relentless mentoring throughout my PhD studies. Your advice on research and how to keep up my determination to finish my PhD dissertation have been priceless.

I greatly appreciate the financial support I received from my department, the Department of Languages for Specific Purposes, at the Medical School of the University of Pécs, and the encouragement I received from my boss, Rébék-Nagy Gábor.

I am also indebted to the participants of my research, especially Anikó and her students, Robi, Béla, Balázs, Anett and Lili, for letting me see behind the curtains and sharing their thoughts and ideas with me.

My thanks are also due to Bors Lídia who helped me recruit participants for my studies.

I am also using this opportunity to express my gratitude to Deák Péterné who was always there when I felt completely lost in the administrative requirements of my PhD studies.

I owe my greatest debt to my family. Words cannot express how grateful I am to my husband and my mother for all of the sacrifices that they have made on my behalf. I thank you for helping me put on hold my duties as a mother and wife for a short time so that I could concentrate on my studies. Special thanks to my two wonderful daughters, Kata and Dóri, for their tolerance and willingness to play with granny or daddy when Mommy had to work on the computer.
Abstract

The dissertation aims to provide insights into how Hungarian EFL teachers assess and give feedback to their young learners and what assessment tasks they use. The empirical part consists of two studies that are embedded in a large-scale project sponsored by the European Union (TÁMOP 3.1.9). This project was carried out in Hungary to design and pilot diagnostic tests, and to calibrate items for an item bank that would be available for teachers on the internet at a later stage. The ultimate aim was to contribute to the improvement of assessment practice in the ELL classroom. The first exploratory study gives an account of the first phase of the project and collected information from a wider range of participants; whereas, the second case-study was carried out in the third phase and allowed for a more indepth look at the topic.

In the first study 12 primary school EFL teachers participated and volunteered to report how they assessed their students’ development and what tasks they used. In the second single-case study one EFL teacher and five of her seventh graders agreed to provide data to allow me to find out what tasks the teacher used to assess her students’ oral skills in class, how she carried out assessment and what feedback she provided during oral assessment. I also examined what the teacher and her students thought of the diagnostic tests they had tried out in the last phase of the project.

In the first study the data were collected with an English questionnaire. The participants’ answers were analyzed to find emerging patterns in their content and frequencies. In the second case-study I carried out semi-structured interviews with the students and the teacher. I also audio and video recorded the students doing the four oral tasks and observed two English classes. The dataset was analysed for themes and issues.

The results revealed that primary school EFL teachers had room for improvement in their knowledge of age-appropriate teaching methodology, and some of their practices reflected unclear understanding of how children develop. The activities they applied were often not in line with the needs and cognitive skills of YLLs. As for assessment practices, similar inadequacies were found. The two studies showed that the teachers had difficulties with diagnosing their students’ strengths and weaknesses. The learners were rarely provided with feedback on their performance and language development. Due to this practice they did not see how much they had progressed, and
lower achievers had a hard time to catch up with their peers, causing them to lag further behind. The difference between good performers and their less successful peers was further increased by the practice of giving regular rewards to the former ones and leaving the latter with no, i.e. negative, feedback. During assessment the teachers seemed to be more interested in what their students did not know rather than concentrating on what they could do, and, thus, helping them to see their progress and feel success.
List of abbreviations

CEFR  Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CPH  Critical Period Hypothesis
DA  Dynamic Assessment
EFL  English as a foreign language
ELL  early language learning
FL  foreign language
fMRI  functional magnetic resonance imaging
L1  first language
L2  second language
NCC  National Core Curriculum
SLA  Second Language Acquisition
YLL  young language learner
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Introduction

However strange it may sound Shakespeare’s well-known thoughts on the power of body language, “There's language in her eyes, her cheek, her lip. Nay her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out at every joint and every motive in her body.” evoke my dear late father’s lame, but very amusing attempt to explain to a carful of Russian soldiers, 200 m away from a petrol station, where they could get hold of fuel. He had learned Russian in all his school years, even at college, but could still not speak a word of it. Therefore, he used body language, German and Italian words he had managed to pick up here and there to get through to the desperate soldiers. Although I do not remember the outcome of this conversation, I do remember how hard my brother, I and also my father, laughed after the Russians left. From then on whenever the opportunity arose to mock my poor father’s foreign language (henceforth, FL) knowledge my brother and I jumped at it and had a big laugh, which my dear father never minded.

Interestingly, my brother, who turned 47 in 2014, has ended up the same way as my father when it comes to FLs. He does not speak any; despite the fact that besides Russian he already had the chance to learn German in secondary school. As far as I am concerned, I was among the first lucky ones who started learning English in the third grade of primary school. However, due to the constant negative feedback I received about my language ability in class, I entered secondary school with the wish to forget about English and start to learn a new FL, which turned out to be French. After this early but discouraging start, not until I had spent a substantial amount of time in the USA and England could I convince myself that I was, after all, not hopeless and became a confident speaker of English. Now that my daughter will turn six, due to the evergoing and very persuasive marketing of early language learning (henceforth, ELL) opportunities, I sometimes catch myself wondering whether I was a bad mother when I decided not to sign her up for English “classes” organised by the kindergarden. In Hungary, the parents of my generation, similarly to my brother, feel that, for various reasons, they failed to exploit the opportunity to learn FLs other than Russian, which had not even been given to their parents. Therefore, they do everything to make sure that their children will speak at least one FL. What this means is that they insist that their children start learning English or German, preferably the former one, as soon as possible.

The phenomenon that children start learning FLs at an early age is not a Hungarian speciality, but an international tendency (Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006, 2011). In
Hungary, though, it is often fuelled by parents’ unsuccessful language learning experience (see Nikolov, 2001a). I also fell victim, however exaggerated this may sound, to the use of inappropriate teaching methods in the ELL classroom. Therefore, as a teacher of English as a foreign language (henceforth, EFL), I have always been interested, especially now that I have two young daughters, in how the quality of teaching FLs can be improved in primary school. The literature on young language learners (henceforth, YLLs) emphasised that in order for early language programmes to ensure positive language outcomes children’s special needs were to be considered and catered for (Mckay, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, it is important to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses and keep track of their progress. Language assessment has a pivotal role in collecting the information necessary for these purposes. No wonder, then, that I jumped at the opportunity to be involved in a Hungarian large-scale project (TÁMOP 3.1.9.) aimed to develop, pilot, and validate new diagnostic tests for primary EFL teachers. The project consisted of three phases. The first phase aimed to explore teachers’ classroom assessment practice and to establish a baseline to build on good practice. Next, building on the experience of the first phase, a list of 18 tests was drawn up. A total of 18 EFL primary school teachers volunteered to choose eight that were suitable for their students’ language proficiency. They were asked to pilot and evaluate them according to a set of given criteria. Based on the results of the previous phases, diagnostic tests were developed and piloted in the third phase. My dissertation comprises of two empirical studies: the first one reports on the findings of the first phase; whereas, the second one is a follow up to the large-scale project implemented in the third phase.

Research questions and overview of the dissertation

According to the European review *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners* (Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006, p. 8), teaching modern languages to young children “serves not only to develop their proficiency in languages but also to help them acquire a wider sense of belonging, citizenship and community, and to develop a clearer understanding of their opportunities, rights and responsibilities as mobile citizens of a multilingual Europe”. The significance of effective language learning in the primary school is further increased by the fact that “the foundations for later language learning are laid” in these early language programmes (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 7). As was mentioned earlier, language assessment plays an important role in ensuring
successful language outcomes. In Hungary, little is known about how primary EFL teachers assess their young learners in class. Although a scarce number of studies (Bors, Lugossy & Nikolov, 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008; Nikolov & Nagy, 2003) presented findings on teachers’ classroom assessment practices, no research study has been carried out with the objective to explore this topic in detail. Therefore, my dissertation is innovative, since it aimed to provide insights into how Hungarian EFL teachers assess and give feedback to their young learners and what assessment tasks they use. The first qualitative exploratory study collected information from a wider range of participants; whereas, the second single-case study allowed for a more in-depth look at the topic. For an overview of the main research questions, data collection methods and methods of analysis (see Table 1 on page 4).

The dissertation is divided into two parts and eight chapters. The theoretical background to the research studies is outlined in Part 1, which entails Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. The first chapter gives an overview of the research related to ELL. The first part of this chapter considers theoretical arguments for the Critical Period Hypothesis (henceforth, CPH) through neurological, cognitive and affective explanations. Then, I discuss whether the younger is the better in FL contexts. Chapter 2 shifts the focus on the two stakeholders of ELL, the young language learner and the teacher. The first part of this chapter gives an account of young learners’ characteristics that are the most relevant from the point of view of their language learning development, and along which their language knowledge can be improved and assessed. The second part provides insights into what criteria FL teachers of young learners need to fulfil to ensure positive language outcomes. In addition, I examine what role teachers’ beliefs play in what they actually do in the classroom. Since the two empirical studies of my dissertation are set in the Hungarian educational context, Chapter 3 gives an overview of ELL in Hungary. Chapter 4 discusses the issues most relevant from the point of view of the assessment of YLLs. First, the two most current assessment approaches, diagnostic and dynamic, are described. Then, the issues of reliability, validity and the concept of construct are discussed. Since the diagnostic tests I used in my studies are criterion-referenced I elaborate on this topic as well. At the end of this chapter, the findings of empirical studies on the assessment of YLLs are presented and analyzed.

Part 2 comprises four chapters. Chapter 5 provides background to the context and the participants of the research studies, and outlines the research methodology applied in the two studies. Chapters 6 and 7 present the two empirical studies, which are embedded in the large-scale diagnostic assessment project involving primary school EFL teachers and their students.
Table 1: The data sources and methods of analysis used to answer the main research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Methods of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Teachers’ Views on Assessment Tasks that Work with Primary School EFL Learners</td>
<td>1) What tests do teachers use to assess their learners’ progress in their English classes?</td>
<td>English Questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) How do teachers assess their learners’ progress in English?</td>
<td>English Questionnaire</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants: 12 EFL teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the questionnaires</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
<th>Methods of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Testing Hungarian Seventh-Graders in an EFL Context: A Single-Case Study with One EFL Teacher and Her Students</td>
<td>1) What kind of oral tasks did the teacher use in class?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) How did the teacher assess and give feedback to her students?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) What did the teacher and her students think of the diagnostic tests they had tried out?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) How did the teacher assess her students doing the diagnostic tests?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) How did the oral tasks work?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Audio and video recordings of students doing the oral tasks</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of the interviews and video recordings of students doing the oral tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants: 1 teacher 5 seventh graders</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Chapter 6 contains the first, exploratory study, which reported on the results of the first phase of the large scale-project. A total of 12 primary EFL teachers took part in this phase. The aim was to find out what tasks EFL teachers used to assess their students’ progress so that a baseline for developing new diagnostic tests could be established. As is shown in Table 1, data were collected with the help of an English questionnaire; and descriptive statistics and the thematic analysis of the questionnaires were employed to obtain results. Chapter 7 outlines the second study, which is a follow-up to the large-scale project. This single-case study was conducted to further investigate the issues that emerged in the first study. One primary EFL teacher and five of her students were involved in the study. The goal of this investigation was to explore how the teacher assessed and gave feedback to her students, and how the oral tasks.
they were given to pilot in the second phase of the project worked. Data were elicited by semi-
structured interviews and audio and video recordings of students doing the oral tasks (see Table
1). Thematic analysis of the interviews and video recordings of students were used to obtain
the results (see Table 1). The final section of the dissertation revisits the findings, discusses the
limitations and areas for further research.
Part I

Chapter 1: Research into Early Language Learning

1.1 The critical period hypothesis

1.1.1 Introduction

The increasing popularity of starting to learn FLs at an early age is a world-wide tendency (Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006, 2011). In many countries early language programmes are often launched because of parental pressure (Nikolov, 2002, p. 31), which usually stems from the folk wisdom according to which children are like sponges when it comes to learning a language. This “theory” has some scientific foundation: the critical period hypothesis (CPH). It was initially put forward by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and later refined by Lenneberg (1967).

The CPH states that acquiring one’s first language (henceforth, L1) after puberty is constrained due to the fact that older language learners do not have access to the innate structures that facilitate L1 acquisition. However, the pre-pubescent brain is like a "sponge", which makes the learning of L1 or a second language (henceforth, L2) easier for children than adults or older adolescents. The CPH has been one of the most fiercely debated issues in the field of psycholinguistics and cognitive science, especially, in terms of its relevance to SLA. One of the main disagreements between researchers is whether there is an abrupt change at around puberty in the ability to acquire a language, or a gradual decline is a more relevant model. Accordingly, some refer to this period as critical (Scovel, 1988; Singleton, 1989), others as sensitive (Patkowsky, 1980), or optimal (Asher & Garcia, 1969). Others dispute the causes, whether they involve physical maturation, or cognitive factors or both. The duration of the period also varies greatly in different accounts.

In the following, after Singleton (2005, p. 279), at first I am going to group and discuss the theoretical evidence for the existence of a critical period for language acquisition in three major areas of research: 1) neurological explanation; 2) cognitive explanation; and 3) affective explanation. After that I am going to examine the relevance of the CPH to early FL learning, which is the broader scope of the dissertation.
1.1.2 The neurological explanation

In 1959, during their research into the cortical processes responsible for speech, neurologists, Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts, found that effective language learning became hindered after the age of nine when the brain lost its heightened plasticity (1959 cited in Muñoz, 2006, p. 1). Lenneberg (1967 cited in Muñoz, 2006, p. 1) provided additional support for the CPH while examining the results of clinical investigations on brain injuries. He discovered that contrary to adult aphasiacs, whose speech remained severely affected for the rest of their life, child patients were able to restore their language invariably, if they were less than nine years old at the time of the neural damage (Lenneberg, 1967, cited in Hyltenstam, & Abrahamsson, 2003 p. 539). He explained the results with the theory of brain lateralization, which takes place between the ages of two and puberty as the brain matures (Lenneberg, 1967 cited in Hyltenstam, & Abrahamsson, 2003 p. 539). Brain lateralization means that the various functions of the brain are divided up between the right and the left hemispheres. Language function was believed to be assigned to the left hemisphere - nowadays, it is widely accepted that the right hemisphere also has an important role in certain language functions, for example, pragmatic functions (Ahlsén, 2006, p. 182). In case of an injury to the left hemisphere of the brain, the right hemisphere can take over, but only before puberty. On the basis of these findings, Lenneberg concluded that after this critical age language acquisition posed plenty of problems. Although all this evidence came from L1 acquisition, he (Lenneberg, 1967) also made a claim about SLA:

Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age (puberty), and FLs have to be taught and learned through a conscious and laboured effort. Foreign accents cannot be overcome easily after puberty. However, a person can learn to communicate in an FL at the age of forty. (p. 176)

Molfese (1977 cited in Singleton, 2007, p. 49) agreed with the idea of lateralization; however, he suggested a multiplicity of critical periods, in which the phonetic/phonological critical period ended at as early an age as one. Seliger (1978 cited in Singleton, 2007, p. 49) claimed that besides lateralization, a localization process also took place in the dominant hemisphere of the brain, which did not end with puberty. He also posited that there were more than one critical period, which were “successive and perhaps overlapping, lasting probably
throughout one’s lifetime, each closing off different acquisition abilities”, with pronunciation being affected first, “not much beyond the onset of puberty” (Seliger, 1978, p. 16 cited in Han, 2004, p. 56). Walsh and Diller also distinguished accent from other language skills, with the former one being a “lower –order process dependent on….the early maturing”, and thus affected first (1979, p. 519). Scovel (1988, p. 101) went further and stated that pronunciation was the only area of language which was affected by age, because it had a “neuromuscular basis”. He added that foreign accent could not be overcome by those who were first exposed to an L2 after the age of 12.

The decrease in the flexibility of the brain was also explained by other neurobiological processes. One of them was myelination, during which a fatty layer, called myelin, accumulates around the axon of neurons. It starts from the fourteenth week of fetal development and continues through adolescence. Due to myelination nerve cells can transmit information faster, and the brain becomes better at complex brain processes. According to Pulvermüller and Schumann, the slowing of this process “results in reduced neural plasticity and, consequently, in difficulty in learning” (1994, p. 719). They also claimed that the timing of myelination may vary among individuals, which could account for late learners who managed to attain native-like proficiency. They added that, in the case of successful adult language learners, high motivation also had a role, since it could stimulate the midbrain, which could then counterbalance the loss of plasticity of the brain (Pulvermüller & Schumann, 1994). The other neurobiological explanation can be attributed to Long (1990), who hypothesised that changes in neurotransmitters might affect SLA.

In the mid-nineties, an American team’s brain-imaging research provided the first direct evidence for the topographic specialization of different languages in the brain (Nikolov, 2002, p. 17). They found differences in the spatial representation of the L1 and the L2 in Broca’s area of late bilinguals as opposed to early bilinguals (Kim, Relkin, Kyoung-Min, & Hirsch, 1997 cited in Nikolov, 2002, p. 17). While the late bilinguals showed activation in two separate areas, the early bilinguals appeared to activate the same area of the brain in the case of both languages. A more recent brain-imaging study revealed similar tendencies (Wattendorf, Westermann, Zappatore, Franceschini, Lüdi, Radü, & Nitsch, 2001). These findings, however, were challenged. Friederici, Steinhauer and Pfeifer (2002) claimed that their brain-imaging study of adults learning an artificial language showed no significant difference between language processing in native speakers and late learners. In her review (1998), Bialystok mentioned two further studies that bear resemblance to these brain-imaging studies. One of them revealed
differences in terms of the representation of the two languages in the brain, whereas the other found no variations between early and late bilinguals. Bialystok drew attention to the flaws of these studies. She called for collaboration between applied linguistics and researchers of other fields to ensure valid results in the future.

A more recent study (Stowe & Sabourin, 2005) reviewed neuroimaging evidence to examine the effects of maturation on the processing of the L2 and found that even late language learners used the same areas of the brain for the L2 as for the L1; however, they may utilize other areas as well to help L2 processing. The authors also concluded that the neurological system responsible for processing languages was, however, used less efficiently for the L2 in the case of early and late bilinguals, too. Hernández, Hofmann, and Kotz, (2007) came up with similar results when they compared highly proficient early and late bilinguals on gender agreement tasks, using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). They found that in late bilinguals additional syntactic processing was necessary to deal with naturally occurring irregular items in an L2. In a meta-analysis of 30 neurocognitive studies investigating language processing in bilinguals Indefrey (2006) claimed that the activation was stronger during L2 processing, but only in the case of speakers with late L2 onset, low L2 proficiency, and low L2 exposure, and only within some of the regions that are also typically used during native language processing. Wattendorf and Festman (2008) examined recent neuroimaging studies that had investigated the effect of the age of SLA by comparing early and late bilinguals carrying out various language tasks on their L1 and L2. They concluded that age of acquisition effects were present in the left hemisphere and especially salient during syntactic processing, word generation and sentence generation; and both languages of bilinguals were affected. Similarly to Bialystok (1998), they also pointed out the discrepancies of these studies, namely, that several factors, such as stages of language learning and parameters of language proficiency, had not been considered during the investigation.

Another line of research, which can be considered as an answer to Bialystok (1998) and Wattendorf and Festman’s criticism (2008), investigates whether age of acquisition or language proficiency is the primary determinant of the neural bases of the L2. Hernandez and Li (2007) claimed that research evidence was inconclusive. They proposed that the reason for the mixed results was that both age of acquisition and proficiency had a role which was different for different language processes. An investigation carried out by Wartenburger et al. (2003) supports this suggestion. They used fMRI to find out the effects of age of acquisition and proficiency level on neural correlates of grammatical and semantic judgments in early and late
Italian-German bilinguals. They found that in the case of syntax age of acquisition was the key determinant; whereas, language proficiency played a crucial role in semantic processing.

As for the reason for the effects of age of SLA, Hernandez and Li (2007) offered a sensorimotor hypothesis. According to this theory the difference between early and late language learning is attributed to the differences in sensorimotor learning. Early L2 learners rely on their sensory and motor processes; whereas, late L2 learners draw on their executive abilities. In order to test this hypothesis, Waldron and Hernandez (2013) used fMRI to compare early and late English-Spanish bilinguals matched on L2 proficiency on a past tense generation task. The results supported the sensorimotor hypothesis. While producing past tense in L2 early and late bilinguals employed different neural routes and control mechanisms. In the case of the former group, sensorimotor and motor control brain regions were activated; whereas, the latter group recruited executive cognitive control regions.

The often contradictory and incomplete findings of neuroscience on the CPH is well summarized by Kees de Bot:

Along similar lines I want to argue that the wealth of research on neuro-imaging and multilingualism so far has contributed little to a further understanding of processes of multilingual processing and L2 development and indeed, that it is as yet very unclear what it is that various neuro-imaging (NI) techniques tell us about language processing in multilinguals. (2008, p. 112)

What also seems to be obvious from the review of the literature is that the inconsistencies of research design and elicitation techniques of target language outcomes contribute a great deal to the contradictory results of the different studies.

1.1.3 The cognitive explanation

After reviewing Lenneberg’s evidence for the existence of laterization, Krashen (1973, 1975) came to the conclusion that it was accomplished way before puberty, around the age of five; therefore, adult language learners had no biological barriers in terms of language acquisition. He then resorted to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development for an explanation for the CPH. Krashen (1975) hypothesised that the reason why the close of a critical period for SLA might be around puberty was that this time coincided with the beginning of Piaget’s cognitive stage
of formal operations, when the child changed his learning strategy. As this stage sets in, so does the ability to think abstractly about language. The child needs to construct theories, and to analyze and use rules to solve problems. In Krashen’s view (1975), this shift in the cognitive development might prevent the child who now looks for a conscious understanding of language from acquiring an L2 naturally.

Similarly to Krashen, Rosansky (1975 cited in Birdsong, 1999, p. 5) also rejected the idea of laterization being the culprit in the existence of a critical period for SLA and also found an explanation in Piaget’s developmental model of cognition. She claimed that language acquisition needed the child to be “highly centred” so that he could concentrate on one thing at a time when facing a problem (Rosansky, 1975, p. 96 cited in Birdsong, 1999, p. 5). In her view, as formal operational stage sets in, so does decentration, which may hinder the natural acquisition of an L2.

Cummins (1980) made a distinction between two types of L2 proficiency. He called one of them basic interpersonal skills, which are contextual and cognitively undemanding. Accent, oral fluency and sociolinguistic competence belong to this group of skills. The name ‘basic’ comes from the idea that they develop naturally due to exposure to a language. The other type of proficiency is called cognitive/academic proficiency, and it is context-reduced and cognitively demanding. It includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. According to this model, cognitive maturity promotes cognitive/academic skills as experience in the literate uses of the L1 accumulates; therefore, older learners of an L2 are more accurate than young learners. Cummins (2000) expanded this theory and claimed that a common underlying proficiency (CUP) existed between two languages. Skills, ideas and concepts students learn in their L1 transfer to their L2.

In his Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (FDH) Robert Bley-Vroman (1988) shared the view that age-related deterioration of the language learning ability was part of human maturation, and gave a cognitive explanation. According to FDH, unlike children, adult language learners no longer have access to the innate mechanisms, i.e. Universal Grammar, so they need to apply alternative, problem-solving mechanisms. Felix (1985), in contrast, claimed that adults still had access to an innate acquisition system. However, around puberty this system competes with a more general problem-solving cognitive system and, finally, loses, which results in less successful L2 learning in post-pubertal learners. Singleton (2001) is more careful about the difference in child and adult language processing and says, "there is no strong
evidence that post-pubertal L2 learners do not have available to them the capacities which Chomskyans think of as deriving from UG" (p.81).

Skehan (1998) also proposed a cognitive approach to SLA, which shed further light on the distinction between child and adult language learners. In his view, during language processing two systems work side by side: a rule-based analytic system and a formulaic, exemplar-based system. The former one is made up of previously memorized, ready-made chunks of language, whereas in the latter one “compact storage and powerful generative rules operate together to compute well-formed sentences” (Skehan, 1998, p. 54). When the learner has time to compute, he can access the rule-based system, or even move between the two. However, when time is pressing, he relies more heavily on the formulaic system, which is less time-demanding. The assumption is that young learners draw more on the memory-processes, while adults tend to rely on rule-based learning (Nikolov, 2002, p. 19). This theory is also supported by studies reporting on successful adult learners who were characterized by exceptional memory capacity.

Bialystok and Hakuta (1999) analysed census data of Spanish and Chinese immigrants to the United States and found a linear decline in proficiency and accent as age of arrival increased. In other words, the results showed no sharp change around puberty, strengthening the evidence against the CPH. In their view, SLA is controlled by general cognitive processes. Therefore, age-related changes of the language learning ability can be explained by the deterioration of these cognitive mechanisms, which is “gradual and constant” (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999, p. 172). Other studies also failed to find a discontinuous decline in L2 learning abilities, which would indicate the presence of a critical period (Hakuta, Bialystok, & Wiley, 2003; Chiswick & Miller, 2008).

DeKeyser claimed that “somewhere between early childhood and puberty” maturational constraints affected implicit learning skills, which characterize the acquisition of the L1, but not explicit learning (2003, p. 335). Paradis (2004) added that as a result of this decline in implicit learning, adult learners had no other choice than to draw on their explicit learning skills. In order to compensate for the loss, older learners can also apply other mechanisms, such as declarative memory to learn new vocabulary, which is not affected by the CPH (Paradis, 2004).

In conclusion, the above described cognitive approaches explained the distinction between young and older language learners by stating that these two groups draw on different systems while processing language. The system the child language learners rely on is
unconscious and memory-based, whereas the one adults use is conscious, analytic and rule-based.

1.1.4 The affective explanation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) were among those who first introduced the idea that affective factors played an essential role in language acquisition and were independent of cognitive factors. They suggested that these variables could account for the individual differences in language learning outcomes. In the same year, Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi and Brannon (1972) proposed the idea of the language ego, which is the interaction of the ego development and the language(s) the individual speaks. Whereas adults’ ego or identity is attached to their L1, children’s ego is developing and, therefore, flexible, so they do not feel that it is threatened by learning a new language, i.e. taking on a new identity. Therefore, unlike adults who have difficulty with adapting to expressing themselves in the new language due to their fixed and unchangeable ego, children can easily accommodate an L2. This lack of adaptability in adults causes inhibition that interferes with language learning.

Following in Guiora’s footsteps, Schumann (1975) proposed that the change in language learning after puberty could be attributed to the social and psychological changes a person goes through around the same time. He formulated the Pidginization Hypothesis to explain the age-related differences in L2 learners. According to this theory, the complexity of the speech of the language learners who distance themselves socially and psychologically from the speakers of the target language will always remain simple, i.e. pidgin-like (Schumann, 1976). Since children are less likely to notice or be biased by the social and psychological differences between cultures they are more eager to sound native-like. On the basis of the Pidginization Hypothesis and the social distance model, Schumann later developed the Acculturation Theory: “the learner will acquire a second language only to the degree he acculturates” (Schumann, 1986, p. 379).

In his Input Hypothesis, Krashen (1985) also presented how affective factors, such as anxiety, motivation and self-confidence, explained individual differences in success in SLA. He called these factors the Affective Filter. A positive attitude towards the speakers of the target language, for example, will lower the filter. According to Krashen (1985), the Affective Filter is usually low for children, but high for adults; therefore, YLLs are more likely to achieve native-like proficiency. Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 406) criticised Krashen for not giving
enough details as to the scope or the process of what and how input was filtered out. McLaughlin (1987, p. 56) claimed that Krashen had “provided no coherent explanation for the development of the affective filter and no basis for relating the affective filter to individual differences in language learning”.

Language learning anxiety has also been considered to account for the differences between child and adult language learning, although it is often assumed that YLLs are not affected by anxiety. This assumption is also demonstrated by the fact that there are only very few studies on the role of anxiety in children’s language learning. Young (1994) reviewed 33 studies on language anxiety from 1945 to 1994, but only one of them had child participants. In a recent exploratory study, however, Mihaljević Djigunović (2002, cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 209) examined three age groups: 7-10 years, 11-14 years and 15-18 years, in terms of language anxiety. The results showed that the older the students were the more anxiety they experienced in EFL classes.

Age-related differences in language learning have also been explained in terms of motivation. As young learners develop at a very slow pace compared to older school children (Krashen, 1985), their motivation must be maintained more often over a longer period of time (Nikolov, 2011). In a longitudinal study examining the language learning motivation of primary school students Nikolov (1995) found that in the early years the emphasis was on intrinsic motivation, and instrumental motivation emerged gradually, whereas integrative motivation did not have an influential role in FL learning in this age group. Young learners’ motivation was also found to be highly related to the teacher and classroom experience, which gradually lost their importance towards the end of primary school years when more utilitarian factors took over the leading role (Nikolov, 1999a; Hardi, 2004). In a study investigating primary school students’ motivation for learning English, Carreira (2006) found an age-related decrease in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which he partly attributed to the inappropriate teaching methods in Japanese primary schools. In a longitudinal study examining how young learners’ attitudes and motivation towards the FL changed Mihaljević Djigunović and Lopriore (2011; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012) came to similar conclusions. The students’ initial enthusiasm slightly decreased over the years and the importance of intrinsic motivation, i.e. enjoying the FL inherently, also faded as school years went by.
1.1.5 Conclusion

So far, I have presented the theoretical, i.e. neurological, cognitive and affective, underpinnings of the CPH. This short review has demonstrated how devisive the CPH is among experts, as Singleton (2005, p. 280) put it, it is a “mythical hydra, whose multiplicity of heads and capacity to produce new heads rendered it impossible to deal with.” Earlier Singleton (1989, p.137) also stated that “concerning the hypothesis that those who begin learning an L2 in childhood in the long run generally achieve a higher level of proficiency than those who begin later in life, one can say that there is some good supportive evidence and that there is no actual counter-evidence.” In a more recent publication Singleton and Ryan (2004) found that late starters could catch up with their early beginner peers after a few years. Therefore, they concluded that “it is impossible to sustain the claim that the younger L2 learner is in all respects and at all stages more efficient and successful than the older learner” (Singleton & Ryan, 2004, p. 199). Similarly, Nikolov and Mihaljevic-Djigunovic (2006) found that although an early start could be more preferable since it fostered motivation and positive attitudes, it had little additional advantages to offer in terms of language learning gains compared to a later start. In the next part I am going to discuss whether “the younger the better” slogan, which is derived from the critical period concept, is indeed relevant in the context of early FL learning, in which the present dissertation is set.

1.2 Is the younger the better in FL contexts?

1.2.1 Introduction

The idea that children should start to learn an L2 as early as possible has fuelled the launch of numerous ELL programmes internationally (Nunan, 2003). The CPH claims that ELL is less strenuous and more successful, because similarly to the case of L1 acquisition young learners rely on their natural implicit learning skills while acquiring an L2. However, classroom reality shows that the majority of such programmes do not exploit this advantage, but rather tend to focus on form and, therefore, require students to apply explicit learning processes (see next chapter for examples, DeKeyser & Larson-Hall, 2005). Two further factors revealed by studies and classroom observations, the “minimal” time available for FL learning (DeKeyser & Larson-
Hall, 2005) and the low proficiency of the FL teachers (Nikolov, 2008, 2009b; Nikolov & Mihaljevic-Djigunovic, 2006) also question the relevance of the CPH to these programmes. Besides these factors, the recent emerging approach which emphasizes the importance of the particular context to determine the usefulness of these programmes also highlights that realistic achievement targets and continuity should also be ensured if the idea of the younger the better is to be applied (Edelenbos & Kubanek, 2009; Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2012; Nikolov & Mihaljevic-Djigunovic, 2006). In the next part, I am going to discuss these five factors in more details to find the answer to the question formulated in the title of this subchapter.

1.2.2 Time available for FL learning

Research on the CPH concluded that although YLLs’ level of ultimate attainment was higher than their adolescent or adult counterparts, their rate of acquisition was slower; thus, they needed more time to achieve the same level (Nikolov, 2006). Empirical evidence, however, shows that early FL programmes tend to focus on the first finding, but ignore the second one. In Nunan’s study conducted in the Asia-Pacific region (2003), the results indicated that in the early years students usually had 50-60 hours of English classes per year, which he considered insufficient for achieving an appropriate level. In his overview of fifteen East-Asian countries, Ho (2003) found that in primary schools the number of weekly hours of English language instruction ranged between one and six hours. A European review revealed similar tendencies, from roughly one to several hours per week (Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006). In contrast, according to an American group of experts, in order to achieve high-quality language teaching in the early years language classes should amount to a minimum of 75 minutes per week, and be held every or, at least, every other day (Curtain, 2000, p. 201). Curtain and Pesola determined the minimum weekly amount in 30 minutes three times a week (Curtain, 2000, p. 202). In her plenary talk at a conference in 2005 Moon concluded that “little and often seems to work best with children” due to their developmental characteristics. Therefore, we can conclude that the research findings indicate that in most part of the world the majority of early language programmes devote less time to teaching an FL than they should to be able to capitalize on the advantages of ELL.
1.2.3 Teachers’ proficiency and methodology

Since the majority of empirical studies investigated the issues of teachers’ proficiency and their methodology simultaneously, I am going to discuss them under one heading as well. Teachers of young language learners should be highly proficient both in the first and the target language, should know the needs and characteristics of the given age-group, and apply age-appropriate methodology accordingly (Curtain, 2000, p. 201; Nikolov, 2009a). In Europe in 2003/2004 (Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006) 50% of primary school language teachers were generalists, who, as Nikolov (2009a) pointed out, tend to have a good knowledge of the relevant methodology, but lack the necessary proficiency. According to another European project investigating young FL learners’ development in seven countries, the qualifications of teachers show great variance (Enever, 2008). In these countries generalist teachers with a specialization in the FL were preferred. The project revealed that in some countries there was no minimum requirement of language proficiency for the language teachers; in the other cases, the required level was usually B1 as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, (henceforth, CEFR, 2001). In certain countries language specialists, who have the proficiency, but know little of children’s particulars (Nikolov, 2009a), also often taught in primary schools. Nunan (2003) found similar results in the Asia-pacific region (e.g. Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam). Primary school teachers had low proficiency skills, and did not possess the necessary methodological background to implement communicative language teaching, which was usually promoted by the governments. The author blamed the insufficient and inappropriate teacher training programmes and the inappropriate pedagogy suitable for young learners for the inadequacies. A Hungarian qualitative study (Nikolov, 2008) shed light on even more discouraging conditions. The participating primary school teachers had poor English skills, deficiencies in age-appropriate methodology, and lacked the motivation to improve their practice. In an overview of research on early FL learning, Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2006) concluded that there was very little research conducted on teachers and teachers’ education due to the sensitive nature of these issues. However, the available literature on these topics indicates that there is a lot that needs to be done in terms of providing a sufficient supply of well-qualified language teachers of young learners worldwide.
1.2.4 Continuity

As Edelenbos and Kubanek (2009, p. 45) pointed out, ”an early start by itself however guarantees nothing; it needs to be accompanied…. by continuity from one year to the other, taking children smoothly from pre-primary to primary, and from primary into secondary education.” Blondin, Candelier, Edelenbos, Johnstone, Kubanek-German and Taeschner (1998, p 35) stated that discontinuity negatively affected young learners’ performance, and it was easier to transfer their fragile competence developing during primary school years to a familiar environment. Nikolov and Nagy (2003) came to a similar conclusion when in a retrospective study they found that adults’ unsuccessful language learning could be explained by their inability to continue learning the target language they started in primary school. The literature, however, shows that in most countries continuity is not ensured (see Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000; Nikolov & Nagy, 2003). According to Blondin et al. (1998, p 56), the problem of discontinuity usually stems from the lack of communication between primary and secondary schools and their teachers, incompatibility of teaching objectives, differences between the applied methodologies, and secondary school language teachers’ unwillingness to rely on what their students have learned in the primary school. In Hungary, for example, according to a large-scale study conducted in 2003, two thirds of first year secondary school students started to learn the same language at basic level, or were forced to begin a new language (Vágó, 2007), which, consequently, questioned the objectives of an early start. In Hungary, secondary school language teachers cannot integrate into the syllabus what their students already know, mainly, due to the great variance of ELL programmes regarding the amount of exposure, quality of teaching and materials (Nikolov, 2009b). In contrast, a positive example could be observed in the Australian state of New South Wales, where the Department of Education and Training launched a programme called the Languages Continuity Initiative to improve students’ language learning outcomes (Chesterton, Steigler-Peters, Moran & Piccioli, 2004). Within the framework of this initiative primary and secondary schools worked together in the last two years of primary school and the first two years of secondary school.
1.2.5 Achievement targets

The targets an educational programme intends to achieve are usually outlined in the national curriculum. Gorsuch (2000) stated that in many countries national curricula were often based on political decisions and, therefore, tended to disregard instruction and focus on content, which could be changed faster and, thus, could, seemingly, present short-term results (see also Johnstone, 2009; Nunan, 2003; Petneki, 2002). Since teachers of FLs often lack the pedagogical knowledge necessary to teach young learners, this tendency results in teachers’ age-inappropriate implementation of the measures described in the curriculum (Gorsuch, 2000; Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009). Nunan (2003) emphasised the importance of sufficient preparation and preliminary studies before the introduction of a national curriculum to ensure cost-effectiveness. Garton, Copland and Burns (2011) pointed out that there were general factors that should influence the outline of a curriculum of early FL teaching; however, the local characteristics should always be taken into account to be able to determine feasible achievement targets. As an example they mentioned the widespread use of the methods of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Learning and Teaching emphasising communication. However, as studies conducted in individual countries showed, the appropriate implementation of these methods often conflicts with certain local particulars, such as over-crowded and under-equipped classrooms, lack of teaching materials, very differing educational customs or inappropriately trained teachers. Therefore, the idea that teachers should adapt rather than adopt is worth applying under all circumstances (Littlewood, 2007).

The type of the programme also determines what can be considered appropriate and feasible achievement targets (Johnstone, 2009; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011). After reviewing research on ELL programmes in Europe, Edelenbos and Kubanek (2009) concluded that these programmes showed great variance. Their aims ranged from the dogmatic teaching of the content of a given textbook or syllabus in limited weekly hours through raising language awareness to the total immersion where the devoted time and intensity were considerably higher. It would be highly unrealistic, for example, to expect young FL learners, who usually attend programmes belonging to the beginning of this range, to achieve native-like proficiency by the end of their primary school years (Nikolov, 2009a).

In the previously mentioned overview, Kubanek and Edelenbos (2009 pp. 52-53) determined eight reasons for ELL: “1) to develop the hidden multilingual potential of every child …; 2) to improve language competence of students …; 3) to foster positive attitudes …”
towards language learning; 4) to improve the level of communicative competence reached by students through their educational system; 5) to raise awareness of language-learning …; 6) to establish links between language learning in primary and secondary education; 7) … to make it easier to begin with a third language …; 8) to respond to the demands of parents …” regarding ELL. As a general rule Johnstone (2009) proposed that early language programmes should always consider learners’ cognitive, emotional and physical development while establishing achievement targets to make sure that the potential benefits these programmes could offer would be fully realized.

1.2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that early FL programmes can capitalize on the potential benefits of “the younger the better” approach only if certain conditions are met. YLLs need frequent, but short sessions of weekly exposure to the target language. Their language teachers need to be highly proficient users of both languages, aware of the needs of this age-group, and they have to be able to apply appropriate methodology accordingly. The transfer from the primary to secondary school need to be ensured to maintain the positive effects of an early start. Achievement targets should be determined by taking into account the characteristics of the given age-group and programme, and the contextual conditions. The results of the above mentioned studies, however, indicate that in most parts of the world these conditions are not or only partially provided; therefore, these facts cast doubt on the gains these programmes can potentially bring in the long run.
Chapter 2: The stakeholders of ELL: the young language learner and the teacher

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I have detailed the theoretical underpinnings of ELL, and what conditions need to be established in order that early language programmes can fully capitalize on the benefits they can potentially offer. In this chapter, I am going to shift the focus on the two stakeholders of ELL, the YLL and the teacher. At first, I am going to outline YLLs’ characteristics that are the most relevant from the point of view of their language learning development, and along which their language knowledge should be improved and assessed. As for who is considered young, there is a great variety in the international arena (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011). According to a working group of the European Union member states children between the age of seven and twelve are young learners (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011, p.96). However, in some cases 14 year olds were also included in this group.

The previous discussions have revealed that the teacher’s role is crucial in the successful outcome of children’s SLA. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter I am going to discuss the areas of knowledge, skills and competences teachers of YLLs should possess to ensure positive language outcomes and show what teachers believe and think about their own learners and teaching practices.

2.2. The young language learner

2.2.1 Cognitive processes

As has been mentioned earlier in section 1.3, language acquisition is based on the co-existence of two systems: a rule based and a formulaic system (MacWhinney, 2005; Skehan, 1998). Young learners mainly draw on their formulaic, exemplar-based system while learning a language (Skehan, 1998). This system consists of unanalyzed, ready-made chunks of language, and is memory-driven. Its disadvantage is that these formulaic items can usually be used in one
particular context and, therefore, are difficult to apply in other contexts. Skehan (1998) stated that this system should work together with the so-called rule-based system comprising language rules. Since children’s understanding of metalanguage is fairly limited (Mckay, 2006, p. 6), they hardly rely on this latter system. In the ELL classroom, therefore, the focus should be on meaning, rather than on form. While paying attention to the meaning young learners can implicitly use their inductive logic to infer the underlying language rules and gain knowledge of the grammar; rather than the teacher providing the form and expecting them to apply it to specific cases, which would be cognitively too demanding for them at this age. As for the activities, role-plays, board-games, songs and stories should be applied in which these chunks, formulaic expressions (e.g. Open your books. Your turn. Let’s have a look at this picture.) regularly appear (Nikolov, 2011).

Young learners can think logically about concrete objects or events, which they have already seen or experienced; however, when it comes to abstract concepts they face difficulties (Mckay, 2006, pp. 6-7). Therefore, for example, asking a child who has never travelled by air, to talk about why airplanes are uncomfortable, would be methodologically faulty. For the same reason, initially, they do not understand metalanguage, i.e. they cannot talk about grammar. They can apply inductive logic, going from a specific example to the general, but find it hard to think deductively, going from the general to the specific. YLLs can most easily learn through direct experience, i.e. actions, objects and visual aids (Mckay, 2006, p. 7). They enjoy playing with words and meanings; therefore, they like rhymes, phrases, puns and learning words. They are also interested in everything that does not belong to the human world, such as the stars, animals and plants. At first, they can usually pay attention for no longer than 10-15 minutes and can be distracted easily; however, this attention span does get longer as they get older (Mckay, 2006, p. 6).

In a large-scale national survey conducted in grade six, eight and ten Csapó and Nikolov (2002) examined how YLLs’ cognitive abilities and FL skills correlated. They found that in each grade the scores achieved on a standardized test measuring inductive reasoning skills, which is one of the four components of aptitude, explained between 10 to 15 % of the variance in performance. In a study aiming to develop and pilot an aptitude test for YLLs in Hungary, Kiss and Nikolov (2005) showed that participants who performed better on the aptitude test had better English grades. The results also revealed that aptitude explained a larger portion of variance (22%, p. 138) and, thus, predicted FL learning success better than motivation (explained 8% of variance, p. 138). In a Greek context, the aptitude of very young learners aged
five to nine was measured and compared to their scores on two vocabulary tests (Alexiou, 2009). They found a significant correlation between cognitive skills and language proficiency scores. The author concluded that aptitude tests could help teachers to develop and tailor their teaching strategies to their students’ individual needs.

2.2.2 Learning strategies

Strategies are important components of language knowledge (Nikolov, 2011). In early language programmes the establishment and development of such strategies should be one of the main aims, so that students can become independent language learners (Nikolov, 2011). The development of strategy use can be assisted by providing students with regular feedback on their performance and with the opportunity to assess themselves and their peers (Nikolov, 2011).

If we have a look at the cognitive characteristics of YLLs (see above), we may make the educated guess that since their metalanguage is highly limited, and their language acquisition is more naturalistic and based on unanalyzed language chunks, the younger they are the more probable it is that they use less complicated and fewer learning strategies. In their longitudinal and cross-sectional studies, Victoria and Tragan (2003, 2006) came to similar conclusions when they found age-related changes in YLLs’ use of certain strategies; however, these changes were not related to proficiency or the stage of learning. Their results also indicated that children, initially, mainly applied memorization strategies and drew on external resources. Similarly, while investigating 12- and 13-year-old students’ test-taking strategies Nikolov (2006) revealed no tendencies showing straightforward differences between low and high achievers.

In contrast, while examining seventh graders’ application of listening strategies Vandergrift (2003) showed that the more skilled listeners employed strategies more frequently, and these strategies were more complex than those of the less skilled listeners. Likewise, Lan (2005) found a positive relationship between primary school students’ use of language learning strategies and their proficiency. Her results also indicated a significant relationship between strategy use, students’ liking of English and their fathers’ educational level. Šamo (2009), who investigated upper primary school children’s use of reading strategies, showed that more proficient readers used strategies more often and in a wider range than less successful readers.
In a longitudinal study with 11-12 year old English children learning French, Macaro and Erler (2008) showed that strategy instruction could improve students’ strategy use and reading comprehension.

Pinter (2006) compared ten-year-old learners’ strategy use while solving a spot-the-difference task, to that of adult participants. She found that the children applied similar strategies but less often, and less appropriately. She also concluded that teachers should be very careful about what tasks they used with their students and consider the context, their age, proficiency and language learning experience. She suggested starting with simpler tasks and gradually increasing the difficulty of activities. In a longitudinal study, Haenni Hoti, Heinzmann, and Müller (2009) investigated Swiss third graders’ use of interaction strategies to overcome communication difficulties and found that the children used strategies mainly in German, rarely in English, and did not employ non-verbal strategies, such as gestures or mimics, either. They came to the conclusion that these kinds of strategies should be taught in class. Similarly, Peng and Zhang (2009) examined the use of communication strategies by Chinese fifth graders. On the basis of the classroom discourse data, they found that the participants, mainly, applied strategies in their mother tongue, and hardly any in English. They blamed the “far from satisfactory” results on the inappropriate teaching methodology, i.e. students simply did not really have the opportunity to communicate in the FL in class, and on the teachers’ low proficiency, as they could not provide their learners with appropriate examples (Peng & Zhang, 2009, p. 349).

2.2.3 Literacy

Research evidence suggests that although the emphasis should be on listening and speaking in the ELL classroom, introducing reading and writing gradually is beneficial (Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006). Postponing the use of literacy skills may hinder children’s FL development as their learning style is more visual. In certain cases, delaying reading can even make young learners create their own writing system in the target language (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 86). However, to ensure that the application of these skills in the FL classroom is truly productive, YLLs’ physical and cognitive characteristics should be considered first. Initially, the aim of reading and writing is only to support what they have already learned orally (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 87). It is also important that YLLs have
some background knowledge what they read about, i.e. they need to be familiar with the topics. Initially, they read very slowly; the abilities to read aloud and silently and to read for information develop at a later stage (Mckay, 2006, p. 13). Around the age of 11 they are ready to read fictions and nonfictions, and understand that a story can have more than one interpretation (Mckay, 2006, p. 13). Listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks should always be integrated, and do not happen in isolation (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 88). Since their fine motor skills are still developing, teachers should not overload them with writing tasks. Teachers should also take it into account that the development of young learners’ literacy skills in the FL show a wide diversity, and very much depend on their literacy skills in the L1 (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 85).

2.2.4 Vulnerability

At this age children are very sensitive to criticism and long for praise (Mckay, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, teachers should create a safe atmosphere where the emphasis is on what they can do, and not on what they did wrong; where they can experience success and progress, and where their efforts are always welcomed and appreciated. Unless these conditions are met, children can easily lose motivation and interest (McKay, 2006, p. 9). Young learners rely heavily on, at first, the adults’ and later their peers’ opinions and reactions while judging their own performance (Mckay, 2006, p. 9). Initially, they are eager to please their teacher (Nikolov, 1999a). As the influence of the peer group is becoming more and more dominant, some may even feel intimidated when required to do a task alone in front of the whole class, and, therefore, become very anxious. Up until around the age of 12 they still prefer playing and working with the same sex and find team games very enjoyable and less stressful (Mckay, 2006, p. 9).

2.2.5 Motivation and attitude

The reason why I am discussing motivation and attitude under one heading is that although they are two different affective characteristics, in research they are usually investigated simultaneously. According to Gardner (2001), motivation is the combination of the learner’s effort, desire and positive attitude towards learning the language. Whereas, language attitude refers to what the learner associates the language with (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). In a
longitudinal, four year study investigating how YLLs’ characteristics change and contribute to their achievements over time Mihaljevic Djigunovic and Lopriore (2011) found that children who had positive attitude, self-concept and strong motivation could achieve more; and the impact of their characteristics also increased with age.

Common wisdom says that all young learners have positive attitudes towards language learning by default. Probably for this reason, only few studies were carried out to research young learners’ attitudes. Those that have been conducted, however, proved this generalisation a misconception. One group of studies (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 1993, 1995; Szpotowicz, Mihaljevic Djigunovic, & Enever, 2009) found that children tended to adopt the attitudes of their parents or other significant others, such as friends, relatives or the teacher. Others revealed that as soon as children gained their own experience in language learning they started to form their own attitudes. In this latter case the classroom environment and the teacher have influential role in shaping young learners’ attitude (Nikolov, 1999a). Some studies shed light on the fact that attitudes were not stable but changed over time (e.g., Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Nikolov, 1999a). A relatively new development in the field of attitude research is that positive attitude is no longer seen as the cause of learning success; but, on the contrary, it is now considered the aim and the result of ELL (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009).

Similarly to positive attitudes, motivation is also often taken for granted in the case of YLLs. However, research studies showed that children’s motivation was largely shaped by classroom experience, the teacher, and later by peers (Hardi, 2004; Nikolov, 1995). Since the process of language learning is slower in children than in adults, maintaining YLLs’ motivation is even more crucial (Nikolov, 2011). Children are more likely to participate in the activities willingly if they find the tasks interesting and enjoyable, i.e. if they are driven by intrinsic motivation (Nikolov, 1995). Instrumental motivation, such as the importance of passing a language exam to get into a better school, comes later with age; whereas, integrative motivation has little influence on YLLs (Nikolov, 1999a). Initially high, later decreasing enthusiasm towards FL learning is also typical of this age group (Nikolov, 1999a; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2012).

The literature indicated that in the ELL classroom there is a close relationship between language achievements and motivation. In a nationally representative survey carried out in grade six and ten in Hungary, Nikolov and Józsa (2006) showed that the higher achievers the learners were the higher goals, such as advanced proficiency exam or university degree in the given FL, they established. The least successful learners even wanted to give up learning the
language as soon as possible. Other studies also found strong correlations between motivation and learners’ achievement in the ELL classroom (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007 cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 207; Tragant & Munoz, 2000 cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 208). In these latter cases, the correlations decreased with age. Interestingly, the opposite result was found in a transnational, longitudinal study carried out in seven European countries (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2012, p. 17). The influence of motivation and linguistic self-confidence on language learning achievement increased between grade two and four. In a study comparing the language learning attitudes and motivation of Croatian primary school students under two different conditions, Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2009) showed that the participants who learned English under less favourable conditions, which meant larger groups, fewer classes and less competent teachers, had lower motivation and less positive attitudes towards language learning than their more fortunate peers.

2.2.6 Language learning anxiety

The effect of anxiety on ELL is an underinvestigated area due to the misbelief that it is not present in the case of children (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011). However, a few research findings indicate that anxiety has a debilitating impact even on YLLs (Legac, 2007; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002 cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 209; Mihaljević Djigunović & Legac, 2008 cited in Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011, p. 103). Anxiety was found to be worth examining in relation to its interactions with other individual differences (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009). It was found to be negatively correlated with motivation (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002 cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 208) and willingness to communicate in the early language classroom (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000), which both play an important role in successful language learning outcomes.

2.2.7 Physical characteristics

In the first three grades of primary school young learners are very active, but can get tired easily; thus, they regularly need time to rest (Mckay, 2006, p. 10). Therefore, they enjoy physical activities, during which they tend to be noisy and sometimes aggressive (Mckay, 2006, p. 10). As their large muscle control is better than their fine coordination (Mckay, 2006, p. 10), writing,
cutting, drawing small pictures can cause difficulties. As young learners get into their upper primary grades, their hand-eye coordination is much more developed, and they still possess high activity level (Mckay, 2006, p. 10).

### 2.2.8 Socio-economic status

Young learners’ socioeconomic status (SES), i.e. parental education level, was also found to contribute to their language development (Nikolov, 2009c; Nikolov & Józsa, 2006). In a Hungarian, nation-wide study investigating the relationships between sixth and tenth graders’ language learning achievements and various classroom variables, Nikolov and Józsa (2006) showed that out of the examined variables, such as SES, long-term language learning goals, intensity of the language course, the number of years devoted to language learning, extracurricular tuition, types of schools, SES explained most of the variance regarding participants’ performance. In some cases, the differences between the mean scores achieved on proficiency tests were considerable. For example, learners of English with the most educated parents scored 75.7%; whereas, their counterparts with the least educated parents could only achieve a mean score of 40.6% (Nikolov & Józsa, 2006, p. 219). Another thought-provoking result was that the majority of students who could learn the more wanted language, English, had more educated parents, and those who studied German had usually less favourable family backgrounds.

In a previously mentioned project carried out in seven European countries (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2012) the results also shed light on correlations between language outcomes and SES, which increased with age. In a Greek study Mattheoudakis and Alexiou (2009) investigated how SES influenced the English language progress of learners in fourth, fifth and sixth grade. They showed that students who had a higher socioeconomic background progressed significantly faster than those of lower socioeconomic origins, and the gap between the two groups increased with age.

### 2.2.9 Conclusion

As Mckay (2006, p. 5) also formulated it, “children bring to their language learning their own personalities, likes and dislikes and interests, their own individual cognitive styles and
capabilities and their own strengths and weaknesses.” Therefore, teaching and assessing YLLs requires knowledge of their special needs and characteristics. In the classroom the emphasis should be on meaning, and in the meantime young learners can implicitly gain knowledge of the form, i.e. grammar as well. Since their attention span is limited, and they can easily get diverted, classes should be based on short and interesting activities, such as rhymes, songs, games or discussions about familiar topics. The literature suggests that aptitude also matters; therefore, tailoring the syllabus to young learners’ cognitive abilities can also increase the efficiency of language learning in the ELL classroom.

The establishment and development of language learning strategies can be a feasible objective in early language learning, and can be assisted by direct instruction, and the encouragement of self- and peer-assessment. Teachers should increase the difficulty of the tasks gradually to allow for the development of YLLs’ strategy use. YLLs’ literacy skills are still developing; therefore, oral activities should constitute the core of their FL teaching. Reading and writing should be introduced gradually, while carefully considering learners’ individual differences in developing these skills. The integration of reading and writing activities with listening and speaking activities is very important, i.e. an isolated fill-in-the-blank exercise, for example, has not much use in the early language classroom.

Since at this age learners are vulnerable to negative feedback and need praise, in order to do their best and learn the most they need a safe, anxious-free and supporting environment, where making mistakes is considered a natural component of the learning process. Instead of frontal classwork, when the teacher talks and the students listen, the emphasis should be on pair and team work, when they can feel less intimidated by their classmates’ presence, and the more able students can help the weaker ones. In terms of motivation, in the case of YLLs what matters can be found in the classroom, i.e. age-appropriate tasks and the support of the teacher and the peers. Contrary to general beliefs, children also feel anxious in language classes, which can hinder their performance and progress. Therefore, teachers should do everything to lower its effects. While designing the syllabus teachers of YLLs should also bear in mind that children enjoy and need physical activities. Since parents’ level of education also influences students’ language achievement, teachers should pay special attention to children who are less fortunate in this respect by giving extra help and motivation they may not receive from home.
2.3. The teacher of the young language learner

2.3.1 Teacher expertise

In their review, Edelenbos, Johnstone and Kubanek (2006, p. 76) concluded that the teacher of YLLs had a central role “in providing encouragement, input, interaction, feedback, a supportive learning environment and guidance”. The publication of the European Commission, *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006*, states that the benefits of ELL can “only accrue [along with other factors] where teachers are trained specifically to teach languages to very young children” (2003, p. 7). Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2011) also claimed that teachers of young learners needed to satisfy certain criteria in order to be able to maximize the potentials of ELL. These measures include a high level of proficiency in the first and the target language, knowledge of the methodology for teaching languages to this age-group, and familiarity with the general curriculum (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 465; Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011).

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I have already demonstrated that in early language programmes teachers’ low level of proficiency in the target language and/or their deficiencies in age-appropriate methodology are worldwide problems. As the empirical studies (overviewed in Nikolov & Curtain, 2000; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011) showed, the explanation for this tendency is that in most early language programmes teachers are either generalists, whose proficiency is often limited, but who are highly knowledgeable in the area of age-appropriate methodology and the general curriculum, or language specialists whose proficiency in the target language tends to be better, but may lack competences in classroom methodology.

In most countries the reason behind the lack of appropriately qualified teachers is that early language programmes have been introduced without adequate teacher education (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011). This was also the case in Hungary, where after decades of teaching Russian exclusively, at the end of 1980’s other FLs were introduced in primary schools overnight (see chapter 3 for more details). The discussion of the relevant literature in the next chapter will demonstrate that after over two decades the consequences of this phenomenon in Hungary can still be felt. The results of a worldwide project (144 countries), *Investigating Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners*, uncovered similar problems and, accordingly, recommended the strengthening of pre- and in-service teacher training; especially the latter one, since many in-service teachers ”did not start their careers as teachers of English
or as teachers of young learners” (Garton, Copland & Burns, 2011, p. 16). According to the reports of the teachers participating in this project, the most often used activity was repeating after the teacher (74.4%, Garton et al., 2011, p. 12); but other not age-appropriate tasks, such as reading out loud, filling the gaps, grammar exercises, and memorising words or phrases, were also among the most popular ones. One of the major concerns of the participant teachers was how to explain grammar to young learners; despite the fact that learning grammar explicitly is known to be of little use or interest to YLLs. Therefore, it should not be included in the curriculum of early language programmes. Good examples, however, were also found. Listening to tape-recorder/CD (73.5%, p.12) was the second on the list of the most frequently applied activities, and playing games, songs, and role-play were also mentioned. Interestingly, the teachers themselves considered training in new language teaching methodologies the most important factor that would improve their teaching. While investigating the Asia-Pacific region, Nunan (2003) also revealed the inadequacies of the education of English teachers, even in countries where this sector was well supported financially. Due to their lack of appropriate language competence and methodological knowledge, teachers could not implement communicative language teaching, which was prescribed in the curriculum.

It is also a widespread problem that teaching YLLs is often considered less prestigious, which usually also means underpaid; therefore, more competent teachers are lured away by the much better paid private sector and jobs requiring high level of language proficiency (Berova & Dachkova, 2000; Komorowska, 2000; Nikolov, 2000a). Under such circumstances schools are forced to choose between proficiency and appropriate methodology, despite the fact that in ELL no such choice should be made, since both are crucial (Nikolov & Curtain, 2000, p. 7).

### 2.3.2 Teachers’ beliefs

Teachers’ beliefs about their learners and practices have a considerable impact on what they actually do in the classroom (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012), and are sometimes even more powerful than their methodological knowledge (Pajares, 1992 cited in Moon, 2009, p. 316).

In a study carried out in Vietnam upon governmental request, Moon (2009) found contradictions between primary school teachers’ perceptions about teaching English to young learners and their classroom practices. Some participants, for example, stated that an early start was beneficial and easier because children “do not have to read and write”, and can “imitate and pronunciation will be better” (Moon, 2009, p. 325). However, classroom observations
revealed that reading and writing activities were part of classroom practice, and teachers had difficulties with their own pronunciation and intonation; therefore, they could not provide young learners with appropriate input. Lugossy (2006) found similar results while researching teachers’ beliefs about using authentic stories. The participants claimed that stories were useful because they developed communicative competence, whereas, the follow-up activities to the stories were often form-focused. The teachers also considered interesting, cognitively and linguistically appropriate texts beneficial because they provided the students with the opportunity to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words from the context. However, in their written assignments some of the participants reported having pre-taught the new words before the students started to read the story. In a case study with a young primary school teacher of English, Lugossy (2009, see chapter 3 for more details) found that the teacher’s inadequate education in methodologies and own experience as a teacher and as a learner prevented her from utilising those age-appropriate techniques that she thought to be useful.

While investigating primary school teachers’ views on the implementation of a new, more learner-centred curriculum in China, Wang (2009, p. 303) found that they were very enthusiastic and, as one of them said, considered it “absolutely necessary to promote”. In contrast with the previous examples, the results showed that their beliefs regarding teaching YLLs were in accordance with this attitude, i.e. in line with the learner-centred teaching approach. When the participants were asked to report on what they actually did in class, only a few discrepancies were found between beliefs and practice. More than 80% of the teachers thought self-assessment and allowing children to make their own plans and choose their own way of learning were all important; however, less than 50% actually implemented these ideas in class. Despite their positive attitudes towards the change in the curriculum, the teachers also voiced their concerns about its feasibility, because of difficulties, including large class size, lack of professional competence, and heavy workload they had to face on a daily basis. The author concluded that the successful implementation of new educational policies did not only depend on teachers’ beliefs, but providing the necessary conditions, for example enough supply of qualified teachers and resources, was also fundamental.

2.3.3 Conclusion

Teachers play a significant role in determining the linguistic outcome in ELL. They have to possess high level of proficiency in the target language and the students’ mother tongue, and
the knowledge of appropriate methodologies and the curriculum. If any of these requirements are missing, the aim of ELL is questionable. Research evidence indicated that in most parts of the world due to the inadequacies of teacher education and the low prestige of the profession, one or more of these teacher attributes were often missing. The comparison between teachers’ practices and their beliefs can also shed some light on the why’s of the problems in early language programmes. The results of the studies discussed above and in the following chapter showed that teachers’ ideas and beliefs as to what should be done in the classroom of YLLs were in line with the age-appropriate methodology; but when it came to practice, their knowledge often failed them. In many cases, the inadequate teaching circumstances and their linguistic and methodological deficiencies kept them from implementing these appropriate ideas.
Chapter 3: Early FL education in Hungary

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, the two most important stakeholders of ELL, the YLL and the teacher were elaborated on. Since the two empirical studies of the dissertation are set in the Hungarian educational context, this chapter gives insights into the most important characteristics of early FL education in Hungary. First, I am going to draw the background to it; then I am going to discuss the issues of language choice and the equality of opportunity. I am also going to outline what kinds of degrees Hungarian teachers of YLLs have to possess, and what characterises their expertise. Finally, I am going to elaborate on the quality of Hungarian ELL programmes.

3.2 Background to FL education in Hungary

According to a survey carried out at the end of 2005 in the 25 EU members and Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria and Turkey, Hungary was the fourth one (58%), along with Portugal, on the list showing the number of citizens who claimed they did not know any FLs (Eurobarometer, 2005, p. 9). In order to see the big picture, it is important to point out that earlier Hungarian surveys (Nikolov, 2011) based on self-report showed that at the beginning of the 1990’s only 12% of Hungarians spoke an FL, whereas, in 2005 this number already went up to 29% (Eurobarometer, 2005, p. 3). In addition, the aforementioned EU survey reported on a further increase when revealing that 42% of Hungarians could hold a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue (Eurobarometer, 2006, p. 8). It was even more encouraging that lagging behind with a mere 1% from the EU average, 27% of Hungarians claimed to be able to speak two FLs; and outscoring the EU average by 9%, 20% of Hungarians knew three FLs in 2005 (Eurobarometer, 2006, p. 9). Unfortunately, this positive tendency was only temporary, since the latest version of this survey (Eurobarometer, 2012) already reported on less optimistic results. In 2012, the number of respondents who could speak at least one FL decreased with seven percentage points to 35%, which granted Hungary the last place on the list of the 27 EU member states (Eurobarometer, 2012, p. 15). Similarly discouraging outcome is that the
proportion of citizens who could hold a conversation in two FLs also dropped noticeably with 14 percentage points to %13, which again meant the last place in the list. A negative peak is that from the fourth position Hungary came up to the first on the list showing the number of respondents who did not speak any FL (Eurobarometer, 2012, p. 15). Although the FL competence of Hungarians has deteriorated in the recent years, 85% of them still agreed with the view that everybody should be able to speak at least one FL (Eurobarometer, 2012, p. 113). It is even more interesting that Hungary was the third (87% of the respondents) on the list of countries supporting the idea that the improvement of languages should be a policy priority (Eurobarometer, 2012, p. 122). In other words, Hungarians consider FL proficiency important; only the majority, somehow, cannot achieve it.

In Hungary, primary school children have been required to learn an FL for over forty years. At first they learned Russian, because it was mandatory. They started to learn it at the age of nine in grade four, and continued it until the end of secondary school, sometimes even at university or college. However, for most of them, this early language programme resulted in very limited language proficiency. Around the beginning of the 1980’s when ‘glasnost’ (openness) started to set foot in Hungarian politics too, more and more people wanted to learn Western languages, mainly German and English. To cater for this new demand the number of private language schools started to mushroom. At the same time, the pressure coming from the parents forced more and more schools to allow their students to learn a Western language. However, this was a difficult request to fulfil, as the curriculum allowed teaching a second FL, such as English or German, only in grammar schools (gimnázium) (Vágó, 2000). Therefore, primary schools had to search for loopholes if they wanted to teach an FL other than Russian. They launched special afternoon classes or specialised classes in more popular FLs.

In Hungary the major turning point in FL teaching came with the declaration of free language choice in 1989. However, at this time the ratio of Russian and other FL teachers was three to one (Vágó, 1997). In order to tackle this problem primary schools started to employ unqualified language teachers who had intermediate or, in a best-case scenario, advanced-level language proficiency. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Education launched a retraining programme for Russian teachers, which gave these teachers the opportunity to become fully qualified teachers of a more popular language, most often English or German. This programme was run from 1990 to 1998, during which period 4,900 teachers could obtain a degree (Vágó, 2000). Another governmental initiative to deal with the shortage of teachers of Western languages was the introduction of the three-year fast-track programmes, which were offered by
universities and colleges. At the same time, the number of students admitted to the FL departments of universities and colleges were raised; whereas, the ratio of Russian majors was decreased substantially (Vágó, 1997). In the 1997/1998 academic year, secondary-school leavers could already apply for more than 4,000 undergraduate places at FL departments (Vágó, 1997).

Due to the new forms of pre- and in-service programmes and the increased intake in pre-service training, the supply of teachers of popular FLs improved significantly. However, the situation in primary schools was less satisfactory. Between 1990 and 1997 the number of primary-school students who learned Russian decreased by 60% and, those who learned Western languages increased also by 60% (Vágó, 1997, Table 10). Similarly, the number of teachers of Western languages grew by 60%. However, between 1992 and 1997 the figures on the student-teacher ratio only declined by 24%. The situation was worse in the primary schools of small towns and villages (Vágó, 1997). In 1998/1999 in grade four, every tenth student did not learn any FL, because there was no qualified language teacher, not even a teacher with an intermediate language exam (Vágó, 2007). By the 2003/2004 school year, however, 92% of eighth graders could learn an FL, which was mostly either English or German (Vágó, 2007). The following year 41% of these students reported that in primary school they had learned an FL for 4-5 years, the duration sanctioned by the National Core Curriculum (henceforth, NCC), 53% for 6-8 years, and only 2.4% did not learn it at all. A more recent large-scale study (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009) reported that students learned an FL in the first three years in 58% of the participating primary schools. In addition, between 2001 and 2005 the number of unqualified FL teachers decreased from 10% to 4% (Vass & Vágó, 2006, p. 247). According to the more recent report (Vágó, Simon & Vass, 2011, p. 240), the ratio of unqualified English and German teachers further reduced to 2.4% and 1.8% by the end of 2010s, respectively. Despite these encouraging figures and the increasing supply of FL teachers, the lack of qualified professionals has not been completely resolved as of yet (Nikolov, 2011).

3.3 Language choice and the equality of opportunity

Since the abolition of compulsory Russian language teaching in 1989 no FL has been mandatory in Hungary. This means that students and their parents can choose from the FLs that their school can offer. After 1989 in primary education, initially, more than 60% of the students still learned
Russian due to the lack of FL teachers mentioned earlier (Vágó, 1997, Table 10). As for Western languages, German and English were far the most common in primary schools. Because of the political and economic links with Germany and Austria the German language remained the most popular for years (Vágó, 1997, Table 10). As globalization took effect in Hungary, the English language took the lead and has maintained it ever since (Nikolov, 2003b).

The introduction of free language choice, however, did not mean that students could learn the FL they wanted, since the shortage of teachers of popular FLs was, and has been ever since, rather common. Nevertheless, the decision who would learn German and who would learn English still needed to be made. The way out of the dilemma was that schools started to stream the learners according to their abilities (Nikolov, 2003b). The more able and talented students were given the opportunity to learn the more wanted language, English. Two nationwide studies carried out in grade six and ten in 2000 and 2003 (Csapó, 2001; Nikolov & Józsa, 2003) revealed this tendency. According to the results in both grades, the students of English outperformed their peers learning German in every aspect. Their results on their proficiency and inductive reasoning tests were better. Their grade point average in the FL and other subjects were higher. Another interesting finding was that the parents’ level of education also influenced which FL their child learned. In grade eight, the higher the mother’s level of education was, the higher the probability was that her child learned English (Csapó, 2001, p. 30). The reason behind this tendency can be that parents with more academic background usually have better ability to represent their interest; therefore, they can promote their children’s interests better in language learning, as well (Andor, 2000).

The figures of another study (Nikolov, 2003a) conducted in grade six, eight, and ten showed similar trends. The students of English had higher self-confidence and more sense of achievement. In contrast, every seventh student of German wanted to give up learning the language. Research findings also indicated (Bors, Nikolov, Pércsich & Szabó, 1999; Bukta & Nikolov, 2002; Nikolov & Józsa, 2003, 2006) that primary schools had been streaming students not only to allocate them into English or German classes, but also to put the best ones in specialized classes where FL education was more intensive and of higher quality. As a result of these practices, huge differences can be seen between the language proficiency of students at the level of schools, as well as classes (Józsa & Nikolov, 2005; Nikolov, 2007, 2011), which are usually divided into two groups. More able students learn English in an increased number of weekly classes; whereas, less able ones learn either English in lower weekly exposure, or German. In other words, due to the free language choice accompanied by an insufficient supply
of FL teachers, more talented and faster learners in primary schools can improve even faster, whereas, their slower peers lag behind (Nikolov, 2011).

3.4 Framework of FL education

Before the development of the NCC in 1995, teachers relied on various, usually foreign, language textbooks when designing their curricula. The problem with these books was that they did not take into account the particulars of Hungarian FL education. Although the NCC gave a framework to FL education, it was only a foundation; it provided teachers with objectives and requirements only to a certain extent. Therefore, teachers of FLs were free to tailor their local curricula to the needs of their students and to their local possibilities and limitations. However, as research studies outlined in subchapter 3.6 showed, in many cases they lacked the necessary methodological background and had insufficient knowledge of the characteristics of this age-group to be able to utilize the advantages of this freedom. Consequently, many teachers either adopted a sample curriculum word by word, or continued to rely heavily on the textbooks, neither of which was written with local characteristics in mind. In 2003, the NCC was amended and supplemented with frame curricula. The frame curricula prescribed a lot more than the NCC, but did not, for example, contain enough methodological recommendations (Petneki, 2002). The NCC already declared the development of communicative language competence as the main objective of language education. The problem was that neither the NCC, nor the frame curricula told the teachers how to achieve this aim. Language education was, however, in need of such recommendations, because classroom reality was more in line with the old traditions, such as the grammar translation and the audio-lingual methods (Nikolov, 2003a, 2008).

In order to improve FL education at all levels of schooling, the Ministry of Education launched a programme called “World Language” in 2003 (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009). Among other things, it provided grants to motivate teachers to design language programmes based on the principles of communicative language teaching. In 2007, a collection of the best submitted lesson plans, syllabuses and curricula along with professional recommendations was published to further assist and improve the methodological knowledge of FL teachers. Another central attempt for the improvement of FL situation was a DVD on “Good practice”, which presented, as the title suggests, exemplary procedures, techniques and materials for those teaching English or German to the age group of 6-10 (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009).
package also included a methodological guide to help teachers in the application of what they saw.

Similarly to the previous versions, the NCC revised in 2007 still gave plenty of elbowroom to primary schools. Although it prescribed schools to ensure their students learn at least one FL from grade four, it also allowed them to launch earlier language programmes if the need arose, i.e. if the parents requested it, which they did. As to what teachers were supposed to teach in the first three grades, it was not specified in the NCC (2007). As to the goals and the achievement targets set for grades 4-12, there were downsides to them, too (Nikolov, 2011). Firstly, the NCC (2007) prescribed two kinds of achievement targets depending on which level, intermediate or advanced, the student intended to achieve by the end of grade 12. However, primary schools were often in a difficult position to decide to whom applied which achievement target, because in many cases, not surprisingly, fifth graders and their parents could not decide eight years in advance (Nikolov, 2011). It was also problematic that the NCC prescribed the same achievement targets in all four skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) for all the students within the same level. However, practice would have called for a less strict requirement, such as the achievement of the appropriate level in only one or two skills (Nikolov, 2011). Thirdly, since the requirements set by the NCC (2007) were not in line with the results of empirical studies of language competence, and sometimes even contradicted them, it was not clear how much they bore upon reality (Nikolov, 2011). As for the frame curricula, their aim and relation to the NCC were not clearly specified, therefore, they gave little concrete help to the schools.

The current NCC (2012) already prescribes two FLs in primary school, and, at same time, slightly decreases the percentage rates allotted to FL classes and increases the former minimum level of A1, as described in the CEFR (2001) to A2 by the end of grade eight. In other words, in terms of FL teaching the requirements of the former NCC (2007), whose feasibility was, as stated above, not supported by empirical data (Nikolov, 2011, p. 15), are further increased by the new version. The obligatory start of the first FL in grade four has not changed; neither has the fact that it can be started even earlier if, and this is a new element, the school has “a teacher qualified in teaching an FL in the first three grades” (NCC, 2012, p. 14). The question of what teachers are supposed to teach in the first three grades stays unanswered in the new NCC, too. Contrary to the previous NCC’s, the current regulation limits the choice of the first FL to English, German, French and Chinese. As for the second FL, students can learn it from grade seven; however, it is not mandatory. It is a positive change that schools are to ensure
the continuity of learning the same first FL in the upper grades and in secondary school too. By
the time of the school leaving exam, students have to reach level B2 in the CEFR scale in the
first FL. The continuity of the second FL is, however, not guaranteed by the new NCC. This
means that if a student decides to start learning a second FL in the last two years of primary
school, she or he may not be able to continue it in secondary school, but has to start a new
second FL. As for the principles and objectives of the new NCC, it is, in many respects, a step
ahead. It extends the notion of communicative competence with linguistic, sociolinguistic and
text competence. Intercultural competences and cross-cultural activities are given more
emphasis. The new document draws attention to the importance of teaching learning strategies
and self-assessment so that students can become autonomous language learners. Information
technology is considered as a means of “modern language teaching, differentiation and
autonomous language learning” (NCC 2012, p. 10681). The 2012 NCC also states that
classroom communication and activities are to be carried out in the target language. As to how
these changes will affect FL teaching in Hungary remains to be seen.

A recent large-scale study (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009) that examined the FL
education in the first three years of primary school presented thought-provoking results as to
what programmes teachers of FLs relied on while designing their own curricula. The results
painted a varied picture. The authors often found it difficult to interpret the answers of the 760
participating primary schools, since they often contained irrelevant information. So it was the
case with the most commonly mentioned category (385), namely the local curriculum, which
in itself did not specify which programme they used. A total of 176 schools indicated that they
relied on a particular textbook, publishers’ curricula or syllabi; 80 participants reported that
they followed a programme planned locally on the basis of the local needs and particulars. The
responses also included references to various programme portfolios, central curricula and
recommendations. Out of the 760 participants only six mentioned that they relied on the
recommendations of the above mentioned “World Language” programme. Many answers
referred to documents which had little to do with language education in grades 1-3.
3.5. Degrees of teachers of foreign languages in primary education

Currently, in primary education FL teachers can have four kinds of degrees in Hungary. The highest and most respected one is the four- or five-year single or double major university degree. Those who earn it are language specialists with less methodological knowledge (Nikolov, 2000a). They can teach at any institution, but typically work in secondary schools, universities and colleges. Since these graduates usually have the highest level of language competence, they often opt for jobs in the business or private sectors, where their salary is multiple of the teacher salary. A four-year double major college degree qualifies the teacher to teach one or two FLs in the upper grades of primary school. They also often end up in better paid secretarial jobs (Nikolov, 2000a). The third degree is offered by the above mentioned three-year fast track programmes, which were ceased in 2001 (Petneki, 2002). In contrast with the previously discussed degrees, these training programmes put more emphasis on practical methodology and teaching practice (Medgyes & Miklósy, 2005). The holders of this degree can teach both in primary and secondary schools. The best of these graduates, however, opted for secondary school positions, which are considered more prestigious. The fourth programme provides graduates with a four-year lower primary college degree with a language specialisation, which qualifies them to teach an FL in grades 1-6. These teachers are familiar with the needs and characteristics of primary school students, but their language proficiency often leaves a lot to be desired (Bors et al., 1999; Nikolov, 2001b). The fifth population of teachers of Western languages in primary schools are the retrained Russian and other major teachers. Many of these teachers also have deficiencies in terms of language proficiency and age-appropriate classroom techniques (Nikolov, 2001b). The recent large-scale study (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009) examining FL education in the first three grades of primary school reported that 60% of the participating FL teachers in grades one to three had a four year double major college degree, i.e. were not qualified to teach this age group. In the participating schools that were only planning to launch an early language programme soon, 62% of the teachers who would teach in the first three grades also had a four year double major college degree, i.e. the future does not look brighter in this respect.
### 3.6 The proficiency and methodology of teachers of foreign languages

The problem of the lack of age-appropriate classroom practices in the FL classroom dates back as far as the period when Russian suddenly became a mandatory FL without any previous preparation (Vágó, 1997). In order to fulfil the abruptly increased need for Russian teachers fast-track programmes were launched, which usually resulted in professionals with low levels of language competence and scarce knowledge of teaching methodologies. Therefore, in class students were mainly made to cram words and the rules of conjunction (Vágó, 1997). Since Western languages were mainly taught in secondary schools, teacher training programmes put emphasis on secondary FL education in the case of these languages (Petneki, 2002). This tendency preserved the problem of the application of inappropriate classroom techniques in primary education (Petneki, 2002). After the liberalisation of language learning, teachers of popular languages were often required to teach students as young as six years of age, for which they were not trained and prepared. The consequences of this unpreparedness were revealed by a retrospective study carried out in 1999 (Nikolov & Nagy, 2003). A total of 185 Hungarian adults were asked to talk about their FL learning experiences. While describing their primary school memories the majority of the participants reported on classes held in an unfriendly atmosphere and based on grammar drills, other form-focused activities, and rote-learning of texts. The routine and, therefore, boring use of textbooks was also mentioned frequently: “We translated the story, did the exercises, and that was it” (Nikolov & Nagy, 2003, p.28). The respondents were often “afraid of” or “terrified of” something in class. Only few of them felt no anxiety in the FL classroom. Many of them did not have a sense of achievement, or lagged behind because of the hurried pace.

Studies conducted around the turn of the century, when communicative language teaching was already widely applied in other parts of the world, still showed the use of inappropriate teaching techniques and the realm of the behaviourist tradition in the FL classroom. In the nationally representative large-scale study (Nikolov, 2003a), students of grade six, eight and ten reported that the most interesting activities, such as the use of audio and video recorders, games, role plays were the least frequent in the FL classroom. In contrast, the least popular activities, such as translation, form-focused activities, drills, and rote-learning of texts, were the most frequent. The responses revealed that in class the students usually worked individually, or sometimes in pairs, and very rarely in groups. Anxiety and failure experience...
were common in the classroom of all grades. A small-scale study carried out in the same year in the primary schools of Pécs painted a slightly more optimistic picture of the FL teachers’ classroom techniques (Bors et al., 2001). The classroom observations proved that good practice could be found in even the least prestigious primary schools. The dominance of grammar, drills and translation, however, could still be observed in many classes. Classroom observations (Nikolov, 1999b) and other nationally representative studies (Nikolov, 2003a, Nikolov & Józsa, 2006) conducted around the 1990s also shed light on the dominance of classroom techniques that were not in line with the needs and cognitive skills of YLLs. The findings showed that written and reading activities were more common than listening and speaking tasks in FL classes.

A more recent qualitative exploratory study (Nikolov, 2008) carried out in the first five grades of primary school provided further proofs that not age-appropriate teaching practices dominated early FL education. Frequent or, sometimes, the sole application of the audio-lingual methods and the principles of the behaviourist tradition were typical of the majority of 60 observed lessons. Accordingly, translation in frontal class work, teaching and practicing grammatical rules, memorizing out-of-context words and drills were common types of activities. Since these activities are not age-appropriate, the students were often bored, which resulted in discipline problems. The dominant and, in several cases, the exclusive use of the mother tongue was common practice in the classroom. The teachers’ language proficiency was often in need of considerable improvement. Many of the participating teachers reported that teaching classes where the students had different abilities was very difficult, and they preferred homogenous groups. Therefore, it was no surprise that no example for differentiated teaching techniques could be observed. Sixteen out of the 30 participants preferred teaching older students, because teaching learners in the lower grades was found “tiresome” (Nikolov, 2008, p. 13) The findings of the study were so discouraging that, as the author herself phrased it, in several cases, “the students would have been better off if they had not learned an FL at all” (Nikolov, 2008, p. 17).

The previously mentioned large-scale study (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009) conducted recently in the first three years of primary school presented thought-provoking results regarding FL teachers’ beliefs and knowledge on various aspects of teaching YLLs. The findings revealed that the teachers had major deficiencies in terms of the age-specific characteristics of these students, and that grammar was still considered the focus of language learning even at such a young age. The non-representative sample of participants consisted of 512 teachers from all
over the country. One of the questions inquired what aspects the participants considered when choosing teaching materials. They had to choose the three most important aspects from a list of options. On the one hand, the results showed that the teachers were mostly aware of what their students needed. Teaching materials that improved students’ skills in a versatile manner, whose content was age-appropriate, and in which activities were in the focus were considered the best ones. On the other hand, the participants found it far less important whether these materials were foreign or national, or contained enough colourful pictures, which are also essential features if classroom techniques appropriate for YLLs are to be ensured. The options also included an “other” category where the participants could write all the other aspects that were not on the list, but they still considered them to be among the three most important ones when selecting the appropriate teaching material. The answers revealed that whether the rhymes and the songs in the book provided an appropriate basis for grammar was also a feature that the teachers checked before opting for a textbook.

The respondents of this large scale project (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009) were also asked what competencies FL teachers in the first three grades should possess. The majority of the answers (611) belonged to the group of social and personal competencies, which included characteristics such as creativity, cooperative skills, empathy and playfulness. The second most frequently mentioned competency (477) was the methodology of teaching YLLs. The fewest references (96) were made to the knowledge of age-specific characteristics of this age-group. In contrast, when the participants were asked to choose the three most important factors of successful language teaching from a given list, the teacher who is fully aware of the characteristics of teaching YLLs was chosen the most frequently. The teacher who has sound language proficiency, however, was only the fourth one, and overcome in importance even by classes appropriate both in frequency and in length. When the participating teachers were asked what they considered the three most important results they had achieved in the first three grades, language development (654) and positive attitude (651) were referred to most commonly. Language development included categories such as the development of language skills, confident language use, and sound bases, which is considered to be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in the first three grades of primary school. However, making students like the language and language learning, which belonged to the categories of positive attitude, is a feasible and essential objective at this age. The importance of giving students self-confidence and a sense of achievement, which are indispensable in the classroom of YLLs and can determine the success of language learning for the whole life, was, though, rated very low by
the respondents, a finding which is in line with the results of studies and classroom observations discussed in this chapter.

In the same study (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009), the answers to the question what problems the teachers had to face in the first three grades were real eye-openers. After inappropriate conditions (383), competencies the students lack (284) were mentioned most frequently. Within this latter category the participants referred to such competencies that the cognitive level of this age-group simply does not allow them to possess. Almost all of these shortcomings had something to do with the insufficient knowledge of Hungarian grammar. One reference held against these students that reading and writing were “difficult for them even in Hungarian” (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009, p.61). Interestingly, however, only 79 references were made to the problem of the lack of teacher’s competencies.

Sebestyénné (2011) found similar tendencies when she carried out a study in the lower grades of two provincial German-Hungarian bilingual schools. She conducted structured interviews with six teachers of German as a foreign language and inquired about their opinion on the principles, advantages and disadvantages of early language teaching programmes. The teachers’ answers revealed that they did not have adequate knowledge of the natural language acquisition processes. The results showed that teaching grammatical rules, activities typical of the grammar translational method and drills characterized the participants’ classes. One of the teachers considered teaching lower-grade students “more difficult and tiring” because young learners’ “attention span is shorter, and therefore, we have to use more varied methods….they are very active, so they can’t just sit there for 45 minutes “ (Sebestyénné, 2011, p. 87). In contrast, one of her colleagues did not consider early language teaching a real challenge in the long-run and believed that it was in the upper grades where teachers “have to push themeselve more, they [upper-grade students] also stimulate me both linguistically and professionally” (Sebestyénné, 2011, p. 99).

A case study with a young, primary school teacher of English can shed some light on the why’s of this stubborn insistence on out-of date and inappropriate classroom techniques (Lugossy, 2009). The author of the article conducted the study with her 10-year-old daughter’s teacher whose inefficient and inappropriate teaching techniques she had heard of from her daughter, other learners and their parents. The observation of one of the teacher’s lessons on an open day proved the feedback right. The teacher did not use the target language in class. The majority of the activities were form-focused. The interview with the teacher revealed that the activities she used in class were the ones she had come across as a learner. As a student, she
liked most the listening activities and songs, which, for some reason, she did not apply as a teacher. Her description of the years spent in the lower primary teacher training college showed that the methodological courses, however “useful” she claimed they had been, left her with very little hands-on knowledge and skills. Besides some of the topics and titles of the courses, she could not recollect any concrete examples as to what she had learned during these courses. As she stated later on in the interview, “it didn’t teach me how to teach” (Lugossy, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, if she did not know how to do something she asked her colleagues. In the interview, she also referred to a video she had seen where children were sitting on a carpet, singing and playing games in a language class. Although she liked what she had seen and could identify with this approach, the expectations of her colleagues and her lack of appropriate methodological knowledge prevented her from seeing the importance and the role of these activities, and, therefore, from implementing them in her own practice: “it’s also important for them to know that they [the pupils] are on the lesson and not in a play-house… otherwise there would be a huge contrast between English and the other school subjects” (Lugossy, 2009, p.7). She probably refrained from using the activities she found interesting as a student for similar reasons. In contrast, she found reassurance in the use of teaching methods that she knew from her language learning and teaching experience. Discipline was another reason for her concern. She felt that using games would also relax discipline, a finding that is in line with the results of other empirical studies (Lugossy, 2006, Nikolov, 2008).

Another factor that has been contributing to this stubborn insistence on the activities of the grammar translation and audio-lingual methods is the increasing importance of various language exams since the end of 1990s. In this period the prestige of the school leaving examination in an FL was fairly low. Therefore, good students, mostly at their parents’ urging, strived to pass a language exam before graduating from secondary school. In addition, they could even gain exemption from attending classes and taking the school-leaving exam in an FL by passing an intermediate language exam that included translation. These bilingual language exams, besides measuring mediation skills, also required a thorough knowledge of grammar on part of the applicant. Therefore, to cater for this growing interest in language exams teachers of FLs, even in the primary schools, started to place more emphasis on translation and grammar both in writing and in speaking in the classroom (Nikolov, 2001b).

To sum up, novice teachers of FLs who have better skills and higher degrees usually choose either the business sector or secondary or higher education over primary schools in Hungary. The classroom observations also showed that many of those who, however, did take
up a job in primary education had either language proficiency, or methodological shortcomings, or both in the classroom of YLLs. As to the reasons why even the new generation of teachers opt for the traditional form-focused classroom techniques, research indicates that we should look for the answers in the deficiencies of teacher training programmes, bad examples teachers came across both as students and teachers, the influence of more experienced colleagues, who are usually the advocates of the old traditions, and teachers’ fear of losing control by applying games and stories in the classroom. Research studies outlined in the previous chapter (see subchapter 2.3.2) also indicated that teachers’ beliefs had a significant influence on their classroom practice; even if these ideas contradicted what teachers knew of age-appropriate methodology. These beliefs, which are usually rooted in their own language learning experience, may also induce teachers of FLs to fall back on previous practice. The inadequacies in the NCC (2007) described in the previous subchapter could also prevent teachers from implementing communicative language teaching in the ELL classroom.

3.7 Quality and effectiveness of early FL education

As for the quality of FL education in Hungary, the problems date back as far as before the period of the introduction of compulsory Russian language teaching (Vágó, 2007). According to the 1960 census, only 0.43% of the citizens could speak English, 0.45% French and 0.11% Italian (Vágó, 2007, para. 10). In addition, for several decades in terms of FL education schools did not have to abide by any quality control standards, unlike in the case of other subjects, such as biology or mathematics (Vágó, 1997).

The efficacy of FL education was well demonstrated by the nationally representative large-scale project (Csapó, 2001) that was carried out in 2000 to determine the language competence of sixth, eighth and tenth graders in English and German. The findings showed that the majority of Hungarian students were able to acquire at least one FL at the level prescribed for them in the curriculum. However, behind the encouraging results, huge differences could be observed among the students depending on their parents’ level of education, the type of region and town they were from, the type of early language programme they were involved in, and the FL they learned. Another representative study (Nikolov & Józsa, 2003) involving sixth and tenth graders painted a very similar picture of the performance of primary-school language learners. The mean score of the primary school students was 56.3%, while it was 75.7% for students attending six-year secondary schools (kis gimnáziumok), which were usually
considered more prestigious. The huge differences in performance were apparent even among classes within one institution, which indicates the presence of the streaming tradition mentioned earlier. The efficiency of FL education was also examined in a small scale study carried out in the primary schools of Pécs at the order of the local government (Bors et al., 2001). In the eight participating schools the results again were highly polarized. There were students who did not make any mistakes, while others did not even start doing the same tasks. The findings revealed another common and alarming tendency. The participating teachers and schools were of the opinion that the quality of education could be best characterized by the results their students had reached in various academic competitions. The problem with this train of thought is that in competitions there are only few winners and plenty of losers, who can still be successful language learners (Bors et al., 2001). Besides, this practice also takes us back to the problem of inappropriate classroom techniques, since the preparation for such competitions usually require cramming and translation, which are not in accordance with the needs of YLLs and, thus, challenge the effectiveness of education.

The number of students and their parents who feel the need to supplement the curricular classes with private tutoring also describes the quality of education. An earlier large scale study (Dörnyei, Nyilasi & Clément, 1996) examining the motivation and attitudes of 13-14 year old students showed that 40% of the participants attended private classes. Another study (Gazsó, 1997) reported similar tendencies, revealing that 60% of primary school students went to private tutors, most often in FLs (cited in Nikolov, 2000a, p. 35). A qualitative study (Nikolov & Nagy, 2003) inquiring into Hungarian adults’ language learning experiences also revealed a high reliance on out-of-school language learning opportunities (e.g. language schools, private tuition) during primary school years. A more recent nationally representative study also reported high numbers (Nikolov & Józsa, 2006). In grade six, 30% of students learning English and 23% of those learning German claimed to attend private language lessons. These data demonstrate that many parents think that language education in primary schools is not effective enough to ensure their children good school results and successful language learning. Therefore, in the hope of better outcomes, they are willing to make substantial financial sacrifices, since private language classes and schools have always been expensive.

The correlation between the FL performance of the students and the number of years and weekly lessons spent learning the language can also describe the effectiveness of early language programmes (Józsa & Nikolov, 2005). A study conducted in 2003 found very low correlation both in grade six and ten (Józsa & Nikolov, 2005). The regression analysis of the
results showed that only 3% of the variance of the performance of the participating sixth graders could be explained by the number of years spent on language learning. Students’ socio-cultural status (parents’ level of education) played a much more important role (25%). A more recent small-scale study examining the relationship between the language aptitude and language learning outcomes of sixth graders in two small towns also made references to the role of the length of English study. The results showed that only 8.5% of the variance of English language performance could be explained by the length and frequency of exposure, whereas 22% by a language aptitude test and 7.9% by the motivation of students (Kiss & Nikolov, 2005).

A comparative study analysing Croatian and Hungarian eighth graders’ English proficiency also provided information on the relationship between language performance and the length of language study and weekly exposure (Mihaljevic Djigunovic, Nikolov, & Ottó, 2006). The findings showed that although Croatian students started English later and had fewer weekly classes, they significantly outperformed their Hungarian counterparts on all EFL proficiency tests. Classroom observations did not reveal any significant differences in terms of classroom techniques; however, the Croatian teachers of English used the target language more often and more fluently. It was also indicated that Croatian students also benefited a lot from the fact that the majority of the foreign television programmes were subtitled and not dubbed like in Hungary.

The stakeholders themselves formulated a critique of primary FL education by launching an innovative programme called the Year of Intensive Language Learning (YILL) in the 2004/2005 academic year (Nikolov, 2007). A complete school year of intensive FL learning was inserted into the curriculum of secondary school, which then expanded to five years. One of its aims was to provide students with FL competence sufficient for them to be able to pass the advanced-level school-leaving exam. In other words, decision makers thought that after a minimum of five years of FL learning in primary school students would need an additional year in secondary school to attain a usable level of proficiency (Nikolov, 2007), which then allows them to pass the advanced school leaving exam in the FL.

### 3.8 Conclusion

As the literature review has shown, Hungary has come a long way since FL learning was liberalised in 1989. There are enough qualified teachers in primary education; however, a great
number of them work in this sector because they did not find a better paid job. Empirical evidence showed that although in many cases EFL teachers possessed knowledge of age-appropriate methodology, they did not apply it in the classroom. Instead of communicative language teaching, audio-lingual and grammar translation methods have dominated many primary FL classes for decades. Reading, writing and form-focused activities, frontal classroom work and the limited use of the target language were found to characterise the ELL classroom. Therefore, it is no wonder that the teachers had difficulties in maintaining students’ motivation, which they often blamed on the YLLs. Teachers’ insistence on these out-of-date methodologies can be explained by the deficiencies of teacher training programmes, teachers’ beliefs that often contradict even their own knowledge of age-appropriate teaching methodology, the influence of experienced colleagues and the deficiencies of the NCC (2007). Research studies aimed to explore young learners’ language competence shed light on large differences among schools, and within institutions. These results supported the idea that schools streamed their students according to their abilities. Interestingly, the variation in students’ level of proficiency could not be explained by the intensity of the programmes or the number of years devoted to language learning. Students’ motivation and, even, their cognitive abilities played less of a role in their school performance. What mattered can be found outside school walls; parents’ level of education. According to Nikolov (2000, p. 38), in Hungary, “teacher education seems to be one of the cornerstones of early language programmes. Enthusiastic teachers setting realistic aims, applying relevant classroom techniques and motivating children in the long run tend to come up with good results.” In what follows, I am going to narrow the focus to the assessment of the YLL, and, then, outline the two empirical studies of my dissertation.
Chapter 4: The assessment of the young language learner

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters I discussed the necessary conditions under which early language programmes could fulfil their potentials. I described those learner attributes that stakeholders needed to consider in order to be able to determine realistic achievement targets, design and implement age-appropriate syllabi and classroom practices. I presented the areas of competence teachers need to possess to ensure positive language learning outcomes, and how much these requirements were fulfilled in the ELL classroom worldwide. I emphasised the importance of teachers’ beliefs, and the fact that teacher education was in need of improvement. Since my empirical research is set in Hungary, I elaborated on how all these factors operated and shaped Hungarian early language teaching. In this section, I am going to narrow down my perspective to the assessment of YLLs.

Today, language testing, in general, has become a widely discussed and researched area of applied linguistics; therefore, a considerable amount of literature has been published on its various aspects (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010; Brown, 2004; Cohen, 1994; Hughes, 2003; McNamara, 2000). At the same time, due to the growing tendency to start learning an FL at an early age, more and more theoretical and empirical studies have been carried out to reveal how the assessment of children’s language knowledge differs from or resembles the general principles of language testing (e.g. Hasselgreen, 2005; Inbar-Lourie, & Shohamy, 2009; MacKay, 2006, Nikolov, 2011; Nikolov & Szabó, 2011a). From the point of view of assessment, one of the most essential conclusions drawn from the literature is that due to the slow language development in ELL the establishment and the maintenance of motivation is fundamental in the classroom. Research findings presented in Chapter 2 revealed that instrumental factors, such as a language exam or getting into a better university, did not motivate young children. However, intrinsically motivating and interesting activities, and a feeling of success and progress in the classroom help to maintain their motivation. Therefore, in ELL, assessment should also focus on how much learners have improved, i.e. on the progress,
not on what they have learned, i.e. on the long-term outcome. These research results have led to the emergence of two trends in the assessment of YLLs: dynamic and diagnostic testing.

In this chapter, first, I am going to outline the two major types of classroom assessment: summative and formative. Then I am going to describe the most important characteristics of the dynamic and diagnostic approaches to assessment. If it is testing, reliability, validity and the construct should also be dealt with. Hence, a short discussion of these factors will follow. Since the diagnostic tests I used in my studies are criterion-referenced I am going to elaborate on this topic as well. By presenting the results of empirical studies investigating the assessment of YLLs, I am going to demonstrate how far teachers’ assessment practice is from theory. Finally, drawing on the present and previous chapters, I am going to close this section with a summary of the main characteristic principles of the assessment of YLLs.

Before the discussion of the assessment of YLLs, it is important to define three key terms: assessment, test and task. According to Brown (2004, p. 3), a test “is a method of measuring a person’s ability; knowledge, or performance in a given domain.” By method, he meant “a set of techniques, procedures, or items that requires performance on the part of test-taker” (Brown, 2004, p. 3). A test should also be “explicit and structured” (Brown, 2004, p. 3). Assessment, however, is an “ongoing process”; whenever, a student uses the target language, “the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student’s performance” (Brown, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, a test is only one of the many procedures or tasks teachers can use to assess students (Brown, 2004, p. 4). As for what is considered task, Willis (1996, p. 1) states that “The aim of the task is to create a real purpose for language use and provide a natural context for language study.” She also added that “tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome” (Willis, 1996, p. 23). In the following I am going to use the terms task and test interchangeably.
4.2 Summative and formative assessment

Most commonly, two major types of educational assessment are differentiated: summative and formative assessment (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 41; McKay, 2006, p. 21). These terms relate to the function not the form of assessment. This means that any assessment task can be used both for formative and summative purposes (Boraie, 2012). Summative assessment is usually carried out after a certain period of instruction, i.e. at the end of a school term, a course or a teaching unit, to give information as to what students have learned and achieved, i.e. the outcome of language learning (Hughes, 2003, p. 5). The scores students collect during summative assessment are often used to compare their abilities and, then, make high-stakes decisions (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 42). Summative assessment does not impact teaching and learning directly, because it is separated from instruction (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 42).

In contrast, formative assessment occurs during instruction, and examines students’ progress, and how well they have managed to learn what has been taught (Hughes, 2003, p. 5). Its aim is to facilitate students’ learning and not to judge or grade their achievement of learning outcomes. On the basis of the information collected during formative assessment the teacher can make further decisions about teaching.

Due to a recent change in the assessment paradigm many prefer using the terms assessment for learning and assessment of learning to better reflect the difference between formative and summative assessment (Stiggins, 2005).

4.3 Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment belongs to the category of formative assessment. Its special relevance to ELL lies in the fact that it is the only kind of assessment whose main aim is to facilitate progress (Nikolov, 2011). As Alderson (2005, p. 10) pointed out, in terms of the features of diagnostic tests language testing literature was proved to be scarce, vague and even controversial. According to the definitions of some experts, there is very little or no difference between diagnostic and achievement, placement, or proficiency tests (Alderson, 2005, p. 6-7). The reason behind this confusion may be, as Bachman (1990, p. 60) also stated, that the results of almost any kinds of tests can be used for diagnostic purposes. There seems to be an ambiguity
with regards to the content of diagnostic tests as well (Alderson, 2005, p. 8). According to Bachman (1990, p. 60), for example, a diagnostic test can be “either theory or syllabus based.” However, the former is characteristic of a proficiency test; whereas, the latter is typical of achievement tests (Alderson, 2005, p. 7). Since, unlike proficiency or university entrance tests, diagnostic tests are usually low-stakes, little attention has been paid to their validity and reliability in the literature (Alderson, 2005, p. 6).

After reviewing the available literature, Alderson (2005) identified 19 features that distinguished diagnostic tests from other kinds of tests. He claimed that some of them were in contradiction with each other, and in need of further research to be considered “definitive statements” (Alderson, 2005, p. 11). These features are the following:

1. Diagnostic tests are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses in a learner’s knowledge and use of language.
2. Diagnostic tests are more likely to focus on weaknesses than on strengths.
3. Diagnostic tests should lead to remediation in further instruction.
4. Diagnostic tests should enable a detailed analysis and report of responses to items or tasks.
5. Diagnostic tests thus give detailed feedback which can be acted upon.
6. Diagnostic tests provide immediate results, or results as little delayed as possible after test-taking.
7. Diagnostic tests are typically low-stakes or no-stakes.
8. Because diagnostic tests are not high-stakes they can be expected to involve little anxiety or other affective barriers to optimum performance.
9. Diagnostic tests are based on content which has been covered in instruction, or which will be covered shortly.
10. Diagnostic test are based on some theory of language development, preferably a detailed theory rather than a global theory.
11. Thus diagnostic tests need to be informed by SLA research, or more broadly by applied linguistic theory as well as research.
12. Diagnostic tests are likely to be less authentic than proficiency or other tests.
13. Diagnostic tests are more likely to be discrete-point than integrative, or more focused on specific elements than on global abilities.
14. Diagnostic tests are more likely to focus on language than on language skills.
15. Diagnostic tests are more likely to focus on low-level language skills (like phoneme discrimination in listening tests) than higher-order skills which are more integrated.
16. Diagnostic tests of vocabulary knowledge and use are less likely to be useful than diagnostic test of grammatical knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in context.
17. Tests of detailed grammatical knowledge and use are difficult to construct because of the need to cover a range of contexts and to meet the demands of reliability.
18. Diagnostic tests of language use skills like speaking, listening, reading and writing are (said to be) easier to construct than tests of language knowledge and use. Therefore the results of such tests may be interpretable for remediation or instruction.
19. Diagnostic testing is likely to be enhanced by being computer-based.

(Alderson, 2005, p. 11-12)

Alderson (2005, p. 208) drew special attention to the importance of feedback in diagnostic assessment. Presenting students with mere test scores, like in many traditional testing procedures, is not helpful, since it gives very little information as to what the weaknesses and strengths of the learner are. Timing of feedback is also crucial; it should follow the test as soon as possible. Otherwise, students cannot remember why they responded the way they did.

Partly due to the difficulties of designing such a test, only few diagnostic tests have been developed so far (Alderson, 2005, p. 6). One of the most significant is a computer-based language diagnostic test termed DIALANG (see Alderson, 2005; Alderson, & Huhta, 2005 for details). It is a free, online diagnostic test system available in 14 languages. The test results are reported according to the six levels of the CEFR (2001), which allows for the comparison of the results even between various languages. Another advantage is that it provides the user with immediate feedback. Although a lot of money and many experts were involved in the development of DIALANG, it is not without flaws. As Chapelle (2006) pointed out, the feedback given to the user does not promote progress; and the reliability of the calibration according to the CEFR scales is also questionable.
4.4 Dynamic assessment

The previous discussions demonstrated that a need for a diagnostic approach to the assessment of YLLs had recently emerged in the literature. By identifying learners’ weaknesses and strengths and, then, tailoring or adjusting the syllabus accordingly, i.e. by focusing on the students’ progress rather than the outcome of learning, the teacher can improve language proficiency more effectively. This leads to further progress and success, which are important motivating factors in language learning at all ages and levels.

Another relatively new trend that has influenced assessment in language teaching is called dynamic assessment (henceforth, DA). It is a paradigm shift from the traditional separation of teaching and assessment to the integration of these two entities (McNamara, 2001). It is rooted in the Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 7).

According to Vygotsky, the traditional approach to assessment, when the teacher observes the learner solving a problem alone, only sheds light on the matured abilities, i.e. the past-development (Poehner, 2008a, p. 5); whereas, by providing support, such as leading questions, hints or explanations, during assessment, i.e. by mediating, the teacher can also reveal the abilities that are still developing. It is important to note that, in DA, assistance and scaffolding should always aim at developing students’ ability, not only at making them complete the task successfully (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 92). The performance students can presently do with assistance will be indicative of what they will be able to do alone in the future (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky called the difference between students’ assisted and unassisted performance their zone of proximal development, i.e. potential development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Further instruction should be based on information and assessment collected on students’ zone of proximal development; otherwise, it proves ineffective (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89). According to this theory, students’ developmental readiness is not a precursor of instruction, but development takes place while students carrying out tasks that are beyond their current level of ability (Poehner, 2008a, p. 12). By depicting a broad picture of learners’ abilities, and, simultaneously, supporting the development of these abilities, contrary to all traditional testing procedures, DA integrates assessment with teaching (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 6). Therefore, it is often referred to as assessment for learning, which is a shift away from a more traditional approach of assessment of learning (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011).
In DA, the role of the examiner and teacher is also reconceptualized. Unlike in traditional settings, where examiners take the position of standing back and listening, here, they collaborate with students (Poehner, 2008a, p. 15; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p. 29). “The conventional attitude of neutrality is thus replaced by an atmosphere of teaching and helping” (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002, p. 29). However, in order for teachers to be able to apply DA they need to be equipped with “diagnostic competence” (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004, p. 260). On the basis of their research in Germany and the Netherlands, Edelenbos and Kubanek-German (2004) formulated the following working definition of teachers’ diagnostic competence:

(1) diagnostic competence is an attribute of teachers who aim to improve the quality of FL growth of their pupils; (2) diagnostic competence can be seen as a combination of pedagogical attitude towards the learner, hermeneutic abilities: seeing, observing, comparing, interpreting, evoking, self-distance, openness; scaffolding learning: as an application of the ‘diagnosis’; (3) diagnostic competence precedes assessment. It is what teachers need in order to assess. (p. 277)

Teachers are also required to attend to their students individually, rather than address the class as a whole (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004). In other words, they need to be able to describe and interpret their students’ language competence individually. The standardised or teacher-made tests teachers typically use in the classroom are only partly suitable for such a diagnosis (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004). Therefore, they need to use and interpret various types of students’ language sample. This is when diagnostic competence comes in handy (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004).

4.5 The issues of reliability and validity in DA

One of the criticisms against DA concerns test reliability. As Hughes emphasised, reliability “is an absolutely essential quality of tests” (2003, p. 9). It refers to the consistency of a measuring instrument. A reliable test measures the same way each time it is used under the same condition with the same test-takers (Hughes, 2003, p. 3). In other words, reliability supposes that what we measure is more or less stable (Poehner & Lantolf, 2003 p. 16).
Therefore, traditional assessment procedures treat cognitive abilities stable, i.e. static; hence the often used term static assessment as opposed to dynamic (Poehner, 2008a, p. 71). DA, however, claims the opposite: these abilities are modifiable. The previous discussion has demonstrated that the key concept of DA is that students’ language knowledge, the construct that we measure, is developing throughout the assessment procedure. Lantolf noted (personal communication, 2006 cited in Ableeva, 2010, p. 111) that “DA does not fit well with psychometric principles.” He stated that in the case of DA, if the test did not generate change, which then led to development, it could not be considered reliable. As a response to these criticisms, Poehner (2008a, p. 73) noted that “DA’s incompatibility with more traditional frameworks does not invalidate it as an approach to assessment”, but rather requires researchers to adopt new criteria to report and interpret outcomes.

With regard to validity, similar criticisms have been formulated against DA (Poehner, 2008a, p. 76). This, of course, comes as no surprise, considering that reliability is a prerequisite for validity (Bachman, 1990, p. 238), as the reliability of DA has been questioned, so has been its validity. A valid test measures accurately what it purports to measure (Hughes, 2003, p. 26). As Poehner (2008b, p. 1) pointed out, all “assessments, regardless of their purpose, must address the matter of validity as this concerns the appropriateness of decisions based on assessment information”. According to Poehner (2008b, p. 23), the problem lies in the fact that psychometric approaches to test validity cannot be applied in the case of classroom-based assessments, like DA, since their goals and methods are fundamentally distinct. In the former, the aim is to measure “learners’ current level of independent performance”; whereas, in the latter, the assessor intends to help learners to go beyond their current abilities. He also added that this difference did not mean that validity was irrelevant in classroom assessment, but rather required a shift away from validity being about an individual performance to being about collaboration with the mediator/assessor who helped the individual to perform better (Poehner, 2008b, p. 11).

4.6 The construct of language knowledge

In order to design and apply a language test it is essential to define the construct of what we wish to measure, i.e. language knowledge (Bachman, 1990, p. 81). The issue of the construct is not a simple matter in early language education. The reason for that is that there are many
different kinds of early language programmes that can be placed, according to their focus, on a “language-content continuum”, and the assessment construct should always be in line with the characteristics of the given programme, such as the aims and achievement targets (Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009, p. 93). Therefore, “the dynamics of testing construction and validation […] need to be constantly re-thought and revised” (Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009, p. 94).

Initially, language proficiency was described in skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and components (grammar, vocabulary and phonology) models (see Lado, 1961; Carroll, 1968 for more details). One of the limitations of these models was that they did not clarify how the skills and the components related to each other (Bachman, 1990, p. 82). It was also problematic that the tests based on these models measured the various components and skills at a time, which did not imitate real-world language use (Oller, 1979 cited in Motallebzadeh & Moghaddam, 2011, p. 43). The main deficiency of these models, however, was that they did not take into account the context of language use (Bachman, 1990, p. 82). To remedy these fallacies the successors (e.g. Hymes, 1972; Oller, 1979) expanded their model to the context of discourse (Bachman, 1990, p. 82) and developed tests that already integrated the various components of language proficiency (McNamara, 2000, p. 15).

The major change in the description of language proficiency came when Hymes (1972) formulated the theory of communicative competence (McNamara, 2000, p. 16). He realized that language proficiency did not only incorporate the knowledge of grammar rules, but the ability to use it in various communicative situations (McNamara, 2000, p. 16); hence, he recognized the importance of the sociolinguistic element of language proficiency. Two of the most influential experts who further developed the concept of communicative competence were Canale and Swain (1980). They identified four elements of communicative competence: 1) grammatical competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence, 3) discourse competence, and 4) strategic competence. One of the major innovations of this model was that it considered language use a dynamic process (Motallebzadeh & Moghaddam, 2011).

A more recent, and widely used model of language proficiency is attributed to Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010), who used the term communicative language ability (CLA). They stated that CLA was influenced by the personal characteristics of language users, such as age, sex, the L1, their language ability, topical knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the real world, and affective schemata, i.e. “the emotional correlates of topical knowledge (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 65). Out of these the most crucial element is language ability, which consists of language knowledge and strategic competence. Language knowledge is subdivided into
organisational knowledge, such as vocabulary, syntax, phonetics and cohesion, and pragmatic knowledge, which helps to understand the intentions of the language user (functional knowledge) and to formulate language suitable for the given context (sociolinguistic knowledge) (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 69-70). Strategic competence is made up of a set of metacognitive components that assist in deciding what is to be done, in implementing what has been planned, and in assessing what has been done (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 71). As in their review paper Bagarić and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2007, p. 99) put it, this model is “preferable because of its detailed and at the same time very organisational description of basic components of communicative competence.”

Relying on all outlined above, the following conclusion can be drawn with respect to the construct of the diagnostic assessment project my empirical studies are based on. The investigation was conducted in the first six grades of Hungarian primary school. On the language-content continuum Inbar-Lourie and Shohamy (2009, p. 84) proposed, these programmes can be placed in the group of “language-focused” programmes, as, the emphasis is on teaching the grammatical structures and the vocabulary associated with topics this age-group is familiar with, such as colours, animals, food, and school. According to the NCC (2007, p. 38), the aim of FL teaching is the establishment of communicative language competence, which corresponds to functional language proficiency. It refers to the ability to use language appropriately in the given linguistic context; and it can be measured and evaluated in the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Taking all these into account Nikolov (2011) suggested that during the diagnostic assessment of the language proficiency of children in grades one to six, we should rely on Bachman and Palmer’s description of the construct (2010). Accordingly, the ability to use an FL communicatively, i.e. the construct, consists of language knowledge and strategic competence. Then, this should be calibrated according to the characteristics of this age-group (see chapter 2 for more details) and students’ level of language proficiency (Nikolov, 2011).

4.7 Criterion-referenced testing

The tests I applied in my experiment were criterion-referenced, because one of the aims of the large-scale project that my study followed up was “to describe what young Hungarian language learners should be able to do at different levels of their development during their school years”
(Nikolov & Szabó, 2012). This is exactly what criterion-referenced tests are used for. They are designed to determine what students can do in the given language (Hughes, 2003, p. 20) and to what degree they managed to master a criterion domain or ability level (Bachman, 1990, p. 8). Unlike in norm-referenced testing, where tests results are reported and interpreted with reference to the achievement of other students, in criterion referenced tests, students’ test performance is evaluated in relation to a preset of criteria. “This means that students are encouraged to measure their progress in relation to meaningful criteria, without feeling that, because they are less able than most of their fellows, they are destined to fail” (Hughes, 2003, p. 21).

### 4.8 Classroom assessment practices of teachers of young language learners

Research on how teachers assess YLLs is fairly limited (Nikolov, & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011; Rea-Dickins, 2004). In a case study investigating teachers’ performance during assessment in the classroom of English as an Additional Language in England, Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) revealed the lack of systematicity in assessment practices. The reliability of the information the teachers elicited through observation-driven assessment was questionable, which, then, threatened the validity of the inferences they drew for the individual students. The findings also shed light on the teachers’ lack of knowledge of a developmental theory. This caused them further difficulties with regards to how to interact appropriately with the students and interpret their abilities. As a result, they sometimes under- or over-estimated the students’ abilities. Drawing on interviews with the teachers the authors showed that “teacher knowledge”, which was not documented in any formal way, played a crucial role in making sense of the assessment data and in the decision-making process, as the following comment of one of the participants also reflected it: “You just know the children, where they are at and whether they were capable of saying (something) in such a way, or whether they weren’t. You just know whether they have said that before” (Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000, p. 231). In conclusion, Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) noted that though classroom assessments were often considered low-stakes, many high-stakes decisions were made on the basis of students’ performance in class. Therefore, acting systematically and on principled grounds during formative assessment is as essential as in summative assessment.
In a study carried out in Germany and The Netherlands, Edelenbos and Kubanek-German (2004) observed the diagnostic behaviour of primary school teachers of English. The results revealed that many teachers found the task of capturing their students’ level of ability challenging. The amount of time they spent on diagnosing their learners was limited (11.3% of the lesson time, p. 266). Similarly to the study of Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000), during classroom observations no systematicity regarding the application of diagnostic procedures could be found. Teachers displayed “diagnostic behaviour when they feel they have time to do so” (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004, p. 266). Three types of recurring diagnostic teacher behaviour were identified: (1) administering and interpreting a test, (2) questioning students, and (3) task-oriented observation of individual students.

Butler (2009a) reviewed studies conducted on teacher-based assessment in three Asian countries, Korea, Taiwan and Japan. As for the language policy in these countries, in Korea and Taiwan English has been a compulsory academic subject since 2001; whereas, in Japan it was not obligatory up until 2011, when “English activities” were made mandatory for fifth and sixth graders (Butler, 2009a, p. 6). In theory, “English activities” meant that students were exposed to English; in practice, as the author herself articulated, the difference between learning English and being exposed to English was hard to illustrate. Butler (2009a) emphasised the importance of central specifications of assessment procedures, and noted that such guidelines existed in none of the three countries. In Korea and Taiwan, the government recommended the teachers to apply teacher-based assessments or informal observation-based assessments, such as portfolios. However, classroom observations revealed that the teachers found it challenging to use these forms of assessment, which had been traditionally considered less valued in East Asia (Butler, 2009a). The difficulties mainly stemmed from teachers’ lack of time and knowledge to apply teacher-based assessment, large class sizes, and the lack of assistance given to teachers in how to utilize the information gained through these assessment procedures. In Japan, teachers were not required to carry out assessment at primary school level; however, they did apply some form of self-assessment. Butler (2009a), however, pointed out that how accurately these assessments demonstrated students’ performance and how the information collected during these procedures could be utilized to improve teaching were often unclear.

In a case study carried out in South-Korea, Butler (2009b) investigated how primary and secondary school EFL teachers observed and assessed sixth graders’ English performance. In the beginning, the author emphasised that though teacher observation as a type of assessment was greatly encouraged in South Korea, without specific central criteria teachers were left alone
to decide how to use such assessment information for summative and formative purposes. Under the new governmental reforms, instead of grades, teachers were to give verbal descriptions on their students’ performance. Despite the educational reforms, however, grades and language exams still played an influential role in society; therefore, teacher-based assessment inevitably became “part of accountability measures, at least to some degree” (Butler, 2009b, p. 422). In this study, the task of the participating teachers was to watch videotapes of sixth graders’ group activities in English and assess each student’s communicative performance in two steps. First, they were asked to give a holistic assessment using a 5-point grading scale (5=excellent, 1=poor) and their notes on the students they were also asked to take. In the second step they were to select and evaluate four out of twelve prescribed students’ traits, for example, vocabulary use, pronunciation, and task completion. The results revealed substantial variabilities among primary school teachers’ attitudes towards holistic evaluation and the importance of setting criteria. The judgements of those who did not use any standard criteria were highly intuitive and personalized. They believed that in early language programmes teachers should only focus on students’ strengths. Therefore, establishing standard criteria was not necessary, because that would only result in a more measurement-oriented practice, which should be avoided at the primary school level. Some claimed that the criteria they used varied depending on the student’s strengths. These inconsistencies, however, did not seem to cause any concern to them. In contrast, there were teachers who supported setting criteria, and were concerned that their inconsistencies questioned the validity of their judgements. They felt they were in need of further training to be better assessors and to be able to use standard criteria. Besides their inappropriate training in assessment, primary school teachers also indicated the lack of clear guidelines and large class sizes as the root of the problems. Butler (2009b) gave the following explanation for the teachers’ seemingly confused attitude:

The belief prevails among elementary school teachers that they should avoid measurement-oriented assessment at the early stages of English learning and avoid competition among students (Butler, 2005). At the same time, they are increasingly held accountable for reporting individual student’s performance. The dilemma they face and their confusion regarding assessment result in many ways from such policy requirements as well as their various backgrounds. (p. 440)
Similarly to the international arena, in Hungary, research on teachers’ assessment practices is limited. Insomuch that currently there are no such studies whose primary aim was to look into how YLLs were assessed in the classroom. However, some of the earlier mentioned research projects found new results with regards to classroom assessment. In the retrospective study (Nikolov & Nagy, 2003) which examined 185 Hungarian adults’ language learning experiences, all the participants claimed that in primary school the assessment of their performance had always been a cause for fear and anxiety in the classroom. Other studies (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008) reported similar tendencies. The students’ most dreaded and hated activities were tests. According to the results, the most common forms of assessment were translation, vocabulary and grammar tests. Oral competence was tested primarily by having students recite a text they previously crammed. In other words, similarly to the classroom work the dominance of the grammar translation and audio-lingual methods, and activities inappropriate for this age group were also typical of the assessment of young learners.

To sum up, empirical evidence showed that the assessment practices of teachers of YLLs were in need of improvement in many parts of the world. In many cases, they lacked the knowledge of a developmental theory and had difficulties in capturing their students’ level of abilities. No systematicity could be observed in teachers’ diagnostic behaviour, and instead of standard criteria they often relied on their intuitions and beliefs. In several countries, the lack of central specifications related to assessment procedures caused further problems. Lack of time and knowledge and large class sizes were also referred to as the source of difficulties. As a consequence, some teachers even voiced it that further training would do good for them.

4.9 The main principles of assessing young language learners

Since the conditions under which children can learn best demonstrate the way they should be assessed (McKay, 2006, p. 47), all the characteristics of YLLs and ELL described in the previous chapters are also relevant when it comes to assessing YLLs. In this section, mainly relying on these chapters, I am going to give a short summary of what teachers, who mostly carry out the assessment in the early language classroom, should bear in mind while assessing young learners.
Similarly to teaching YLLs, during their assessment teachers should always take into account their special needs and characteristics. Given their vulnerabilities and need for security, assessment should be carried out in familiar settings and by the teacher whom children trust to elicit optimal performance (Nikolov, 2011). Since young learners are very sensitive to criticism, and need encouragement and positive feedback, during assessment it is essential to provide them with a feeling of success and progress. Teachers should always emphasise what students can do, and not how many mistakes they have made. Support related directly to the immediate performance of the child should be provided continuously to ensure a sense of success. As research evidence indicates (Legac, 2007, cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 210; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2002 cited in Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009, p. 209; Mihaljević Djigunović & Legac, 2008 cited in Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011, p. 103), anxiety may affect YLLs’ achievement negatively. Due to the increasing influence of peers, some young learners may feel uncomfortable, or even anxious if asked to perform alone in front of the class. Teachers should take into consideration these facts when applying tests.

To allow young learners to do and show their best, assessment tasks should be short, familiar and engaging enough to motivate them to use the target language (Mckay, 2006, p. 47). If the task is too easy or too difficult, it can discourage them to “extend themselves and show their true abilities” (McKay, 2006, p. 126). So, it is important for children to meet just the right amount of challenge.

The focus of the assessment tasks should be on meaning; rule-based tasks are to be used later when students are able to handle grammar explicitly. In real life, language is mainly used in social interactions; therefore, tasks that can be carried out while communicating with peers or the teacher are also more relevant during the assessment procedure (Nikolov, 2011). Since at the age of 6-12 learners are not confident in their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, oral activities should constitute the core of their FL teaching and, consequently, their assessment as well. While designing and using reading and writing tasks for assessment teachers should consider how well young learners can read and write in their L1.

Although language tasks integrate the use of more than one language skills, during assessment the teacher should focus on each skill separately to determine the strengths and weaknesses in that particular skill (Ioannou-Georgio & Pavlou, 2003, p. 7).

Teachers’ feedback and evaluation should always come right after students’ performance, be individualised and stimulating for further learning (Nikolov, 2011), since
creating positive attitudes to the target language and learning is one of the most important outcomes of assessment.

In young learners, the process of language development is slow; therefore, teachers are required to apply assessment tasks that can tap into small developmental steps and to give feedback regularly, so that young learners can see they are progressing and achieving what they are expected to (Nikolov, 2011).

Self- and peer-assessment are effective forms of assessment in the early language classroom. They can make young learners more conscious about their language learning, and help them develop learning strategies, which are crucial elements of the sustained process of early FL learning (McKay, 2006, p. 46). Since the establishment and development of learning strategies are important, assessment should also tap into how students apply them.

4.10 Conclusion

The literature presented in this chapter demonstrated how diagnostic and dynamic approaches allow teachers of FLs to act according to the principles of the assessment of YLLs and, consequently, to increase their students’ learning potential. What teachers actually do as a form of assessment in the classroom is an underinvestigated area of applied linguistics. The scant research evidence, however, revealed that practice was far from theory. In many cases, due to factors such as teachers’ insufficient knowledge of age-appropriate methodology and developmental theory, large class sizes, the washback effect of exams, inappropriate teacher training and lack of precise policy guidelines, during assessment teachers often acted on their intuition, relied on their beliefs and dated practices, and applied inappropriate techniques that hindered, rather than improved learning. However, as William (2006, p. 4) also pointed out, “supporting teachers in developing the use of assessment for learning has been shown to roughly double the speed of learning”.

The project the empirical part of my dissertation is based on tapped into these problems by exploring the assessment practices of Hungarian EFL teachers, and, simultaneously, by developing English diagnostic tests for children in grades one to six to improve teachers’ practice. In the next chapters, first, the research design and the applied methodology are outlined; then, the research study is presented.
Part II: Two empirical studies on the assessment of young language learners in Hungarian state schools

Chapter 5: Background to the empirical studies

5.1 Introduction

In part I, first, the theoretical underpinnings of early language programmes and the conditions necessary to fully realize the potential benefits these programmes can offer were overviewed. Then, the characteristics of the two main stakeholders of ELL, young learners and their teachers, were discussed in detail. Since the empirical studies of my dissertation were conducted in Hungary, I discussed how all these factors operate in the Hungarian educational context. Finally, I overviewed the main principles of the assessment of YLLs. The second part of my dissertation constitutes two empirical studies that are embedded in a large-scale project sponsored by the European Union (TÁMOP 3.1.9). The objective of this project was to design, pilot and calibrate diagnostic tests Hungarian primary school EFL teachers could use to assess their students’ progress. The first study was implemented in the first phase of this project the objective of which was to develop a framework for diagnostic tests. My exploratory inquiry aimed to find out how primary school EFL teachers assessed their students’ language development and what tasks they used. The second study is a follow-up to the large-scale project. This qualitative, exploratory single-case study was conducted to give in-depth insights into an EFL teacher’s assessment practice and to find out how the oral tests that the participants of the large-scale project took actually worked (for an overview of the studies see Table 1 on page 4).
5.2 Research context

Chapter 3 describes in details the Hungarian educational context in which the two empirical studies are embedded. Therefore, in this section, the most relevant issues are summarized in order to contextualize the research.

Following the international trends, more and more children start to learn an FL at an early stage in Hungary, due to parental pressure, before the mandatory fourth grade. The NCC (2007) however, did not specify achievement targets for the first three grades. This controversy also contributes to the fact that the quality and the structure of these early language programmes vary to a great extent. Therefore, large differences can be found in young learners’ levels of proficiency, which, in most cases, do not depend on the intensity of the programme or the number of years devoted to language learning (Nikolov, 2009c). In contrast, a stronger relationship was found between students’ socioeconomic status and their level of proficiency (Nikolov, 2009c). In order to cater for the ever increasing need for ELL, schools stream their students according to their abilities; thus, the more able ones get to study in more intensive programmes; whereas, the less able learners either start later, or learn in fewer classes than their fortunate peers. As for classroom practices, research studies (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; Nikolov & Nagy, 2003) demonstrated that teachers most often applied traditional techniques: grammar-translation, reading aloud, drills, other form-focused activities, and rote-learning of texts. Similarly, teachers’ assessment practices were also shown to contradict the principles of age-appropriate methodology (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008). Therefore, a need to develop diagnostic tests arose so that EFL teachers could find out where their young learners were in their development and adjust the syllabus according to the information gained from these tests.

5.3 Setting and participants

In the first phase of the large-scale project, which my first study was a part of, the organizers contacted all the primary school EFL teachers on the contact list of the Pedagogical Institute of Baranya County and a previous testing project to inquire if they were ready to participate. By the deadline, 26 teachers agreed to take part in the project. However, only twelve participants
submitted the requested data. Six of these teachers were from Baranya county, two from Békéscsaba, one from Szeged, and three from Törökbálint. All participants were practicing teachers and had a teaching degree in EFL. They all had taken part in previous pedagogical research projects, and were known to be generally enthusiastic about contributing to studies. No detailed information was available on the participants’ years of experience, since such data did not seem to be relevant at the time (Nikolov, personal communication, June, 29, 2013).

In order to recruit participants for the second study, emails were sent out to the teachers from Pécs who had taken part in the last phase of the project (see Nikolov, 2011 for the details of this phase). Two of them, volunteered to participate with their four students. At the initial stage, however, one of them withdrew from participation. Anikó (pseudonym), who stayed on, was from one of the most prestigious primary schools in Pécs. It is one of the schools affiliated to the University of Pécs, where in-service teachers do their teaching practice. Public opinion is that, as a well-known paediatrician voiced it to me in an informal conversation, “TRENDY PARENTS’ TRENDY CHILDREN ATTEND THIS SCHOOL”.

Anikó graduated from the Teacher Training College of Pécs with a four-year double-major college degree in 1985. She had taught EFL in primary school ever since. In order to update her knowledge she also participated in various courses organised for in-service teachers. The five students she chose attended the same seventh grade class. Three of them, Robi, Béla and Lili, were 13 years old; two of them, Anett and Balázs, were 12 (pseudonyms). According to Anikó, Robi, Lili and Anett were less able but still good students; whereas, Balázs and Béla were the best in class. Except for Béla, none of them learned an FL other than English. They all seemed to consider English an important school subject. Robi, whose parents thought “MATH AND THE OTHER BASIC SUBJECTS COME FIRST”, was less enthusiastic about English.

5.4 Overview of research methodology

The two studies in the present dissertation are embedded in the constructivist knowledge claim: rather than starting with concrete, carefully narrowed hypotheses and relying on objective measures and data I approached the research topic with an open mind, made observations at close range and interpreted the results with the help of the participants’ views and the researcher’s experiences (Creswell, 2004, p. 9). As far as the research approach is
concerned, I followed the traditions of the qualitative paradigm (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In qualitative research design, instead of statistical procedures, a thorough description of the data is utilised so that the researcher can “interpret a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people attach to them” and view it holistically (Mackey & Gass, 2005. p. 163). The aim is not to justify a particular hypothesis, but to let the questions and the patterns emerge from the context as the research goes along. Unlike in quantitative research, qualitative studies use fewer participants because the goal is not to generalize the findings to a larger population, but to shed light on underlying phenomena (Mackey & Gass, 2005. p. 163).

As Dörnyei (2007, p. 36) formulated it, the significance of qualitative research in applied linguistics has been increasing, since “every aspect of language acquisition and use is determined or significantly shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors, and qualitative research is ideal for providing insights into such contextual conditions and influences.” Due to its exploratory nature, qualitative research is especially beneficial to study under-researched areas (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 39), which is the case with Hungarian EFL teachers’ assessment practices.

5.4.1 Study One: Teachers’ Views on Assessment Tasks that Work with Primary School EFL Learners

The first qualitative exploratory study aimed to find out what tests EFL primary school teachers used to assess their learners’ progress in their English classes. The data was elicited with the help of a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire is one of the most often used data collection instruments when the goal is to gather information as to the attitudes and opinions of a large number of participants (Mackey & Gass, 2005. p. 92). The aim was to collect data from as many EFL teachers as possible so that a framework for developing diagnostic tests could be established. Several emails were sent around to reach the target population. However, only 26 teachers answered the call for participation, and 12 of them returned the required data by the deadline via email. As the participants were EFL teachers, the questions were written in English. One reason to use English was that the participants were expected to be able and willing to use the language they taught. The other reason was that international experts were involved in the project and the materials were shared with them (Nikolov, personal communication, November, 23, 2013.). However, since the objective was to elicit their thoughts and ideas, not to test their language competence, the participants could choose if they wanted
to give an answer in Hungarian or in English. The study aimed to give insights into teachers’ assessment practices; therefore, the form comprised both closed and open-ended items (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 93). Inductive data analysis was used to let the findings emerge from the dataset (Mackey & Gass, 2005. p. 93). Themes and categories were identified, and their frequencies were determined (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Although the study was based on qualitative approach quantification of the data was also applied. As Mackey and Gass (2003, p. 182) formulated it, in qualitative studies, quantification can help to generate hypotheses and detect patterns, and “make readily apparent both why researchers have drawn particular inferences and how well their theories reflect the data.”

5.4.2 Study Two: Testing Hungarian Seventh-Graders in an EFL Context: A Single-Case Study with One EFL Teacher and Her Students

The second qualitative case study was conducted as a follow-up to the large-scale project. According to Dörnyei (2007, pp. 154 -155) “case study approach has been productive and highly influential in applied linguistics” because “it offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield”. Dörnyei (2007, p. 155) also pointed out that case studies were especially effective when “uncharted territories” were to be explored; because they could generate new hypotheses (Duff, 2008, p. 43). In my single-case study one of the objectives was to give further insights into how Hungarian EFL teachers assess their students’ language development: how they gave feedback and what kinds of oral assessment tasks they used. Although a few studies (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008; Nikolov & Nagy, 2003) examined teachers’ classroom assessment practices in Hungary, no research study has been conduct with the sole aim to explore this topic. Therefore, this “territory” can be considered, if not uncharted, but, definitely, under-researched, where there is a need, as Johnson (1993, p. 7 cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005. p. 172) formulated it when describing the advantages of case studies, to provide “insights into the complexities of particular cases in their particular context”. My other objectives were to find out what the participating teachers of the large-scale project and their students thought of the diagnostic tests they had been given to try out, and how the oral tasks had worked. Providing answers to these questions also required a research method that allowed for a more in-depth look at the underlying factors.
One of the main issues with case studies, and qualitative research in general, is their generalizability. Quantitative research solves the problem of ensuring wider relevance by “preparing an overall, average description of a larger group of people (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 27). Qualitative studies, however, aim to examine exactly what is missed out in this way, i.e. the individual cases. Qualitative research claims that the real meaning can be found in these individual stories. Therefore, as Dörnyei put it (2007, p. 153), qualitative researchers are not “overly concerned with generalizability as long as the researcher believes that the specific individual meaning obtained from the sample is insightful and enlightening.” In order to ensure research validity qualitative researchers often apply triangulation, which is “the use of multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation in order to arrive at the same research findings” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 181).

For the purpose of triangulation, in the second study, the data was collected with semi-structured interviews with the students (see Appendix B and C) and the teacher (see Appendix D); and the students were also audio- and video-recorded while doing four oral tasks. Interviews are frequently applied data collection techniques when the participants’ beliefs, attitudes and perceptions are to be investigated (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). Since in this second study the aim was to further investigate the results the first study shed light on, I could develop questions about the topic. However, I also wanted to let further issues emerge; hence, the interviews were semi-structured (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136).

Before conducting the interviews I observed two classes so that the students and the teacher could get to know me and used to my presence, and, consequently, the effect of the observer’s paradox could also be reduced (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 176). The interviews were conducted in the participants’ mother tongue so that the quality and the quantity of the data were not compromised. Like any other data collection methods, interviews also have caveats. One of them is that the interviewees may show “selective recall, self-delusion, perceptual distortions, memory loss” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 174). In order to minimize this effect the students’ opinion was elicited twice: during the interviews and right after they completed the four oral tasks (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 175). The other disadvantage of interviews is the so-called halo effect. This refers to the case when the interviewees give answers they think the researcher wants to hear from them. In order to reduce this effect I strived to put the participants at ease (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 174). I conducted the interviews with the students in a familiar place, in one of their classrooms. I explained to them the purpose of my investigation thoroughly, and I ensured that their answers would remain confidential and not count towards
their school assessment in any way. Before the students did the four oral tasks, I applied similar techniques to assure a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

As for my relationship with the volunteering teachers, I made a mistake right at the beginning. The person I asked to send around the email inviting teachers to participate in the study was not properly informed on the exact procedure of the study. Therefore, the two volunteering teachers, Anikó and Lenke believed that they were only to allow four of their students to take part in the follow-up study. They did not realize that they were also to be interviewed, and that I wanted to observe one of their classes. Due to this miscommunication, Lenke decided to back down. Anikó, who stayed on, was also concerned and felt misled. After I explained to her how miscommunication had happened, we managed to work together smoothly. The interview with Anikó was conducted in two sessions in her breaks between classes so I did not take up much of her free time.

5.5 Conclusion

The main objective of the two empirical studies was to find out how Hungarian primary school EFL teachers assessed and gave feedback to their students. Since little is known about teachers’ classroom practices, a qualitative, exploratory approach was required. The first study aimed to collect information from as many teachers as possible so that a baseline for developing new diagnostic tests could be established; hence the use of a questionnaire was decided. The second study intended to provide a more in-depth look at the ways EFL teachers assessed their young learners in the classroom, and how the oral tasks that were developed and piloted out in the framework of the large-scale project worked. Therefore, a case study was conducted. These two qualitative studies are discussed in detail in the next two chapters.
Chapter 6: Teachers’ Views on Assessment Tasks that Work with Primary School EFL Learners

6.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed account of the first of the two empirical studies, which are embedded in a large-scale study whose overall aim was to develop, pilot and calibrate diagnostic tests that could be used in the (EFL) classrooms of the first six grades of primary school. This section is based on a published preliminary analysis of the results (Hild & Nikolov, 2011). This first phase of the project provides insights into what tasks EFL teachers used to assess their learners’ progress in the classroom in grades one to six (ages 6 to 13). The study was implemented as an exploratory inquiry into Hungarian teachers’ practices and views on what tasks best tap into YLLs’ development in English. The aim was to establish a baseline in order to build on good practice and integrate relevant task types into a range of new diagnostic tests in the proceeding phases of this project. Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What tests do teachers use to assess their learners’ progress in their English classes?
2. How do teachers assess their learners’ progress in English?

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Participants

A convenience sample of 26 EFL teachers agreed to participate in the study at various primary schools in Hungary. Finally, twelve teachers returned the tasks. Six of these teachers were from Baranya county, two from Békéscsaba, one from Szeged, and three from Törökbálint. As for their educational background, or years of experience, no information was collected since such data did not seem to be relevant at the time (Nikolov, personal communication, June, 29, 2013). They were all practising teachers and had been involved in previous testing projects.
6.2.2 Data collection instruments

The teachers were asked to choose and characterize ten tasks they had used successfully with their students for testing their EFL knowledge. They were invited to scan or Xerox a copy of printed tasks and also to attach listening tasks as files, tapes or CDs. They were given a form (see Appendix A) and asked to complete it for each task they chose. The questions were written in English; however, the participants were free to choose between English and Hungarian while answering them. The form inquired about the following data:

1) title of the task,
2) exact source of the task (they could choose from a list of information to provide),
3) what the teacher needs to prepare and what students need to use,
4) what the task involves, i.e. what students are expected to do with what and in what format,
5) what level they thought the task was appropriate for (chosen from options),
6) what skills they wanted to develop with the task (chosen from options)
7) what subskills the tasks measured (options were provided, e.g., listening for gist (overall meaning) or for specific information; asking & answering yes/no, or wh questions; intonation & pronunciation; retelling a rhyme, guessing meaning from context; fluency or accuracy, reading aloud, reading for gist, reading for specific information, spelling, memorization),
8) how learners were assessed on the task (Describe how you give learners feedback when you assess task accomplishment. Indicate what a top achiever can do, what you accept as adequate, and what you consider inadequate performance. If you score them or grade them, explain how),
9) how the students succeeded on this task, we asked the teachers to send sample performances and to add their comments on them.
10) how their best learners could perform on this task, we asked them to finish the statement, “Best students can .....
11) how popular the task was with their students on a 1 to 4 scale (1=unpopular – 4 = extremely popular)
6.2.3 Procedures

First, several circular email messages were sent to all teachers on the contact list of the Pedagogical Institute of Baranya County and a previous testing project in early February 2010. By the deadline 26 teachers volunteered to participate. However, after getting the detailed description of their task, only 12 sent back all the required data in April despite the fact that participants were paid for their contributions. A total of 119 tasks were returned in electronic format or in printed form and on tapes and CDs. Not all respondents filled in all data, whereas, some sent more than required. The files were saved with codes, and, then, all tasks were analyzed along the focal points of the data collection instrument. The dataset was analyzed according to content and frequencies of emerging patterns (Creswell, 2003, p. 190-195; Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 178). The Hungarian answers of the teachers are translated into English and printed in uppercase letters.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Sources of tests

The first question inquired about the source of the tasks. Respondents were to choose from a list of possible sources (see Appendix A). The respondent only provided a copy of the tasks with no additional details in five cases out of the 119 tasks. Therefore, a total of 114 answers were grouped into eight categories that are shown in Figure 6.1. Most of the tasks came from English coursebooks; whereas, 24 tasks were designed by the teachers themselves. Hungarian coursebooks (19) were the third most often mentioned category of source. Thirteen tasks were taken from the internet. In the case of nine tasks, the teachers borrowed the idea from their colleagues. The last three categories included six authentic board or card games, five tasks from teachers’ resource books and three from other sources, such as television, a workshop and a competition. One of the teachers did not know the source of a task.
6.3.2 Teaching materials necessary for the tests

The second question asked what the students and the teacher needed for the task (see Appendix A). Since in five cases, the teacher sent in a photocopy of the tasks without any further details, and, in the case of two additional tasks, no response was given to this question, a total of 112 answers were analysed. Many of these responses contained more than one reference to what was necessary to do the task. As Figure 6.2. shows, 13 categories were identified. In most cases, various handouts, such as task sheets, photocopies of tasks, lists of words, were needed. Coursebooks (28) and visual support (28), such as flashcards or pictures, were the second most often mentioned item in the answers. In the case of 23 tasks, the students needed pencils, papers, crayons or other stationeries. Ten tasks required the pre-teaching (8) or revision (2) of a particular grammar point or vocabulary, such as the future tense, the names of animals, fruits and furniture. A reference to the use of audio teaching materials was only found in ten answers. The most obvious teaching equipment in any classroom, the white board, was needed only in nine tasks. Objects children also use in everyday life, such as cards or board games (7) or various realia (6), were rarely mentioned. In some cases (see Figure 6.2.), the teacher and the

Figure 6.1: Frequency of sources in submitted tests
students used authentic texts (3) or a dictionary (2) during the task. The students had to apply specific background knowledge (e.g. how to apply for a job, who is Chaplin) in three out of the 112 tasks. Five tasks did not require any specific tools or preparation (see Figure 6.2).

![Figure 6.2: What teachers thought tasks required](image)

### 6.3.3 Work mode

In the fourth question, I inquired about what students were expected to do and in what format, individually, in pairs or groups or whole class, (see Appendix A), while solving the tasks. Out of the 119 tasks, no response was given to six. However, on the basis of the photocopy of the tasks the teachers sent in and the answers they gave to the other questions, I could establish which category they belonged to. Besides the four work modes that were provided as options on the form, I identified three additional categories in the responses (see Figure 6.3.). More than one possible work mode was indicated in some tasks. As Figure 3 presents, in order to test students’ language knowledge the participating teachers preferred by far the most using tasks (61) that require individual work. Only half as many pair-work tasks (32) were submitted.
Students worked in whole classes in 24 tasks, and in groups in 21 tasks. The teachers sent in 15 tasks in which one group or student won, i.e. competitions, for example, “THE WINNER CAN CHOOSE A PICTURE IN THE NEXT ROUND” “THE WINNER IS THE ONE WHO CAN FURNISH HIS OR HER WARDROBE FIRST, AND TELL THE OTHERS WHAT CLOTHES SHE OR HE HAS”. Only three tasks involved physical activity.

![Figure 6.3: Distribution of work modes of the tasks](image)

### 6.3.4 Difficulty of tasks

The fourth question elicited information on what level of proficiency the tasks are suitable for. The teachers could select from a list (see Appendix A) with descriptions of the various levels (beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, and intermediate described in terms of length of study in years and frequency of English classes). Similarly to the previous question, in the case of five tasks, no response was given. Therefore, for further analysis I specified the proficiency level that these tasks were suitable for. A total of 119 answers were analysed. They were grouped into seven categories that are visualized in Figure 6.4. The most frequent tasks were suitable for beginners, according to the teachers. Thirty tasks were considered to be good for pre-intermediate students, whereas 20 for elementary, and eight for intermediate level. Three of the categories comprised tasks whose level of difficulty was a combination of two different
proficiency levels: nine tasks were labelled as appropriate for both beginner and elementary, five for elementary and pre-intermediate, and two for pre-intermediate and intermediate students.

![Figure 6.4.: Distribution of tasks according to estimated level of difficulty](image)

In the case of three tasks other combinations were indicated, such as beginner / elementary / pre-intermediate, beginner / advanced, and any level depending on the topic.

### 6.3.5 The skills the tasks developed and assessed

Respondents were to specify the skills they wanted to develop with the tasks. Similarly to questions 1 and 4, they could choose from a list of skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). In the case of five tasks, teachers did not complete the questionnaire, so I specified the skills. A total of 119 answers were placed in a relatively wide range of categories (see Figure 6.5.). The largest category of answers comprised tasks that developed both reading and writing skills. The second main category included tasks that improved both listening and speaking skills. The third most frequent tasks integrated three skills, according to the teachers. Five of these tasks...
were reported to develop listening, speaking and writing; four reading, writing and speaking; two listening, reading and speaking; and one listening, reading and writing. Two of these tasks contained new skills, such as practice of punctuation and negative forms and lip reading.

Figure 6.5.: Distribution of language skills in the tasks

Twelve tasks developed and assessed speaking exclusively. The fifth category comprised eleven tasks that integrated reading and speaking. Eleven tasks were claimed to develop writing and nine listening. The last three categories comprised seven speaking and writing tasks, seven reading and two other tasks (listening - reading and reading – vocabulary building).

### 6.3.6 The subskills the tasks developed and assessed

Besides indicating the skills the tasks developed and assessed, the teachers were also asked to specify the subskills. Similarly to the previous question, they were provided with a list of options to choose from (e.g. listening for gist (overall meaning) or for specific information; asking & answering yes/no, or wh questions; intonation & pronunciation; retelling a rhyme, guessing
meaning from context; fluency or accuracy, reading aloud, (see Appendix A for more details). In most cases more than one subskill was indicated in the answers. I had no information on the subskills of the five tasks for which no questionnaire was completed; so a total of 114 answers were analysed. As is visualized in Figure 6.6., 16 categories were specified. The most tasks developed and assessed spelling (26). Intonation and pronunciation (24) were the second most often mentioned subskills. The third category contained listening for specific information (22). Asking and answering yes/no, or wh questions and memorization were indicated 19 times, respectively. Reading for specific information (18) only fell behind with one (see Figure 6.6.). The number of tasks requiring guessing meaning from context was less than half of those assessing spelling, the first on the list. The next six categories comprised listening for gist (10), accuracy (7), reading for gist (7), fluency (6), reading aloud (6) and retelling a rhyme (4).

The teachers also added 38 new subskills, for example, giving and following instructions, asking for repetition and clarification, talking about direction, using imagination or creativity, developing imagination, acting skills, drawing, comparing tenses, making a choice and sharing knowledge. In the case of 13 tasks, the specified subskill(s) and skill(s) were controversial: intonation and pronunciation – reading / writing (4), listening for specific information – speaking / reading / writing (4), reading for gist / specific information – writing (1), accuracy, grammar awareness – reading (1), memorization – speaking (1), acting skills – reading (1), and retelling rhyme – reading / writing (1). The dichotomy of “fluency or accuracy” was among the options and the participants were supposed to choose between the two. However, in the case of nine tasks, the indicated subkill was ‘fluency or accuracy’ , and nothing was indicated for one of the tasks.
6.3.7 How teachers gave feedback to learners

The teachers were also asked to describe how they gave learners feedback when they assessed task accomplishment. They were expected to explain how they scored or graded their students if they did so (see Appendix A). One of the respondents did not give any information on the assessment procedure of two tasks. For five tasks no questionnaire was completed; therefore, a total of 112 answers were analysed. The responses were grouped into nine categories (see Table 6.1.).

The largest category of the answers describing assessment, grading and scoring procedures comprised references to rewarding the best students without mentioning others (see Table 6.1.). This category was further divided into five secondary categories according to the type of rewards. The most popular types were smileys, red points or plus signs (24); whereas, stickers (12) were also frequently applied rewards. The number of answers referring to students getting a mark 5 or an opportunity to make a decision or a choice instead of the teacher was the
same (6), respectively. Congratulating or praising the best students were the least frequently mentioned forms of reward (4). As for the assessment of learners, the second most often mentioned procedure was checking or correcting the tasks (36), which took place individually, by the teacher or in a whole class.

Table 6.1.: Assessment of students’ performance on tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Secondary categories</th>
<th>Frequency of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. rewarding best students</td>
<td>a) smiley / red point / +</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) stickers</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) mark 5 (top grade)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) opportunity to make a choice or decision</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) congratulation / praise</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. correcting/checking task</td>
<td>a) the students alone</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) the teacher</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) the class together</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. quantifying results</td>
<td>a) grading</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) percent</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) scores</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) number of mistakes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. motivating irrespective of</td>
<td>a) appreciate</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td>b) praise</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. no reference to assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. competition</td>
<td>a) with rewards</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) without rewards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. group / self-assessment</td>
<td>a) group-assessment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) self-assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. further practice</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. no answer</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third largest category included references to the quantification of the results (29). This was carried out in the form of grading, determining a percentage, or a score, or counting the mistakes. Giving students feedback and motivating them irrespective of their performance were both mentioned twelve times. In eleven cases the respondents’ answers were more task descriptions or how students managed the task, for example, "they can match easy uppercase with lower case. But find the meaning of the words was not so easy", "Ss should know the spelling of certain words and find the correct place of their letter", and "Discussing why it is
useful to work in pairs from time to time, what help they can get from each other”. The last three categories included references to competitions with or without a reward (7), group- or self-assessment (5), and further practice (2).

6.3.8 Top, adequate and inadequate performance

The respondents were also required to indicate what a top achiever could do, what they accepted as adequate and what they considered inadequate performance. Excluding the five tasks for which no questionnaire was completed, out of a total of 114 tasks, the teachers described the performance of top achievers in only 40 cases. The categories established for the responses are shown in Table 6.2. The most frequent category concerned top achievers’ mistakes. According to these answers, they could do the task without mistakes (7), with a few mistakes (4), or correctly (6). The second most frequently mentioned pattern was that top achievers could perform beyond what the task required (see Table 6.2.). They were either creative (4), for example, they could “use the information in text freely and creatively, paraphrase it, or add humor”, or “draw easy to guess flashcards”; or they could help others (2), do an extra task (2), or simply enjoyed the task (1). In eight answers, the teachers specified what elements of the task top achievers could accomplish, and, hence, applied criteria in their descriptions, for example, “TA can act out their own version”, “TA can retell the story and come up with new things”, “TA can retell the chant with the help of pictures”, “TA can understand and reply all my questions in full sentences”. In six cases, top performance meant that the task was completed quickly or easily. In four cases, the respondents simply indicated the results top performers achieved. In four answers, students who did not need any help were considered top achievers.
Table 6.2.: Top achievers’ performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Secondary categories</th>
<th>Frequencies of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. reference to mistakes</td>
<td>a) without mistakes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) with few mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) correctly</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. perform beyond task</td>
<td>a) creative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) also help others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) carry out an extra task</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. reference to some criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. reference to aptitude</td>
<td>(easily/quickly)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. quantification of the results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. reference to no need for</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scaffolding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The characteristics of adequate achievers were specified in 23 tasks out of 114. After analysing the responses seven categories were established (see Table 6.3.). The most frequent category comprised reference to some criteria (7) by indicating what elements of the tasks adequate achievers could do. In six cases, adequate performance meant that the student needed help. Mistakes were also mentioned, but only in four answers. Students who were willing to participate in the task were considered adequate achievers in four answers. One respondent quantified the result of adequate performance in the case of three tasks. In one description, adequate achievers did their best, and, in another one, they were slower than the others.

Table 6.3.: Adequate achievers’ performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Frequencies of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. reference to some criteria</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. reference to scaffolding (with help)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. reference to mistakes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. reference to participation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. quantification of the results</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. reference to students ’effort</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. reference to aptitude (slower)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The performance of inadequate achievers was described in the case of 30 tasks. The categories identified in the answers are visualized in Table 6.4. In more than half (16) of the
descriptions, the respondents detailed what elements of the task inadequate achievers could and could not carry out. In the next category, the respondents described inadequate achievers as those “not willing to participate” in the task (see Table 6.4.). In five answers, the performance of those students who (1) carried out the tasks with lots of mistakes, or (2) with a specific number of mistakes, or (3) had no correct solutions, was considered inadequate. The quantification of the results of inadequate achievers also occurred in five cases. Reference to how much help these students needed was only present in one answer.

Table 6.4.: Inadequate achievers’ performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Secondary categories</th>
<th>Frequencies of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. reference to some criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. reference to lack of participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. reference to mistakes</td>
<td>a) with lots of mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) specific number of mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) no correct solutions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. quantification of the results</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. reference to scaffolding (with lots of help)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.9 Students’ performance on tasks

The following question inquired how students succeeded on the task. As has been mentioned, out of the 119 tasks, in five cases, the respondent only provided us with a copy of the tasks with no additional details. In the case of 32, out of the remaining 114 tasks, the teachers did not answer this question. After analyzing the answers I specified 11 categories (see Table 6.5.). When it comes to describing students’ performance, the teachers addressed the issue the most often from the perspective of the task (see Table 2). In 26 answers, they referred to the difficult, less difficult or easy parts of the tasks, for example, “listening was the easiest part, the most difficult one was to act out their version”, “this is one of the hardest parts of grammar”. In eight cases, they mentioned certain instructions, or rules of a game or task, or that the students could or failed to follow them, for example, “when they understand the rule they can manage easily”, “3 shouts are allowed and that is sufficient enough”. There were two tasks the teachers had
problems with (e.g. “20 MINUTES IS NOT ENOUGH FOR THEM TO GUESS WHAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS ABOUT”).

The second category (27) comprised references to how much the students enjoyed, liked or found the task interesting, i.e. how intrinsically motivating it was, for example, the students “enjoyed the game because they could use English language freely”, “all enjoyed the task and wanted to share their ideas”, and “they like short dialogues especially acting out”. The following categories fell behind considerably in terms of occurrence (see Table 6.5.). In seven answers, the teachers quantified students’ performance by mentioning the best, the worst or average score or percentage, or by indicating the number of top, adequate and inadequate achievers. Similarly, in seven cases, they formulated specific criteria which the students could or could not fulfil, for example, “most could choose and copy the correct forms and explain the differences”, “even the best Ss could not hear all the words correctly”, or the students “succeeded in giving instructions and performing them, and inventing crazy/impossible sculptures”.

The advantages and disadvantages of various work modes (6), such as individual, pair or group work, were also referred to in some answers; for example, “in pair work sometimes they use their mother tongue“, “Some do not like to work in pairs“ or “Students like pair work, and help each other so the success is guaranteed”. The following four categories (see Table 6.5.) included references to students’ creativity (5), for example “all took part and was creative” and the students “made nice and interesting posters”, their need for scaffolding (4), for example “the younger ones needed more help” and “they needed help to fill in the forms.”, their use of English or the mother tongue (3), for example, “they can use English language, and it is always fascinating for them “, and that all students participated in the task (1).

The teachers were also asked to add samples of students’ performances, which they did in the case of 14 tasks. Four of the answers did not respond to this question; but they were rather task descriptions, for example, “the group is asked to correct mistakes or suggest proper use of vocabulary”, and “the group with the most correct sentences wins”.

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Table 6.5.: Students’ performance on tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Secondary categories</th>
<th>Frequencies of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. reference to the task</td>
<td>a) level of difficulty of elements of the task</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) rubrics</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) problem with the task itself</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. reference to students’ intrinsic motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. reference to quantifying students’ performance</td>
<td>a) best / worst/ average score / %</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) number of TA, AA, IA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. reference to some criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. reference to work mode</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. reference to creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. reference to scaffolding</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. reference to the use of English / Hungarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. reference to students’ participation during the task</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. giving sample performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. no answer</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. irrelevant answer</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.10 Best students’ performance on tasks

As a next step, respondents were required to finish the statement on how their best learners could perform on the task. Out of a total of 119 tasks, in the case of 19, no answer was given. The responses were grouped into seven categories (Table 6.6.). One of the two equally large categories comprised statements that were concerned with the number of students’ errors or correct answers (29). This category was further divided into four secondary categories. As Table 6.6. shows, in 13 cases, the best learners could do the task without mistakes; whereas, in seven cases, all or almost all of their answers were correct; in five, they carried out the tasks with few mistakes. In four responses, the emphasis was on the number of the correct answers.

The second largest category included 29 statements that referred to assessment criteria by detailing what elements the best students could complete, for example, best students could “find all the hidden animals and write sentences about them”, “match letters and find the
meaning of the words” and “mime all the verbs, enjoy the task, say verbs instead of the teacher”. The third group of most frequent responses is related to aptitude. Out of the 28 answers, 25 described the best students as those who could do the task easily or quickly; whereas, in three cases, good memory was emphasized. In the next category 25, answers described the best students as the ones who could go beyond the task: (a) they could either carry out another task, for example, best students could “type their version at home and also write an assessment of the answers” and “put up questions in connection with other topics”, (b) were creative, for example, best students could “use their creativity” and “ask interesting questions”, c) help the others, or (d) enjoyed the task, i.e. intrinsically motivated.

Table 6.6.: Best students’ performance on tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary categories</th>
<th>Secondary categories</th>
<th>Frequency of categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. number of mistakes/ correct answers</td>
<td>a) without mistakes</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) all / almost all correct</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) few mistakes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) number of correct answers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. reference to some criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. aptitude</td>
<td>a) do it easily / quickly</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) reference to memory</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. perform beyond task</td>
<td>a) do another task</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) creative</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) help the others</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) intrinsically motivated</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. scaffolding</td>
<td>a) without help / on their own</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) without prompt</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) with little help</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. language use</td>
<td>a) complexity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) accuracy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) fluency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the fifth category, the teachers referred to the amount of support the best students required. Out of the 14 cases, in six, the best students needed no help; in another six, they could carry out the task without a prompt; and in two, they needed little help. In the last two categories, the quality of language use, such as complexity, accuracy and fluency, and cooperation were considered to be the indicator of the best students (see Table 6.6.).
6.3.11 Popularity of tasks among students

The final question elicited information on the popularity of the tasks among the students. The teachers were to indicate how much the students liked the tasks on a 1 to 4 scale, where 1 meant unpopular and 4 extremely popular. Since, in the case of five tasks, the questionnaire was not completed, only photocopies of the tasks were received, a total of 114 answers were analysed (see Figure 6.7.). The majority of the tasks were either extremely popular (59) or popular (33) among the students. However, as is visualised in Figure 6.7., 15 tasks were rated 2.5, 2 or 1 on the scale. In nine cases, the respondents were hesitant and specified an in-between number, 2.5 or 3.5. Although the highest rank on the scale was 4, one of the teachers rated the popularity of four tasks 5.

![Figure 6.7. Popularity of tasks](image)

6.4 Discussion

6.4.1 Sources of tests

It is intriguing to discuss where the test tasks came from and what their sources implied. The results showed that almost half of the tasks (53) sent in were from various coursebooks, mainly international publications (34). During assessment applying tasks from coursebooks the class uses regularly, i.e. is familiar with, should reflect good practice; since, as McKay (2006, p. 47)
pointed out, young learners can show their language skills best through tasks that are familiar. With these tasks they have a better chance of feeling confident during assessment. However, since the questionnaire the participants filled in did not inquire about what textbooks they used on a regular basis, I do not know if this was the case. In general, it can be said that ready-made, as opposed to teacher-made, activities, can run the danger of not being tailored enough to the specific needs and interest of a specific situation and group of children. This is especially so, if the source of the task is foreign. The other disadvantage of relying too much on coursebookss is that young learners can easily get bored of them, which can then lead to demotivation.

The second most frequently mentioned source of the tasks (24) was the teachers themselves. As typically, there is a wide range of variance in young learners’ cognitive, emotional, maturational, and language development, the teacher, who has the necessary information to cater for their individual needs, is the most suitable person to carry out the assessment (McKay, 2006, p. 57). By devising the task she can further increase the chance of providing students with tasks in which they can show their best, which is fundamental in young learners’ assessment (McKay, 2006, p. 110).

Considering how widely available and how abundant in relevant information the internet is, it is surprising that, out of 119 tasks, only 13 were downloaded from various websites. This finding can indicate the stubborn insistence on traditional methods and teaching materials, which, as the empirical studies also showed (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a, 2008), is so typical of Hungarian EFL teachers. In terms of the internet, however, teachers should always be cautious and make sure that the source is reliable enough, and, like with the coursebookss, that the task is suitable for the given group of students and learning environment.

Since assessment should be based on the curriculum (McKay, 2006, p. 47), when it comes to choosing an appropriate assessment task, teachers’ handiest references are their colleagues, who are similarly familiar with the goals and objectives of the curriculum, and, in addition, may be fully aware of the specificity of the given learning environment. In view of this, it is a remarkable finding that only three of our respondents borrowed their colleagues’ ideas in the case of six tasks. In light of this lack of collegial collaboration even within one school, it is no wonder that the literature shows (e.g. Nikolov & Nagy, 2003; Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006) that primary school EFL teachers do not cooperate with their secondary school colleagues, which, however, would greatly contribute to the continuity of language education, so vital in ELL.
By bringing authentic games into the FL classroom teachers can break the monotony of using the coursebook all the time. Games are effective ways of raising young learners’ attention, motivating them to take part in activities, and allowing them to do their best in meaning-focused tasks. In our study, only six tasks are authentic card or board games; all were sent by the same teacher. Three of them were competitions, which are not appropriate for assessment, because only one group or student can win and get feedback.

Teachers’ resource books are probably the most essential readings of a primary school teacher. The fact that, out of 119 tasks, only five were taken from resource books indicates that our participants do not often rely on this type of literature.

### 6.4.2 Teaching materials necessary for the tests

As the literature discussed in the previous chapters indicates, in the ELL classroom the focus should be on oral skills, learning should mainly take place through direct experience, and topics should be familiar and reflect students’ experience of the world (McKay, 2006, pp. 8, 6, 11-13). These factors are all important to allow young learners to show their best while being assessed and ensure that they do not lose interest and their motivation is maintained. The results of this study, however, are not in accordance with these suggestions. In more than half of the tasks the respondents sent in, teaching materials that are usually used for reading and writing, for example, handouts, stationeries or coursebooks, were required. In contrast, visual and, especially, audio materials were used only in a few cases. This can indicate that the teachers put emphasis on literacy rather than oral skills during assessment. Various cards and board games, realia, such as puppets, toy animals, and authentic texts, which can bridge the gap between real-life language use and classroom language learning, and ensure fun and play-time, i.e. increase students’ motivation (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 29), were mentioned even less frequently. Eight tasks required the teachers to pre-teach a particular grammar point or vocabulary, for example, the name of furniture, farm animals, food, which were appropriate for this age-group. In these cases teaching and assessment were integrated, which is one of the main principles of DA (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 6). Three tasks required background knowledge, two of which, job application procedure and knowledge of Chaplin, contained elements the students were unfamiliar with. New elements in tests may increase YLLs’ anxiety, or prove to be too challenging, which may affect their performance negatively.
6.4.3 Work mode

Most of the answers the respondents gave here contradicted what the literature suggests about the work mode most appropriate for YLLs. More than half of the tasks the participant teachers reported to have successfully used to assess and develop their students’ language knowledge required the students to work individually or in whole classes. In contrast, theoretical and empirical studies (e.g. Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, pp. 32, 98-99; McKay, 2006, pp. 8-9; Nikolov, 2011; Nikolov & Szabó, 2011a) suggest that the emphasis should be on pair and group work, when young learners can feel less intimidated by their peers’ presence, and the more able students can help the weaker ones to show their best. The respondents also sent in 15 competitions, which are not suitable for the assessment and development of this age group, since only one team or student can win and experience the feeling of success, whereas all the others lose, i.e. receive negative or no feedback. Although young learners enjoy and need physical activities, only three tasks contained such elements.

6.4.4 Difficulty of tasks

According to the NCC (2007, p. 39), by the end of primary education all students are to reach level A1 on the CEFR (2001) scale, which corresponds to the beginner level, in at least one FL. In our study, out of 119 tasks, teachers estimated the difficulty level of 62 tasks as beginner or elementary language skills. So the respondents accurately judged their learners language competence in most cases. However, the number of the tasks that necessitate pre-intermediate language knowledge (30) is still relatively high. Considering that according to the description of various levels the participants were given pre-intermediate proficiency requires 3-5 years of language learning in 1-3 or more weekly classes. The respondents sent in eight tasks suitable for intermediate learners, of whom there are indeed not many in the first six years of primary school. In the case of 16 tasks, the teachers specified two consecutive proficiency levels, which indicates that they have a loose perception of what task difficulty means.
6.4.5 Skills and subskills

Since at the age of 6-12 years learners are not confident in their reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, oral activities should constitute the core of their FL teaching (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 85-86). Consequently, during assessment listening and speaking tasks should also be favoured (Jungné, 2012; McKay, 2006, p.47). In our study, the ratio of skills does not reflect this idea. From among the 119 tasks, 76 were reading and/or writing tasks, and 57 tapped into listening and/or speaking. In addition, in 78 cases, the respondents claimed that a task assessed two or three skills, and they often mixed skills with inappropriate subskills, thus indicating two problems. On the one hand, teachers found it difficult to identify which skills and subskills tasks tapped into. This problem is similar to what was found on task difficulty. On the other hand, such tasks used for diagnostic assessment will not provide insights into learners’ strengths and weaknesses, as teachers will not be able to find out in what specific areas their students’ face problems, and, consequently, in what domains they need further improvement.

The respondents’ lack of appropriate methodological knowledge was further demonstrated by the finding that although they had been provided with options to choose from, they specified 38 further subskills and two skills, and nine tasks were to develop “fluency or accuracy” at the same time. Despite the fact that YLLs have difficulties with spelling even in their mother tongue (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 96), and English spelling is especially hard for Hungarian students because of the differences, the majority of the tasks used successfully by the respondents to test their students’ language knowledge focused on spelling. In early childhood language teaching, the emphasis should be on “communicating important messages and not necessarily on accuracy for everything that is written” (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 96). The finding that intonation and pronunciation was the second most often indicated subskill was also intriguing. As Curtain & Dahlberg (2004, p. 57) pointed out “focusing instruction and correction on pronunciation increases the potential for creating problems and for communicating some inappropriate messages”. In addition, although young langue learners are considered to be good at oral skills, the participant teachers were not native speakers of English, and the results of my and other Hungarian studies on classroom procedures (Nikolov, 1999b, 2003b, 2008) both showed that they were rarely given the opportunity to listen to authentic materials or use the language freely and creatively, i.e. to improve their intonation and pronunciation.
6.4.6 Assessment of learners’ performance

There is unanimous agreement in the literature (Mckay, 2006, p. 9) that young learners are extremely sensitive to criticism, they need encouragement and positive feedback during learning and assessment, and it is essential to provide them with a feeling of success and progress (McKay, 2006, p.14). The younger the learners are the more attention should be paid to these principles, as young learners develop at a very slow pace compared to older school children (Krashen, 1985): Thus, their motivation must be maintained more often over a longer period of time. In the most frequently occurring answers to how teachers assess their learners, our respondents indicated how they rewarded best performances on tasks. This practice of rewarding only highest achievements fails to take into account that by giving various rewards to the best students, lower achievers get negative feedback and evaluation. Rewards mean extrinsic motivation to fast learners; however, their lack is discouraging to all other learners: their performance is worth nothing. In addition, teachers leave weaker students without any specific clue as to how they performed on the task and how they can improve.

The second most frequent category of answers (36) comprised references to checking and correcting tasks. Out of these 36 references, only one mentioned feedback and two others explained further practice. This implies that assessment is not followed by detailed feedback to provide students with information about the strong and weak points of their performance, and, consequently, they do not know how to improve and may also lose interest. Likewise, if after receiving feedback young learners are not given the opportunity to practice and develop, they are quite likely not to experience progress in the given skill or subskill, which may also lead to demotivation. Diagnostic assessment integrates assessment and development. Therefore, it is important to involve learners in the process of checking and correcting their tests. This can be implemented in frontal class work. But students should also be encouraged to assess themselves, as the aim is to develop learners’ autonomy. If tests are marked by teachers and error correction is not part of the learning process, learners do not benefit from seeing their tests with errors corrected.

As McKay (2006, p. 266) claims, “in order to evaluate children’s performance in the most appropriate way possible, a scoring method is needed”. Out of the total of 112 answers describing the assessment procedure, only 29 referred to the quantification of the results. In twelve instances, this meant grading, which does not provide learners with detailed diagnostic assessment (Noss, Goldstein & Hoyles, 1989). Appreciating and praising participation
irrespective of the quality of the performance, giving feedback and providing the opportunity to practice further are all crucial elements of diagnostic assessment in the classroom of YLLs. However, in our study, they were referred to only in few answers of the respondents. Although self- and peer-assessment are worthwhile strategies, because they encourage young learners to be conscious of and responsible for their own learning (McKay, 2006, p.46), they were mentioned in only five answers.

**6.4.7 Top, adequate and inadequate performance**

Looking at the results where the respondents were asked to indicate what top, adequate and inadequate achievers could do, the most apparent finding is in how few cases the teachers gave an answer. The most often (40), top achievers’ performance was specified; inadequate achievers were described in 30 task; whereas, the description of the in-between, adequate performance (23), which requires the teacher the most to formulate concrete requirements to be able to differentiate it from the best and the worst performance, was only found in almost half as many cases as in the descriptions of top performance. These results indicate that the teachers often found the tasks of defining the various levels of performance and setting assessment criteria challenging, which then raises the question what they based their judgements on while assessing their students.

A closer look at the categories identified in these answers reveals that those who did undertake to describe what they required from the top, adequate and inadequate achievers had deficiencies in age-appropriate methodology and establishing assessment criteria. Mistakes and correct answers were referred to in several answers. However, the teachers tended to focus on the wrong rather than the correct solutions, which, should be the other way around to ensure a supporting and anxious-free classroom environment. The quantification of the results should always be part of the assessment procedure. However, the respondents provided such data only in very few cases. According to the principles of DA (Poehner, 2008, p. 80), the amount and the type of help students need while carrying out a task tells a lot about at which developmental stage their language knowledge is, and what areas need further improvement. Such references, however, were rarely found in the answers. In the second most often identified categories, top achievers were referred to as those who could perform beyond the task, such as helping others, carrying out an extra task or simply being creative. These answers imply that top achievers were quicker, because they had extra time on their hands, which, however, does not reveal what these
students’ strengths and weaknesses were, and why exactly they were better than all the others. In other words, this information has little diagnostic value. An encouraging finding was that both adequate and inadequate achievers were most often specified in terms of some kind of criteria. In these answers, the elements of the tasks that these students could or could not complete were identified.

6.4.8 Students’ performance on tasks

Similarly to the descriptions of the performance levels, the respondents did not provide an answer to the question of how their students succeeded on the tasks in 32 cases; and, in additional four cases, they did not answer the actual question asked. These findings suggest that the teachers had problems with capturing their students’ performance. The largest category of answers addressed the question from the perspective of the task, and described what caused students no, little or much difficulty, which gives valuable information as to what their strengths and weaknesses were, and where they needed help, i.e. scaffolding, to be able to complete the task and reach the next developmental stage. However, this latter point of view was explicitly communicated only in four cases. The respondents indicated the second most frequently how much the students liked the task or elements of the task, i.e. how intrinsically motivating it was, which, as has been mentioned in the previous chapters (Carreira, 2006; Nikolov, 1995), has a decisive influence in the ELL classroom. If young learners enjoy the task, they are more willing to participate, and do their best, which is a good starting point during the assessment and development of language knowledge. However, it reveals little about student performance or which language domain needs further practising. The students’ results were quantified in only seven answers, despite the fact that it is essential information during assessment. Identifying which elements of the task students could or could not do, i.e. whether they could fulfil a specific set of criteria, displays diagnostic behaviour. However, it was only mentioned in seven cases. Finding out the disadvantages of various work modes, and if students can or like to work in pairs, groups or individually, are important issues, but, again, these facts have little bearing on students’ performance.

Creativity was a recurring pattern in the answers given to several questions, and the respondents seemed to think that it was a kind of ‘language skill’ which students needed to perform well. Here, while reporting on how the students succeeded, the teachers considered creative solutions worth mentioning in five tasks.
6.4.9 What best students could do

To do their best and feel good about themselves YLLs need a safe and supportive environment (McKay, 2006, p. 10), where making mistakes is considered a natural component of the learning process. Therefore, while assessing their performance teachers should always emphasize what students can do and not how many mistakes they have made. When teachers described what their best students could do they often framed their answers in terms of the number of errors and correct answers. This finding indicates that teachers were focused on errors and they placed students on the scale of good and poor performance by counting mistakes instead of applying other criteria.

Twenty-nine answers comprised specification as to what distinguishes best performances from less successful ones by indicating what elements of the tasks these students could carry out. In 25 tasks, the best students went beyond the original task: they either solved an additional test or helped their classmates, or their solution reflected creativity or enjoyment. The latter finding may be an indication of good practice of managing individual differences: teachers gave fast learners extra tasks to solve. As young learners’ maturational and emotional development is diverse (McKay, 2006, p. 6), these techniques are crucial to ensure that all students’ needs are met. Peer support is indeed an effective element of early childhood learning, although it raises the question of whose performance teachers assessed in these cases. Although these statements are proofs of good practice, they give little valuable information in terms of assessment criteria. In 28 cases, the criterion of being best was related to aptitude. The teachers implicitly referred to best learners’ higher aptitude by stating that they worked faster or had better memory. Interestingly, besides memory (mentioned three times) no other component of aptitude was hinted at. This means that teachers did not think in terms of other components of the aptitude construct.

In early language learning, it is important for the teacher to guarantee that students feel good about themselves and experience success in the classroom (McKay, 2006, p. 46). Therefore, during assessment if the need arises teachers should always give YLLs additional support to help them do their best. Only 14 answers refer to teacher support. This either means that in most cases learners did not need help, or they did not get any.

It is also worth mentioning that, out of the total of 119 tasks, in the case of 19, the respondents did not or could not describe how the best students would solve them.
6.4.10 Popularity of tasks

As Mckay (2006, p. 41) also formulated, one of the four most important conditions for optimal ELL was “interesting and engaging input”. This is partly so, because children’s attention span is limited, and they can easily get diverted, which can happen if they do not enjoy the activity (Mckay, 2006, p. 11). A task that students do not like, because, for example, it is boring or too difficult, can cause students to lose motivation to participate or perform well, i.e. to show their best and consequently, have a sense of success. The same principles should also apply to assessment (Mckay, 2006, p. 47). The popularity of half of the tasks the teachers submitted was 4 on a 1 to 4 scale, i.e. they acted in accordance with what the literature suggested, and according to the instruction asking them to send tasks they had used successfully to test young learners’ language knowledge. However, in 33 cases their students rated the popularity of the tests 3, and in further 15 even lower. The question, here, is why the teachers thought that these tasks were appropriate to successfully test young learners’ language knowledge.

6.4.11 Two or more tasks in one

An additional and intriguing finding is that except for one teacher, all participants submitted tasks that in fact consisted of two, three or even more interrelated tasks in a sequence. For example, in one of such task, students were expected 1) to read a little girl’s composition on her future and answer questions, and 2) then to complete a gapped text similar to this composition with their own ideas about their own future. In another one, the whole class were 1) to make up a story about three puppets or plush animals by asking and answering questions and suggesting ideas; then they were 2) to listen to the teacher retelling it, and 3) act it out in groups. This finding raises two methodological issues. Firstly, it indicates that the respondents had problems with defining the concept of task: where it begins and ends. Secondly, if the accomplishment of a task depends on or requires the completion of a previous one, it questions the validity of assessment. The teacher will not be able to ‘diagnose’ the reason why the student could not do the task. Is it because he could not complete the previous one, i.e. his weakness lies there, or because he has problems with the skill or subkill this task requires?
6.5 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to find out what tasks teachers of English use to assess their students, how they carry out diagnostic assessment and how they apply them in the first six grades of primary school. Only 12 teachers participated in the study, therefore, this is an exploratory study aiming to find out what the main issues and challenges are in young learners’ diagnostic assessment. Clearly, the findings cannot be generalized; however, the findings allow us to generate new hypotheses. The respondents chose and characterized ten tasks they had found useful to tap into their learners’ English skills. As has been shown, the 119 tasks teachers used for testing their students’ proficiency vary to a great extent in their sources, levels of perceived difficulty, skill area and most importantly, quality.

In terms of the submitted tasks, the findings of my study coincided with the results of the literature on the Hungarian teaching and learning situation (Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009; Nikolov, 2003a, 2008), and indicated that many participants lacked the knowledge of age-appropriate methodology. As for materials and resources, the tasks the teachers sent in and, thus, considered appropriate for testing YLLs were mainly from coursebooks, and required written materials and hardly ever authentic games, realia, visuals, or physical activities, which can all assist in motivating and engaging children. The other fallacy the findings shed light on was that the majority of the tests were frontal or individual, preventing students from experiencing the reassurance of peer help and the sense of safety team and pair works can offer. Instead of focusing on meaning and oral skills, the teachers seemed to be preoccupied with accuracy, i.e. form, and literacy skills during assessment. McKay emphasized (2006, p. 47) that “Children show their language ability through the kinds of tasks that are most likely to promote their interest and motivation to use the language.” Accordingly, the majority of the tasks the teachers sent in and, thus, considered appropriate for testing young learners’ language development were popular among students. However, there were a few tasks that students disliked and, therefore, can be considered unsuitable for the assessment of YLLs. The results also revealed that the participants found it difficult to apply categories they are supposed to be familiar with to their chosen classroom tasks and practice. They seemed to have a loose perception of what task, task difficulty, and subskills mean and entail.

In terms of assessment procedures, the findings revealed a lack of systematic knowledge of developmental theory, which is in accordance with what similar international studies found (Butler, 2009b; Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000). While
describing the different levels of learner performance, instead of clear criteria the respondents often applied loose and fuzzy terms, which had no or little diagnostic value. During assessment the participants often provided feedback in the form of rewards for top performance only and no reward for less good performance; thus, only top achievers got feedback. This practice may easily lead to a decrease in less able learners’ motivation. The teachers were focused on errors and accuracy rather than fluency and vocabulary, and what students could not do, as opposed to what they could. Checking and correcting tasks were not followed by feedback and practice, hence, preventing students, firstly, from knowing what exactly needs further development and, secondly, from practising it and, consequently, getting to the next level of language development. There was also only little evidence of the application of a scoring method, which should always be part of assessment. Providing students with continuous support, i.e. scaffolding, is an essential element of DA, because it can guarantee learning and a sense of success during assessment, and reveals prospective development. The results of this study, however, indicated that the respondents attributed little importance to its use.

The limitations to this study are manifold. No data were collected on how teachers assess their learners in practice, what tasks they apply in the classroom and how testing contributes to learning over time. It would also be useful to observe teachers using tests of all four skills with their learners and to find out how they apply assessment criteria, how they actually provide feedback to learners, how they recycle the information they gain from tests in their teaching, and how they scaffold their learners’ development from the level they have diagnosed they are at. In the long run, it would be beneficial to provide teachers with validated tasks to use for assessing their learners – the aim of the larger project.
Chapter 7: Testing Hungarian Seventh-Graders in an EFL Context: A Single-Case Study with One EFL Teacher and Her Students

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the first phase of the large-scale TÁMOP 3.1.9. project, whose overall aim was to design and pilot diagnostic tests, and to calibrate items for an item bank that would be available for teachers on the internet at a later stage to allow teachers to improve their assessment practice in the ELL classroom over time. In the first stage, I explored what tests EFL teachers used to assess young learners’ progress and how they evaluated them in the classroom. The results revealed that many of the tasks the participants submitted were not suitable for diagnostic assessment and not age-appropriate, thus preventing students from showing their best and experiencing a sense of success, which is essential for the positive outcomes in early language learning. Similarly, the assessment practices were not in accordance with what YLLs can be realistically expected to do, as they demonstrated deficiencies in the teachers’ knowledge of age-appropriate methodology. In addition, instead of standard criteria the teachers often seemed to rely on their intuition and tradition. The findings also showed limited diagnostic behaviour during teacher assessment.

Building on the experience of the first phase, a list of 18 tests, which included reading, writing and integrated skills activities, were put together in the second stage of the project in May, 2010. Out of these tasks, 18 EFL primary school teachers were asked to choose eight that suited best their students’ language proficiency, and they were invited to pilot and evaluate them according to a set of given criteria.

The research questions concerned 1) how the tasks worked and 2) what the teachers and their students thought about them. The findings (Hild, 2010) indicated that both the teachers and the students liked the tests. The teachers considered the majority of the tasks suitable for assessing students’ language knowledge. The tests could also differentiate more able students from their less able peers.

In the third phase, drawing on the results of the previous stages, diagnostic tests were developed and piloted. A total of 21 booklets were used. Each booklet contained 20 tasks: five
tasks for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The number of students participated in the project was 2,173. They were from 161 groups of 26 schools from different towns and villages around the country. The students were between the ages of seven and 13; and they attended grades two to seven. The first results indicated that the difficulty of the reading and listening tasks was in line with what was expected, and the majority of the tests were suitable to be included in an item bank (see Nikolov & Szabó, 2012 for more details).

The qualitative exploratory study I outline in this chapter is a follow-up to the large-scale project. My aim was twofold. Firstly, since only the reading and the listening tasks developed and piloted in the third phase had been analysed (Nikolov & Szabó, 2012), I intended to find out how the oral tasks had worked. Secondly, since the literature on classroom assessment is fairly limited I intended to explore early EFL teachers’ assessment practices from an emic perspective involving one teacher. Accordingly, my research questions were as follows:

1) What kind of oral tasks did the teachers use in class?
2) How did the teacher assess and give feedback to her students?
3) What did the teacher and their students think of the diagnostic tests they had tried out?
4) How did the teacher assess her students doing the diagnostic tests?
5) How did the oral tasks work?

7.2. Methods

7.2.1 Participants

One EFL teacher, Anikó (all the names of the participants are pseudonyms), and five of her seventh graders from the same class, Robi, Béla, Balázs, Anett and Lili, agreed to participate in my exploratory study. They all attended the same prestigious primary school in Pécs. It is one of the schools affiliated to the University of Pécs, where in-service teachers do their teaching practice. Therefore, its students and teaching staff are considered to be well qualified. As Anikó herself formulated it during one of our meetings “CHILDREN ATTENDING THIS SCHOOL ARE USUALLY BRIGHT AND HARD-WORKING, AND COME FROM WELL-
EDUCATED FAMILIES, WHERE PARENTS STRONGLY MOTIVATE THEIR KIDS TO TAKE LEARNING SERIOUSLY.”.

As for the students for my study, I asked Anikó to choose two weak and two good students from the class. However, Anikó informed me that “THERE ARE NO WEAK STUDENTS IN THIS CLASS”, because even the less able students had a mark 3 or 4 in English. Robi was one of the weaker students Anikó finally chose. He had a mark 3 in English. He was 13 years old at the time of the study. He had been learning English since kindergarten. He did not learn any other FL, but attended private English classes “TO BE ABLE TO IMPROVE MY END OF TERM MARK”.

The 13 year-old Lili was the other less able student. She had a mark 4 in English. She started to learn English in grade one, and did not learn another FL. After she fell ill, her classmate Anett replaced her in the study. She was 12 years old, and had been learning English from grade one. Although she did not learn another FL, she was thinking about starting German because, as she put it, “LEARNING A SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE WOULD BE EASIER AT SECONDARY SCHOOL”.

Béla was one of the ‘good’ students. He was 13, and had been learning English since grade one. Her mother was an EFL teacher and worked at university. When he was around four years old he spent a semester in the USA, where he went to kindergarten. But after that he did not pursue learning English up until grade one in primary school. He had also learned French at school since grade six.

The other more able student was Balázs, who was 12. He started to learn English at kindergarten, where they had English classes with an EFL teacher twice a week. Besides English, he did not learn any other FL. Once a week he took private English classes from “A MAN WHO WAS BORN IN ENGLAND”.

7.2.2 Data collection methods

Data were collected with semi-structured interviews with the teacher and the students and, for the purpose of triangulation (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 181); the students were audio- and video-recorded while doing four oral tasks. I also observed two classes so that the students could get to know me and used to my presence, and, consequently, to reduce the effect of the observer’s paradox (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 176). During the classroom observation I took notes. The dataset elicited during the interviews and video recordings of the students was analysed for
themes and issues (Creswell, 2003, p. 190-195; Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 178-179). The Hungarian statements of the participants were translated into English and are printed in uppercase letters.

The students were asked about their opinion on the oral tasks (see Appendix B for the list of questions) immediately after completing them so that the drawback of selective recall or memory loss could be minimized (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 174). They were also interviewed at a later stage during which the following topics were addressed (see Appendix C for the complete list of questions):

1) general background information: social background, language learning experience
2) typical English class: tasks, work mode, activities
3) assessment in class: self-, peer-assessment and teacher assessment
4) the diagnostic tests they piloted with their teacher.

The questions of the interview with the teacher (see Appendix D for the complete list of questions) tapped into the following topics:

1) the students: general abilities, language knowledge, motivation, out-of-school language use
2) typical English class: tasks, teaching materials, work mode, assessment, practice, popular and unpopular tasks among students
3) assessment procedures in class
4) piloting the diagnostic tests: the teacher’s view on the tasks and the assessment procedures.

The language of the interviews was Hungarian, since the aim was not to test the participants’ language proficiency, but to elicit information regarding their views and experiences. While piloting the oral tasks with the students English was used, except for the introductory discussions and while discussing their opinions on the tasks. The students were, however, free to switch to their mother tongue whenever they felt the need.

The difficulty level of the diagnostic tests was calibrated so that children could practice in pairs without the teacher’s constant supervision (Nikolov, personal communication, May,
The aim of the item writers was to encourage teachers to use and design such tasks to provide their students with more opportunities to use the language freely (Nikolov, personal communication, May, 13, 2013).

Except for one, the four oral tasks (see Appendix E-K), the students carried out, were not the same, but of the same types as the ones they had completed six weeks earlier in the last phase of the large-scale study. The task which was the exact same was a list of 99 age-appropriate questions (see Task 41 Appendix E), for example, “What food do you dislike?”, “What kind of music do you listen to?” and “Which animal has four legs?” The questions were ordered according to their estimated level of difficulty, the first ones being the easiest, and the last ones more difficult. One member of the pair had to draw a number from a hat containing 99 numbers, and ask the question on the list. The other student was to answer it, write the number in his table on the tasksheet, and, then, put a tick under it if he thought the answer was correct, or a cross if he thought it was incorrect. They were to take turns until both of them asked nine randomly chosen questions.

The other task was a picture description task (see Oral task 42A and 42B Appendix F and G). Each member of the pair had a copy of the same nine pictures in front of them. All pictures were marked by a letter of the alphabet. One of them was to describe one of the pictures, for example, “a girl is driving a car”, and the partner had to guess which picture showed this action. If the first student thought he had been able to describe the picture he was to put a tick next to the letter of that picture, if he had not, then a cross. They had to take turns until both of them had a tick or a cross next to all letters.

The third task was storytelling (see Oral task 43A and 43B Appendix H and I). Each student had a copy of the same nine pictures showing a sequence of actions in a story. They took turns describing the pictures. They were to tick the picture they had described if they could talk about it, or put a cross if they could not.

The fourth one was a spot-the-difference task (see Oral Task 44A and 44B Appendix J and K). Each student had a similar picture, but could not see their partner’s picture. They described their pictures in turns, for example, “In my picture there are four people. What about your picture?” They could accomplish the task when they found three differences.
7.2.3 Procedures

In January 2011, the teachers from Pécs who had participated in the third phase of the large-scale project were sent an email inquiring if they were willing to take part in a follow-up study of this research. In the email they were informed that I would need two pairs of students for piloting the oral tasks, and that these students would be audio- and video-taped while carrying out these tasks in pairs. I also intended to interview the teachers and their students, and observe a class. However, these latter intentions were not mentioned in the email. Two teachers volunteered to participate. One of them was Anikó, and the other one, Lenke, was her colleague from the same school. Lenke was also a very experienced EFL teacher, and, in addition, a mentor. The interviews with the teachers were conducted in two sessions in their breaks between classes, because otherwise it would have taken up too much of their time.

When I first met Lenke and told her that I wanted to audio-tape our conversation, she did not consent to it, so I took notes. The second time I went to the school to discuss a few details with the teachers, Lenke withdrew her participation in the study, because she considered it unfair that they had not been informed properly about the procedure of the study in advance. She resented that they had only been told to give four students, but not that they were supposed to talk about their “METHODS AND TEACHING PRACTICE”. She felt “AS IF THIS WAS AN EXAM” and, besides, she should have “PUT IN SO MUCH ENERGY AS IF I WAS WRITING UP HER DOCTORAL DISSERTATION”.

Aniko was also displeased about not having been informed properly. She did not like the idea of me observing her class, because, as she voiced it to me, “I CANNOT SHOW YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THESE STUDENTS TODAY; WHETHER THEY WILL PARTICIPATE OR NOT; YOU WILL NOT SEE ANYTHING ABOUT THEM”. She was also concerned that during the first interview she had not been able to answer some of my questions regarding the tasks she had piloted with her students a month earlier. She said that she had not remembered those things, because they “HAD TO DO THEM IN SUCH A HURRY, IN TWO WEEKS”. However, she let me observe her class that day, and, following this conversation, willingly cooperated; finally, we could work together on a friendly basis. Since, in the first class, she “CANNOT SHOW YOU [me] ANYTHING” Anikó asked me to come back and observe another class, which request I gladly complied with.

The week after the interviews with the teachers the five students carried out the four oral tasks in pairs. I audio- and video-taped one pair at a time during their regular English
classes in a free classroom; thus, I did not take up their free time. They seemed to be motivated and intrigued that they could participate in a research study. Except for Anett and Lili, each student completed the four task types twice on two different days and with a different peer and tasks (see Table 7.1). On one occasion, they worked with a classmate who had similar language knowledge, and on the other occasion with a classmate who, according to Anikó and the end of term mark, was either better or worse at English. Hence, (see Table 7.1) Béla formed a pair with Robi and Balázs. Robi also worked with Lili. Balázs was also in a pair with Anett, because after the first round Lili got sick, so her classmate, Anett participated in the second round.

Before the students started to perform the tasks I informed them in Hungarian that they were going to do four oral tasks similar to the ones they had done with their teacher before Christmas, and during the tasks we would use the English language, but if they did not understand something or had a problem they were to feel free to switch to Hungarian. I told them that this time I would like to see how well these tasks worked with students of their age and FL learning experience. I put them at ease that this was not a test and their performance would remain confidential and would not count towards their assessment at school. I also informed them that after each task and after the completion of all tasks I was going to ask a few questions regarding these tasks in Hungarian (see Appendix B). Before each task I explained to them in English what they were expected to do; and they could read the English instructions on their task sheets as well. They had no problems with understanding the instructions; probably partly because they had done similar tasks not so long before. The interviews with the students were carried out during class time the week after all of them completed the oral tasks twice. I interviewed them in one of their classroom; therefore, the environment was familiar.
### Table 7.1: Student pairs and oral tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Béla</th>
<th>Robi</th>
<th>Balázs</th>
<th>Lili</th>
<th>Anett</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Béla     | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 18  
|          | Task 43 booklet 15  
|          | Task 44 booklet 15  
|          | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 21  
|          | Task 43 booklet 16  
|          | Task 44 booklet 21  
| Robi     | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 18  
|          | Task 43 booklet 15  
|          | Task 44 booklet 15  
|          | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 21  
|          | Task 43 booklet 16  
|          | Task 44 booklet 21  
| Balázs   | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 21  
|          | Task 43 booklet 16  
|          | Task 44 booklet 21  
|          | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 18  
|          | Task 43 booklet 15  
|          | Task 44 booklet 15  
| Lili     | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 21  
|          | Task 43 booklet 16  
|          | Task 44 booklet 21  
|          | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 18  
|          | Task 43 booklet 15  
|          | Task 44 booklet 15  
| Anett    |      | 99 questions  
|          | Task 42 booklet 18  
|          | Task 43 booklet 15  
|          | Task 44 booklet 15  |

### 7.3 Results

#### 7.3.1 Classroom observations

As for the first class I observed, Anikó was partly right when she said that “I CANNOT SHOW YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THESE STUDENTS TODAY; WHETHER THEY WILL PARTICIPATE OR NOT; YOU WILL NOT SEE ANYTHING ABOUT THEM”. The whole class was devoted to discussing the homework, which was to make a “spidergram”, a list of words organised in a cobweb fashion (see Appendix L). The students were to collect words in connection with traffic, and group them under headings, for example, rules, people, jobs, vehicles.

During this class, the teacher and the students discussed who wrote what under the different headings. The students were to complete their lists with the words they missed to think of, while the teacher was writing the words on the board, as Anikó put it, “Are you writing? You must have all the words”. If unfamiliar words, for example, ferry, cruiser, were mentioned Anikó asked the students “Can you explain what it is?” In these cases, they usually tried to give
an English definition, or simply gave the Hungarian equivalent. Although the task itself might allow for more use of English in context, the aim seemed to be to gather as many words as possible. During the class, however, it did not turn out what the students were supposed to do with the complete spidergram, which covered a whole A4 paper. Towards the end, the students started to talk and fidget, and seemed to get bored. When she realized it she said that “THIS CAN BE CONTINUED FOREVER. BUT WE HAVE TO FINISH IT SOMEWHERE.”

The students had few opportunities to use English, and even those times Anikó failed to comment on their performance. Her utterances were limited on only few communicative intentions: 1) asking for more words, for example, “Have you got any other words in connection with railway?”; 2) asking the students to clarify new vocabulary, for example, “What is it good for?” “Can you explain it?” 3) asking the students to spell unfamiliar words, for example, “How do you spell it?” and 4) thanking them for their participation.

In the second class, the students were to give a presentation in pairs about an object they invented. As it turned out during the interviews, they previously prepared the written version of this presentation at home, and submitted it so that Anikó could correct it. Six pairs were given the chance to present their inventions, for example, a cooking machine, a holowatch, and a supersuit; the rest had already done it in the previous classes. During and after the presentations, the teacher did not initiate a discussion. She hardly asked additional questions and gave no feedback to the students, except for when she inquired where people could buy the holowatch and how much it would cost; and when she indicated to one of the students that he “SEEMED TO SAY MORE THE OTHER DAY.” This latter note may imply that, after all, this was not the first time for these students to give this presentation, as it had been suggested.

Next, they opened the coursebook and talked about the story, Justin’s party, they had covered in the previous class. Anikó asked questions in English and the students answered while looking for the responses in the book. Afterwards, she quizzed the students on the words and expressions of the text. She gave the English definitions and they were to give the English equivalent. The students often did not wait for the teacher to ask them to reply but shouted in the answers, which Anikó had no problem with. She was content if she heard the correct answer and did not attempt to find out who said it, which was often impossible. It seemed that she assessed the vocabulary knowledge of the whole class, rather than the individual students’ vocabulary. As for the feedback, she sometimes corrected the students or thanked them for the correct answer. The class was finished off with a competition. She asked for two volunteers who had to stand next to one of the desks. She said words, expressions or sentences in
Hungarian, and the student who was quicker to translate them into English could take a step forward. The winner, who received a red point in the end, was the student who reached the teacher’s desk first. The other student’s performance was not commented on.

7.3.2 The interview with the teacher

7.3.2.1 The students and classroom activities

In the first part of the interview I asked Anikó a few questions about the students who attended the class the participating children were in: 1) their general abilities, 2) language knowledge, 3) motivation and 4) out-of-school language learning. With regard to general abilities, this was a "LUCKY CLASS", because "THE MAJORITY HAS VERY GOOD ABILITIES. TWO OF THEM ARE AT A LITTLE LOWER LEVEL, BUT EVEN THEY HAVE ABILITIES ABOVE AVERAGE." She attributed this to the students’ "VERY GOOD PARENTAL BACKGROUND". As for the students’ language knowledge, she described them in terms of their marks based on normative assessment, "THERE ARE STUDENTS WHO HAVE A MARK 5, BUT SOME OF THEM HAVE A MARK 3 OR 4." She failed to define their proficiency levels in relation to any criteria: "WELL, THEY ARE AT A GOOD LEVEL… THEY CAN COMMUNICATE AND TALK". Creative language use and fluency were typical of eight students, who "CAN COMMUNICATE WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS, … FLUENTLY, BUT NOT WITHOUT MISTAKES."

Except for one or two students, the class was "MOTIVATED", and considered the English language "VERY IMPORTANT". Those who were “LESS ENTHUSIASTIC… PROBABLY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE GRAMMAR, OR ARE NOT VERY GOOD AT THE OTHER SUBJECTS EITHER.” The teacher attributed the students’ high motivation to their social background and parental expectations: “WELL, THEIR PARENTS AND SURROUNDINGS SAY THAT LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE IS VERY IMPORTANT.”

According to Anikó, private English classes can be useful when the child needs “SOMEBODY TO PAY ATTENTION ONLY TO HIM”, “TO MAKE SURE THAT THE HOMEWORK IS READY”, or when he has difficulties with the grammar. However, she believed that generally, private tuition only made an excuse for students not to pay attention in school, because the private teacher would explain what the students had failed to understand in class.
I also inquired about what kind of activities she used to supplement the coursebook in class. Anikó usually brought in gap-filling, vocabulary, multiple-choice exercises, and role plays. She used these exercises in every second or third class “TO SUPPORT WHAT’S IN THE BOOK, TO APPROACH IT FROM ANOTHER ANGLE AND TO MAKE IT MORE EXCITING AND INTERESTING.”

According to her, the students’ favourite activities were those in which they could “COMPETE, AND FEEL THE CHALLENGE, SO THAT THEY CAN SHOW WHAT THEY CAN DO, AND THEY ALSO LIKE ROLE-PLAYS.” However, they did not like practising grammar, but “DID IT PROPERLY, ANYWAY.” The reason why Anikó still applied these exercise was that “IT IS NECESSARY TO GIVE A GRAMMATICAL BASIS TO THEIR KNOWLEDGE, SO THAT THEY CAN USE THE LANGUAGE ACCURATELY. NATURALLY, THE EMPHASIS IS NOT ON THIS, BUT I STRIVE TO KEEP THEM IN BALANCE. GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY. SO THAT THEY FEEL THAT BOTH ARE IMPORTANT.” In class, the students also worked in pairs, because, “FOR EXAMPLE, IN WRITTEN TASKS THEY CAN HELP EACH OTHER IF IT IS A LITTLE BIT MORE DIFFICULT, AND, THUS, CAN DO IT MORE EASILY. THIS IS WHY THEY LIKE IT.”

As for catering for the varied needs of the students, Anikó usually let the more able students do the tasks alone or start the next one, while she was helping those who had difficulties. Other times she told the “CLEVERER STUDENTS TO WRITE MORE SENTENCES OR A LONGER COMPOSITION”. In the case of grammar exercises, she usually did the exercises “TOGETHER WITH THOSE WHO NEED ASSISTANCE”.

7.3.2.2 Assessment in class

The next group of questions focused on progress testing in the classroom. When I asked her about the importance of teacher assessment, she said “IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THEY RECEIVE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ON WHETHER THEY DID IT CORRECTLY OR INCORRECTLY. THEREFORE, WE ASSESS [students] IMMEDIATELY, BE IT INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP WORK, WE CORRECT IT, AND THEY GET RED POINTS OR MARKS 5”. When I asked her to talk about assessing students not about checking and correcting the tasks, she answered that the students usually received detailed, individual “FEEDBACK AFTER WE FINISH A TOPIC, OR, AT LEAST, AT THE END OF EACH SEMESTER, WHEN THEY GET A MARK FOR THEIR END OF TERM TEST”. On such
occasions, they also got to know who had “PERFORMED AT THE LEVEL EXPECTED OF them”, whom Anikó would have “EXPECTED MORE OF, WHO SHOULD ADD WHAT TO HIS PERFORMANCE AND WHO SHOULD PRACTICE WHAT.”

Anikó assessed every student regardless of their language knowledge, since they “SHOULD GET POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEEDBACK AS WELL.” She considered this important because smart learners should also see that they “PERFORMED BELOW THE REQUIRED LEVEL”. Except for a few cases, she usually voiced these criticisms in front of the whole class, since “THIS IS NOT A SECRETS. IT IS NOT A PROBLEM IF THE OTHERS CAN ALSO SEE THAT THIS IS A CLEVER STUDENT WHO COULD HAVE PERFORMED BETTER. THERE IS NOTHING HURTUL ABOUT IT”. However, according to Anikó, “PRAISE SHOULD ALWAYS BE PUBLIC, SO THAT EVERYBODY CAN SEE IT AND BE HAPPY ABOUT IT.”

In class, she gave red points rather than marks, unless some students put in an outstanding performance, which was worth a mark 5. Those who did not perform well did not receive anything, because “THEY CAN SEE ANYWAY THAT IT DID NOT GO WELL AND THEY NEED TO DO MORE, BECAUSE OUT OF TEN ONLY SEVEN WERE CORRECT.”

Sometimes, Anikó took home one or two students’ exercise books to check their compositions, homework or what they had done during class. On such occasions, she always wrote some comments in the exercise books, such as “THIS WAS GOOD OR WRONG. NICE JOB. WELL DONE. THEY CAN GET MARKS 5. OR I WRITE THAT THIS WAS UNSATISFACTORY, AND YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT.”

I also inquired about how often Anikó invited the students to assess themselves and their classmates. She stated that students’ self- and peer-assessment were not typical in her class, because it was “NOT GOOD OR REALISTIC.” During practicing vocabulary, however, the students could score themselves by following the teacher’s instructions, for example “ONE CORRECT WORD IS ONE POINT, IF THERE IS A SPELLING MISTAKE IT IS HALF A POINT”. Then they counted their scores on the basis of which Anikó told them what mark their performance “WOULD BE WORTH, APPROXIMATELY”. The other occasion when the students could assess themselves was at the end of the semester, when the teacher asked them what mark they thought they deserved, or what they thought of their general performance, and how they thought they could improve it, “FOR EXAMPLE, BY NOT FORGETTING TO DO THE HOMEWORK OR PARTICIPATING MORE ACTIVELY”. She believed that this was important so that the learners themselves could “SEE WHERE THEY STAND. SO THEY DO
NOT OVER- OR UNDERESTIMATE THEMSELVES AND IDENTIFY THE AREAS THEY CAN STILL IMPROVE. THIS IS HOW THEY CAN DEVELOP THEMSELVES. THEY SHOULD NOT HEAR IT FROM ME, BUT FEEL IT THEMSELVES.” Peer-assessment took place mainly after a short presentation, when Anikó asked the whole class “WHETHER IT WAS CONTINUOUS, ACCURATE, AND WHAT THE VOCABULARY AND PRESENTATION WERE LIKE.“

Since scaffolding is a crucial element of DA, I was interested in how Anikó scaffolded, her students’ performance during assessment. When the class was “IN A PRACTISING PHASE I NATURALLY HELP THEM,” she explained. She did not simply tell them what the answer was, but tried to “LEAD THEM TO THE SOLUTION”. If a word did not come to the students’ mind, she tried to get them to “TELL THE SAME THING WITH OTHER WORDS”. She also often asked the class who could “TELL THE ANSWER, OR HELP”. However, if her aim was to find out what the students could or could not do, she did not give students any assistance. At some other point of the interview, Anikó also added that during assessment, sometimes, she did help the students by giving them advice regarding the “TECHNIQUE OF DOING THE EXERCISE OR WHAT METHOD THEY SHOULD APPLY”, or by telling them to “DO FIRST WHAT THEY CAN THEN LATER RETURN TO THOSE ITEMS THEY CANNOT SOLVE”.

As for tasks suitable for assessing oral skills, Anikó considered “HAVING STUDENTS CRAM A TEXT A GOOD METHOD”, because it can be assessed “OBJECTIVELY”. It “IS EVEN GOOD FOR THE LESS ABLE LEARNERS; THEY DO NOT HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT TO SAY.” She preferred them reciting texts word for word; but it was also acceptable if students deviated from the exact wording if what the students said was correct. But “HAVING A LOOK AT IT AND TALKING RIGHT OFF THE TOP OF HIS HEAD IS UNACCEPTABLE. I WOULD RATHER HE CRAMMED IT.” She usually advised the students who were “A BIT UNCERTAIN TO LEARN TEXTS WORD BY WORD. THOSE WHO ARE MORE ABLE AND CREATIVE MAY CHANGE IT HOWEVER THEY CAN.”

7.3.2.3 Practising

During the interview Anikó often referred to practising as a task students were expected to be able to do on their own at home: “IF I SEE AT A PARTICULAR GRAMMAR POINT THAT SOMEBODY HAS PROBLEMS WITH IT, I TELL HIM WHAT HE NEEDS TO DO. OR,
FOR EXAMPLE, IF HE HAS DIFFICULTIES WITH READING, HE SHOULD READ MORE OR READ ALOUD, OR PRACTISE IT MORE.” Generally, if she noticed that the students had a problem with something, she devoted more time to practising it. However, not too much time, because “OUR EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT AFTER A CERTAIN NUMBER OF CLASSES IT IS NOT EFFECTIVE. IT BECOMES BORING; YOU CANNOT COME UP WITH NEW THINGS SO MANY TIMES. [We practice] UNTIL I CAN SEE THAT ONE PART OF THE GROUP HAS ALREADY UNDERSTOOD IT. AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT, FOR THEM THREE MORE CLASSES WILL NOT DO ANY GOOD EITHER…. ADDITIONAL EXERCISES WILL NOT HELP SOMEBODY WHO DID NOT DO THE HOMEWORK, AND THAT IS WHY HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND IT”.

Sometimes, Anikó gave extra exercises to one or two students to practise at home, or told them to “WRITE EXERCISES SIMILAR TO THE ONES WE DID IN CLASS. IN OTHER WORDS, CHANGE ONE OR TWO WORDS, OR DO THE WHOLE EXERCISE AGAIN AT HOME.” However, this was “NOT TYPICAL. SINCE IT WOULD MEAN THAT I HAVE TO FOLLOW UP AND ASSESS WHAT THEY HAVE DONE AND…..THERE IS NO TIME AND ENERGY FOR THIS ON A DAILY BASIS.” She added that they had enough practice so that “A CHILD WITH AVERAGE SKILLS SHOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND IT”. She believed that it was usually sufficient for “80 PER CENT OF THE STUDENTS”, and the rest did not manage because, for example, they had not paid enough attention. Since “THESE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES ARE ALSO COVERED AT A LATER STAGE, IN GRADE FIVE OR SEVEN…..WE ARE WAITING FOR THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY SO THAT THESE STUDENTS CAN CATCH UP WITH THE OTHERS. EVERYBODY CANNOT BE ON THE TOP AND DESERVE A MARK 5.”

7.3.2.4 The diagnostic tests

According to Anikó, the majority of the tasks in the booklet they filled in were “QUITE GOOD” and below these students’ level of proficiency. “THEY HAD TO SPEND ONLY LITTLE TIME WITH THE READING AND LISTENING TASKS.” While scanning through the booklet, which I gave her to refresh her memory, she chose reading tasks 21, 22 and 24 (see Appendix M) as the easiest, where definitions, picture descriptions or dialogues were to be matched with words, pictures and places, accordingly. In the listening tasks, as she put it, “THERE WERE ONLY A FEW PHRASES OR WORDS THEY DID NOT KNOW”. At some
other point of the interview, however, Anikó added that the students found some of the listening tasks demanding, because “ALTHOUGH [in the coursebook] THERE IS A LISTENING ACTIVITY TO EACH TEXT, AND THEY LISTEN TO MUSIC ON THE INTERNET A LOT, WHEN THEY HEAR AUTHENTIC ENGLISH, IT IS KIND OF STRANGE TO THEM. THE FACT THAT THEY SPEAK SO FAST”. As Anikó revealed, in class they did not listen to authentic materials, but only did the listening activities in the coursebook, which, in her view, “ARE USUALLY QUITE STERILE.” While looking through the booklet she often pinpointed when they had covered the grammatical structures or topics certain tasks required: “WE COVER THESE TOPICS IN GRADE FIVE AND SIX: JOBS AND WHAT THEY ARE DOING IN THE PICTURES. THEY CAN TELL STORIES. WHAT’S IN THE PICTURE? SUCH THINGS……..THESE PICTURE DESRCRIPTION TASKS ARE DEALT WITH IN ABOUT GRADE FIVE IN OUR SCHOOL.”

According to Anikó, what really caused difficulties to both the students and the teacher while doing the tasks was not related to language learning; it was the quality of the pictures. For example, in writing task 31, where the students were to write sentences about a picture, (see Appendix M), they could not figure out “WHETHER THE LITTLE GIRL IN THE PICTURE WAS TAKING SOMETHING OUT OF HER BAG, OR HUGGING SOMEBODY”. In another, similar picture description task (task 33, see Appendix M) they could not decide if “THE MAN IS WALKING OR GOING SOMEWHERE, OR THE GIRL IS PUTTING THE PICTURE ON THE WALL OR TAKING IT OFF”. In these cases Anikó told the students to write what they thought it was in the picture. However, this “made CHECKING MORE DIFFICULT, AND …LENGTHY…SINCE IT TOOK US A WHOLE CLASS [to complete it]. IT TAKES TIME FOR ALL OF THEM TO ASK IF IT IS OK IN THIS OR THAT WAY, BECAUSE THERE WERE SO MANY VARIATIONS.”

Anikó liked the most reading task 23, which was, according to her, one of the tasks the students found the most difficult (see Appendix M). The reason for her preference was that “IT WAS A MORE COMPLEX TASK, IT WASN’T ENOUGH TO HAVE A LOOK AT IT AND WRITE SOMETHING WORD BY WORD, BUT THEY HAD TO THINK A LITTLE BIT. YES, IT WAS [one of the most difficult to the students.] BUT THAT’S EXACTLY THE REASON. IT WAS A BIT MORE CHALLENGING.”

As for the oral tasks, they were “NOT DIFFICULT, AND WENT REALLY WELL”. Because the class had already covered these topics, such as JOBS OR WHAT PEOPLE ARE DOING IN THE PICTURE, in grade five and six. Although spot-the-difference tasks were
done fairly rarely in class, the students had no difficulties with them, since they “HAVE BEEN PRACTISING THE STRUCTURE OF THERE IS / THERE ARE SINCE GRADE FOUR.” The students enjoyed the oral tasks because “THEY COULD TALK.” She also added that “ON THE BASIS OF THEIR FEEDBACK I CONCLUDED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO DO ACTIVITIES IN PAIRS MORE OFTEN, FOR EXAMPLE, STORY TELLING IN PAIRS, OR THEY REALLY LIKED THIS ASKING QUESTIONS [99 questions].” Anikó’s favourite was the story-telling task, because “AGAIN, WE COULD FIND OUT HOW CREATIVE THEY WERE AND WHAT IDEAS THEY HAD.” She considered creativity “IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THEY CAN SHOW WHAT THEY CAN DO, WHAT KIND OF IDEAS THEY HAVE, OR HOW THEY CAN DEMONSTRATE IT IN THE LANGUAGE, SINCE THAT’S WHAT MAKES IT MORE ENJOYABLE, THE FACT THAT THEY CAN SHOW THEIR PERSONALITY.”

7.3.2.5 Assessment of the students’ performance while doing the diagnostic tests

The teachers’ booklet contained detailed instructions as to how to assess and carry out each task (see Appendix N). So during the interview I also inquired about what Anikó thought of these assessment procedures. She “HAD NO PROBLEM WHERE THEY HAD TO WRITE IN A NUMBER OR PUT A TICK”. However, in those written tasks, for example, the spot-the-difference task, “WHERE ONE SENTENCE COULD BE SCORED FROM 1 TO 4 POINTS, THE ASSESSMENT CAUSED MORE DIFFICULTIES.” In these cases, there were many acceptable answers; so “YOU EITHER SPENT A LOT OF TIME CHECKING EACH STUDENTS’ SENTENCES OR LET THEM SCORE THEMSELVES”. However, Anikó was not happy about the idea of self-assessment, because then the assessment “WILL NOT BE OBJECTIVE OR REALISTIC.” Spelling mistakes, for example, were only spotted if she herself read all their answers. Therefore, she believed that “IT IS DONE PROPERLY ONLY WHEN I DO THE ASSESSMENT.”

In the oral tasks where the teachers had to decide on the basis of the instructions in the booklet (see Appendix N) how many scores a particular sentence was worth, Anikó found it challenging to determine what exactly she “SHOULD ACCEPT AS A POSSIBLE ANSWER: HERE, FOR EXAMPLE [task of 99 questions], WHEN DO YOU GO TO BED ON WEEKDAYS?. WHAT SHOULD I ACCEPT? AT 10 O’CLOCK OR I GO TO BED AT 10
O’CLOCK. BECAUSE 10 O’CLOCK IS ALSO RELEVANT. AN ENGLISH PERSON DOESN’T SPEAK IN FULL SENTENCES ALL THE TIME. BUT, THEN I WON’T KNOW IF THE STUDENT CAN SAY I GO TO BED.” In class, when she wanted to find out if students had learned a grammatical structure properly, she simply instructed „THEM TO USE THAT STRUCTURE IN THEIR ANSWERS”. This was probably the reason why, in the following task, where the students were to describe what people with various jobs were doing in the pictures, Anikó circumvented the problem by “CONVINCING THE STUDENTS NOT TO OVERCOMPLICATE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURES. SO THEY SHOULD USE THIS STRUCTURE: THIS A MAN WHO DOES THIS AND THAT. AND THIS IS WHERE THEY SHOULD STOP”. When I asked her what she would change in the scoring method in order to overcome this problem, she answered that “IT SHOULD BE LAID DOWN IF WE CAN ONLY ACCEPT FULL SENTENCES, OR LIKE IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE USE, WE CAN ALSO ACCEPT IF THEY SAY TWO OR THREE WORDS”.

Anikó was also concerned that the scoring guide on how many words and mistakes an utterance could contain to be worth a particular number of scores did not take into account the differences between students’ language knowledge: “FOR SOME STUDENTS A THREE-WORD SENTENCE WOULD BE AN EXCELLENET PERFORMANCE; WHEREAS OTHERS CAN SAY FIVE OR SIX WORD LONG SENTENCES”. She also added that this method was “WELL, QUITE COMPLEX. I SHOULD STUDY IT VERY CAREFULLY, SO THAT DURING ASSESSMENT I WILL KNOW HOW MANY SCORES EXACTLY I CAN GIVE TO THE KIDS”. She stated that without these specific instructions she probably would not have known how many scores students’ performance was worth. She did not, however, consider this assessment procedure so different from what she herself used. On the contrary, it was quite “SIMILAR TO WHEN WE GIVE POINTS OR MARKS…. WELL, THE ONLY DIFFERENCE MAY BE THAT WE GIVE MARKS NOT SCORES. She believed that this procedure might be more “NUANCED, BUT MORE DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW. SO, NOW IS IT FIVE, FOUR OR THREE POINTS. AND THEN HOW SHALL WE CONVERT IT INTO MARKS? OUR KIDS AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THINK IN TERMS OF MARKS.”

Students’ self-assessment was part of the assessment procedure. Anikó believed that letting students give scores to themselves was not a good idea, because “THEN THE ASSESSMENT WILL CERTAINLY NOT BE APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT…. BECAUSE STUDENTS CANNOT REALLY DECIDE IF THAT SENTENCE WAS
GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT OR NOT. THE BEST ONES MAY BE ABLE TO JUDGE IT, BUT IT ISN’T FOR SURE.” She was of the opinion that these students were not “AT THE LEVEL OF BEING ABLE TO MAKE SUCH DECISIONS FOR A 100 PER CENT.” In the case of the oral tasks where, as she could recall the instructions, the students did not have to score their partner’s performance, but only put a tick if they understood what the other student said, they naturally ticked everything off if their partner said something and they understood it “REGARDLESS OF ITS BEING ACCURATE OR NOT.” However, she was sure that there must have been mistakes in these utterances, because “THAT’S WHY THEY ARE ONLY STUDENTS; THEY ARE BOUND TO MAKE MISTAKES.” Although letting students assess themselves “CAUSED DIFFICULTIES” to her, she believed that the students had enjoyed it and had not cared about these discrepancies.

7.3.2.6 Scaffolding while the students were doing the tests

As for giving assistance while the students were doing the diagnostic tests, Anikó claimed that the learners did not really need it, because she made sure beforehand that “THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT THEY HAD TO DO……SO THAT THEY COULD CONCENTRATE ON THE TASK ITSELF AND WHAT THEY HAD TO DO. AND NOT GET STUCK BECAUSE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND SOMETHING.” She added that when, however, she did help the students she told them to “HAVE A LOOK AT THAT; OR WHAT THEY SHOULD WRITE THERE; OR WHAT THAT BOY IS DOING. …I DIDN’T TELL THEM THE SOLUTION, BUT ONLY WHAT WE COULD ACCEPT.” However, when it came to support related to the FL Anikó did not provide any because, as she put it, “I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE AIM WAS TO FIND OUT WHAT THE CHILDREN COULD DO”. In the interview, she also mentioned that while doing the oral activities the students “WERE SO NICE TO EACH OTHER. THEY WANTED TO HELP EACH OTHER.” “WHETHER THIS WAS PERMITTED OR NOT WAS NOT CLEAR TO” her. She herself “TOLD THEM THAT THIS WAS NOT ABOUT HELPING YOUR CLASSMATE, …IF HE COULD SAY IT, IT WAS OK, IF HE COULD NOT, THEN CONTINUE WITH THE NEXT ONE.”
7.3.3 Interviews with the students

7.3.3.1 General information on language learning

In the first part of the interview I asked the students general questions related to language learning: 1) why they liked learning English, 2) if they used English out-of-class, 3) what they found difficult in learning English, 4) how good they thought they were at English?, 5) how important English was according to their parents, and 6) what languages their parents spoke.

Béla, Balázs and Robi had instrumental motivation for learning English. They thought it was “GOOD, BECAUSE ENGLISH IS A WORLD LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTOOD IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD.” The two girls, Lili and Anett, had intrinsic reasons, namely, because “ENGLISH IS GOOD” and “AN EASY LANGUAGE”; and “I LIKE IT.” Except for Robi, all of them sometimes watched films in English. Out-of-school, Balázs, Béla and Lili read in English, for example, Harry Potter or graded books. All of them mentioned that when they went on holiday abroad they had a chance to use English once or twice. Robi also used English when he played strategy games on the internet. For the two ‘good’ students, Béla and Balázs, “THERE IS NOTHING DIFFICULT IN ENGLISH”. As Balázs put it, ”BECAUSE EVERYTHING CAN BE LEARNED.” Robi and Anett sometimes had problems with the tenses. For Lili, the fact the she could not “TELL EVERYTHING IN ENGLISH. AND THERE ARE THINGS THAT WOULD BE EASIER TO EXPRESS IN HUNGARIAN” caused difficulties.

All of the students seemed to be aware of their level of English proficiency. In the case of Anett and Lili, their marks helped them to assess themselves, whereas, Balázs thought he was “RELATIVELY GOOD” at English “BECAUSE OF THE RESULTS I ACHIEVED AT COMPETITIONS.” He believed that his performance in English classes was not informative, since “WHAT WE DO IN CLASS IS NOT A BIG DEAL. IT CAN BE LEARNED.” Béla had the same opinion of his language knowledge, because once when they were in Croatia, they bought a toy gun that did not work; when they went back to the shop with his friend he “COULD EXPLAIN THE SITUATION TO THE SHOP-ASSISTANT, WHO COULD SPEAK ENGLISH. AND THEY EXCHANGED THE PISTOL FOR ANOTHER ONE.” Robi thought that “THERE ARE UPs AND DOWNS” in his language knowledge, because sometimes he understood “WHAT THE ENGLISH CLASS IS ABOUT, AND CAN PARTICIPATE; BUT OTHER TIMES I DO NOT AND GET BORED.”
All of the participants’ parents considered English a very important subject. However, Robi’s parents thought that “MATH AND THE OTHER BASIC SUBJECTS COME FIRST”. In his family, according to his knowledge, only his mother had a basic-level language exam. In the other families, one or both of the parents could speak one or two FLs, according to the children.

7.3.3.2 Classroom activities

In the second part of the interview, I was interested in what kinds of tasks students did in English classes; which ones were the most and the least frequent and what they thought of them. The participating students seemed to be satisfied with the classroom activities Anikó brought to class. They most often did the exercises in the coursebook, *Project 3* (Hutchinson, 2003), and the workbook, which were often supplemented with, as Anett put it, “A LITTLE BIT SIMILAR”, photocopied exercises, such as gap-filling, “TRUE OR FALSE” or form-focused activities, for example, according to Béla, “THERE IS A PICTURE, AND WE HAVE TO WRITE DOWN WHAT THE PEOPLE WERE DOING YESTERDAY AT 12.” Robi mentioned another activity, “THERE WAS THIS EXERCISE WHEN THERE WAS A WORD, HAVE; AND WE HAD TO EXCHANGE IT FOR WILL HAVE.” As for the most and the least frequently used tasks, two of the students mentioned that there were no such activities, because “WHAT WE DO WE DO REGULARLY”. The others indicated different tasks as the least or the most frequent in class. However, they all mentioned that they did a lot of gap-filling exercises. They also noted that vocabulary tests, where Anikó, as Balázs formulated it, “TELLS US 20 HUNGARIAN WORDS AND WE HAVE TO WRITE DOWN IN ENGLISH” were also quite frequent. As for activities that are not in the coursebook or workbook, they hardly mentioned any. Besides the photocopies of various written exercises, one of such activities was a “reading diary”. Anikó brought in books and they could choose which one they wanted to read. They were also “TO DO THE TASKS AT THE END OF THE BOOK AND WRITE A SUMMARY OF THE STORY”. Another one Balázs mentioned, “FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE WERE LEARNING THE FUTURE TENSE, ANIKÓ FORETOLD OUR FUTURE.”

Their answers regarding oral activities also agreed. They were mainly to cram texts, sometimes dialogues in the book at home, and then recite them in class, usually word by word, but sometimes the gist was also enough. According to Béla, they did not have to “LEARN IT SO PRECISELY. BUT IF WE LEAVE OUT AN IMPORTANT SENTENCE, SHE ALWAYS
HELPS US.” Robi also reported that “IT HAS ALSO HAPPENED THAT ONE OF MY CLASSMATES DID NOT LEARN IT, BUT TOLD US THE WAY HE REMEMBERED IT. SHE SAID IT WAS OK, BUT NEXT TIME HE SHOULD LEARN IT BY HEART.” According to Béla, oral activities, when the teacher “SOMETIMES ASKS A QUESTION AND WE ANSWER IT IN ENGLISH”, did occur, but in a lockstep fashion rather than in an extended task format.

As for listening activities, Lili’s report coincided with what Anikó described. They only did the listening tasks of the coursebook. As Lili formulated it, “WHEN THERE IS A TEXT FIRST THE TAPE-RECORDED TELLS IT. AND THERE IS ALWAYS A SENTENCE THAT WE LISTEN TO, THEN SHE STOPS IT, AND WE HAVE TO REPEAT IT.” Lili also added that sometimes they also did listening for the gists activities.

All of the students indicated that they did pair work in class, though not regularly. They all preferred working with their friends in pairs, because as Lili put it, “WE GET USED TO EACH OTHER” and Béla pointed out, “WE GET ON BETTER.” They all reported that usually they could choose who to work with.

As for their favourite tasks, Béla mentioned that “THE EXERCISES IN THE WORKBOOK AND IN THE HANDOUTS ARE BOTH GOOD. BUT I PREFER THE LATTER, BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE INTERESTING, AND THERE IS MORE WORK TO BE DONE WITH THEM.” Robi liked “THE ACTIVITY WHEN WE HAVE TO INVENT SOMETHING (a story] WITH SENTENCES, AND THEN PUT IT INTO WORDS AND PRESENT IT.”

7.3.3.3 Assessment and feedback in class

In the next part of the interview, I elicited information about how the students assessed themselves and their peers in class, and how the teacher assessed them and gave them feedback. As for self-assessment, three of the five students stated that they did not do it in the English classes. Two of them said that it rarely occurred. As Béla put it, “AT THE END OF THE TERM, OR SEMESTER, WE ARE ASKED WHAT MARK WE WOULD GIVE OURSELVES, OR HOW WE THINK WE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THAT YEAR”. In terms of peer-assessment, the ratio of the answers was the same. According to three students, they did not do it, while the others said “not very often”. Robi mentioned one such occasion: “WE HAVE TO PERFORM SOMETHING IN FRONT OF THE CLASS, AND SHE ASKS
FOR OUR OPINIONS, AND THEN SHE TELLS HERS.” Except for Robi, all agreed that both self- and peer-assessment would be useful, and they would gladly do it, because, as Béla formulated it, “IF WE CAN FIND OUR OWN MISTAKES, THAT IS GOOD. WE WOULD HAVE A BETTER IDEA WHAT WE NEED TO IMPROVE THAN WHEN WE ARE ONLY GIVEN A CORRECTION.” According to Anett, “IT IS GOOD BECAUSE IF I ASSESS HIM, HE CAN THEN LEARN FROM HIS MISTAKES”. Balázs thought that students would do a better job because “SOMETIMES SHE [the teacher] DOES NOT TELL WHAT’S REALISTIC…..BECAUSE THERE ARE STUDENTS WHOM SHE FAVOURS”. The reason why Robi did not want to assess his classmates was that “IT IS NOT MY JOB.” As for self-assessment, he did not “WANT TO ASSESS MYSELF. I HAVE SAID WHAT I CAN. IF THE TEACHER LIKES IT, IT IS OK. IF SHE DOESN’T, THEN SHE DOESN’T.”

With regards to teacher assessment and feedback, there were some contradictions in the responses. According to Lili and Anett, during assessing their oral performance the teacher did not go into details. Anett stated that “SHE IS TAKING NOTES … BUT SHE ONLY TELLS US THAT THIS WAS GOOD, OR A FEW THINGS WERE MISSING.” Both of them, however, wanted to get more information so that, as Lili put it, “WE WOULD KNOW WHAT WE NEED TO BRUSH UP”. The others also mentioned that Anikó was taking notes while they were doing the oral task, but they also indicated that “SHE READS ALOUD HER NOTES”. Robi added that “SHE TELLS US WHAT EXACTLY WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO. FOR EXAMPLE, I TEND TO FORGET ABOUT THE FUTURE TENSE”. Balázs noted that he usually did not receive any feedback, because he did not “MAKE MISTAKES, SO SHE DOESN’T TELL ME ANYTHING”. However, if Anikó was not satisfied with his performance she only said that “I EXPECT MORE FROM A STUDENT AT YOUR LEVEL”, which Balázs did not consider very useful, since “WHEN I DO WHAT SHE ASKED, I DON’T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE IS SAYING THAT”. The other ‘good’ student, Béla, confirmed Balázs’s statement about feedback: “SHE DOESN’T USUALLY COME UP TO ME [and tell him what he needs to practise or improve], ….BUT IT HAPPENS MORE OFTEN IF SOMEBODY IS NOT SO GOOD AT ENGLISH”.

According to the students’ reports, Anikó hardly ever gave them feedback individually. One such occasion was when “FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THE READING DIARY. SHE BECKONS US TO HER DESK AND TELLS US ONE BY ONE WHAT MISTAKES WE HAVE MADE.” After a test, she usually distributed the papers and only provided a general evaluation on the class’s performance. According to Lili, in the tests Anikó “UNDERLINES
THE MISTAKES OR PUTS A QUESTION MARK NEXT TO THEM”. After getting back their papers, as Béla voiced it to me, they, sometimes, “CORRECT THE MISTAKES, AND WE WRITE DOWN THE CORRECT VERSION IN OUR EXERCISE BOOK.” Lili reported that she “ONLY HAVE A LOOK AT IT AT HOME.” She also added that sometimes “IT HAPPENS THAT SHE [Anikó] GOES UP TO A STUDENT AND DISCUSSES WITH HIM WHAT HE NEEDS TO PRACTICE”. When Anikó, sometimes, took the students’ exercisebooks home, as Lili put it, “TO CHECK IF WE HAVE DONE EVERYTHING, AND IF WE HAVE DONE IT CORRECTLY”, she did not talk to them individually, but “CORRECTS OUR MISTAKES, … AND GIVES IT BACK TO US TO SEE IT”. According to Robi, at that time, Anikó also told the whole class that “THERE WERE VERY GOOD IDEAS SHE COULD GIVE RED POINTS FOR. BUT THERE WERE QUITE A LOT OF MISTAKES, TOO.”

As for giving assistance during assessments, all of the participants claimed that Anikó did not help them while writing a test. According to Balázs, if they did not remember a word, “WE CAN RAISE OUR HANDS THAT WE DO NOT KNOW HOW TO SAY THIS IN ENGLISH.” He also added that, in the case of oral tasks, if they stopped and could not continue, the teacher “FOR EXAMPLE, STARTS THE SENTENCE. THEN IT COMES TO OUR MIND AND WE CAN CONTINUE”.

In terms of practising, the students’ answers also coincided. Generally, the whole group practised together; or Anikó, sometimes, advised one or two students that, as Anett formulated it, “THEY SHOULD PRACTISE THIS OR THAT AT HOME, OR ASK FOR SOMEBODY’S ASSISTANCE”. Robi and Balázs stated that they disagreed with this idea: “WHEN ONLY TWO OR THREE OF US CAN’T DO IT, WHY DO THE WHOLE GROUP NEED TO PRACTISE IT. THAT I DON’T UNDERSTAND” and “THOSE WHO COULD MOVE ON SHOULD NOT LAG BEHIND......SHE [the teacher] SHOULD SIT ASIDE WITH THAT STUDENT, WHILE THE OTHERS DO SOMETHING ELSE.”

In class, Anikó usually told the students, as Lili put it, “WHO PERFORMED WELL, OR WAS ACTIVE. AND WE ALSO GET RED POINTS.” According to Béla, when the whole group worked together, they “DISCUSS IT WHY IT IS NOT CORRECT, AND WHAT THE CORRECT ANSWER IS”, and then, as Robi put it, “BELOW A PARTICULAR NUMBER OF MISTAKES SHE GIVES RED POINTS, IF NOT, THEN NOTHING.”
7.3.3.4 The students’ feedback on the diagnostic tests

In the last part of the interview, I discussed with the students what they thought of the tests, especially the oral tasks they had done with their teacher six weeks earlier. As for the oral tasks, all of them stated that they did not really do such activities in class. However, the list of 99 questions seemed familiar to Robi and Anett, because “WE DO THIS QUESTIONING IN CLASS. WE HAVE TO WRITE A FEW QUESTIONS, EASIER AND MORE DIFFICULT ONES, THEN ASK THEM.”, and “ANIKÓ, SOMETIMES, ASKS SUCH QUESTIONS IN CLASS”. For Béla and Lili, the picture description activity rang a bell. According to Béla, “WHEN WE DISCUSSED present continuous THERE WAS THIS EXERCISE WHERE THERE WERE PICTURES, AND WE DESCRIBED WHAT THE PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE WERE DOING AT THAT MOMENT.” Lili stated that “SOMETIMES, IN THE BOOK THERE ARE PEOPLE AND THEIR NAMES ARE WRITTEN THERE, AND THEY ARE DOING SOMETHING IN THE CLASSROOM. OUR HOMEWORK WAS TO WRITE DOWN WHAT THESE PEOPLE WERE DOING”.

As for the written tests, none of the participants found them difficult. Anett, Lili and Balázs, however, mentioned that they caused them some problems: “THE PICTURES WERE VERY BLURRED.” Because, according to Anett, “WE Couldn’T DECIDE WHAT SOMEBODY WAS DOING IN THE PICTURE…SOME OF US, FOR EXAMPLE, DID NOT WRITE THAT THEY ARE SITTING IN THE CINEMA, BUT THEY ARE HUGGING (see Appendix M, task 33, picture H).” The gap-filling reading and writing tasks, such as task 25 or 34 (see Appendix M), were the most familiar to the participants.

All five students said that although self-assessment was not typical of the English classes, they had no difficulties with it, because, as Robi formulated it, “IF IT IS REQUIRED IT CAN BE DONE.” Lili said that they “SOMETIMES DO IT IN OTHER SUBJECTS”. Lili, Anett and Béla mentioned that self-assessment was “CLEAR” because Anikó always read aloud the correct answers, then they read their solutions and, as Anett put it, “IF IT WAS SIMILAR WE COULD TICK IT, IF IT WASN’T SHE SAID WE COULD NOT.” Béla also added that in listening task 12 (see Appendix M) “IT WASN’T CLEAR WHETHER WE HAVE TO PUT A TICK OR A SCORE. SO FINALLY WE PUT TICKS.” The interviews, however, also revealed that not everything was so straightforward concerning students’ self-assessment. In theory, during the oral tasks the students were to put a tick if they thought their own responses were correct. But, as it turned out, during piloting these tasks they did it the other way around (see Appendix M, task 42). According to Balázs’ report, “WE PUT A TICK HERE, IF OUR
PARTNER COULD GUESS IT [which picture he was describing]”. Except for Robi, they all liked the idea of assessing their own performance. Robi’s problem was that the class in which they carried out these tasks was the last one on that day, and he “WAS VERY TIRED AND HUNGRY. I DID NOT WANT TO FIGURE OUT IF IT WAS CORRECT OR NOT. SO I WROTE 2 [the maximum score] OR 0 [the minimum score] EVERYWHERE.” He also added that “SOME OF US THOUGHT THAT OUCH, IT IS NOT ANIKÓ WHO WILL CHECK IT, WE HAVE TO DO IT. THEN I WILL WRITE 2 [the maximum score] EVERYWHERE TO FOOL THEM.”

7.3.4 Piloting the oral tasks

Each student participated twice with different partners and similar, but not the same tasks (see Table 7.1). There were four oral tasks: 1) 99 questions (see Appendix E), 2) picture description (see Appendix F and G), 3) story-telling (see Appendix H and I) and 4) spot the difference (see Appendix J and K). All of them were meaning-focused and required pair-work. The topics of the tasks were, for example, travelling, fishing, pets, weather and in the library. In each case, self-assessment was required of the participants. Turn turn-taking was automatic, because it was included in the task rules. The partners were required to listen to and understand each other, because otherwise they could not carry out the task.

After each task I asked the participants what they thought of the task, what caused them difficulties and / or what was easy in them. After they finished with all the four tasks, I inquired about which one they liked the most and why; which one was the easiest and the most difficult and why.

7.3.4.1 The 99 questions (task 41)

The 99 questions seemed to enjoy general popularity among the participants because these questions were, as they all put it, “EASY” and “BASIC QUESTIONS”. Robi, one of the weaker students, added that he had liked this task because “WE DIDN’T HAVE TO THINK A LOT TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER”. When Balázs and Anett worked together they considered the 99 questions (see Appendix E) the easiest and the best task. Anett’ reason was that “YOU COULDN’T MAKE A MISTAKE….AND IF WE DID NOT KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT
OUR PARTNER WE NOW HAD A CHANCE TO GET TO KNOW IT.” Balázs liked it the most because it was “THE EASIEST” since they did not have to “BREAK OUR NECK TO ANSWER THE QUESTION WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE COLOUR?” Lili and Robi liked that “YOU COULD CHOOSE FROM A LOT OF QUESTIONS”. With a few exceptions, for example, “What does your favourite teacher teach?” or “When can you go to a museum”, the students understood and could answer the questions easily. For Robi the question ‘Which animal lives in trees?’ was “DIFFICULT, BECAUSE, I COULD NOT EVEN ANSWER IT IN HUNGARIAN.” The question, “What is the easiest word for you in English to spell?”, also proved challenging for the participants, because, as Balázs put it, “I DON’T USUALLY THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS”.

When Robi and Béla worked in pairs they either showed the number of the questions they drew to each other or read it aloud; therefore, they could read the question on their list before they answered it. The same was the case with Lili and Robi. However, Anett and Balázs gave answers without reading the questions first. When Béla and Balázs formed a pair, Béla sometimes had a glimpse at the questions, but Balázs never tried to read them before giving an answer.

As for self-assessment, the participating students did a good job. They accurately assessed their performance. However, Anikó’s fear that “STUDENTS CANNOT REALLY DECIDE IF THAT SENTENCE WAS GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT OR NOT.” was confirmed. When they assessed themselves they disregarded the grammatical rules, and concentrated on whether the meaning of their answers was appropriate. Therefore, for example, Robi ticked his answer, “Is the chemistry and this.”, to the question of “What is your favourite subject?”. It was interesting that, at first, the best and also the most confident student, Balázs, asked me if his answer had been correct, although I explained them at the beginning of the task that they themselves had to decide if their answer was correct or not.

7.3.4.2 Picture description (task 42)

The participants completed two different picture description tasks. In one of them a girl was travelling by various vehicles (see Appendix F); while in the other pictures (see Appendix G) they had to describe different jobs, for example, a nurse, a sailor or a tailor. All the students considered the latter more challenging. As Lili formulated it, “I COULDN’T ALWAYS EXPRESS MYSELF, BECAUSE THE WORDS DIDN’T COME TO MY MIND
Sometimes.” The pictures depicting, as Balázs put it, “interesting jobs”, such as watchmaker, sailor and shoemaker, caused the most difficulties. He also added that “This one [pictures of various professions] was different….but still easy. …because if we say ship then it is picture g, if we say making clothes then it is picture i.” According to Anett the pictures depicting jobs were “good. Because we could find out what was in them.”. However, when Béla and Balázs worked together they could not decide if there was a tailor or an architect in picture I (see Appendix G). Béla also had a problem with another picture. He stated that “this task was easy. But I couldn’t always describe these jobs. Because the picture was not very straightforward. Though, I only had a problem with this one” [pointing at picture F, see Appendix G]. The other version of the task, which depicted a girl on various vehicles and animals, presented no difficulties to the participants. As for self-assessment, two of the students misunderstood what exactly they had to do. The instruction emphasised that “Put a tick if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture” (see Appendix F and G). Balázs correctly explained me that “I put a tick when I could describe the picture and a cross when I couldn’t”. However, when I asked him why he had put a cross next to picture I, (see Appendix F), his reason was that Annett could not find out which picture he had talked about. Annett also claimed that she “put a tick when Balázs guessed the letter of the picture correctly”. In contrast, Lili and Robi understood the instruction properly, and acted accordingly. Similarly to the previous task, during self-assessment the students did not focus on whether what they had said was grammatically correct, but if it properly described the picture they chose. Therefore, sentences, such as, “In this picture racing at the motorbike.”, “In this picture Clara riding elephant.” and “In this picture Clara is drive aeroplane”, were also ticked by the participants.

7.3.4.3 Story-telling (Task 43)

The stories the students were asked to tell on the two occasions were different. One of them was about a fly family (see Appendix H), where the mother was expecting a baby. The other one was about a boy, Michael, and his pet mouse, Muesli (see Appendix I). Balázs, Béla and Robi, who told both stories, considered the former task more difficult, because, as Balázs put it, “When the fly was on the phone it could be anybody [whom he talked too].” When Béla and Robi worked together, they believed this was the most difficult task,
because, as Béla formulated it, “THE PICTURES WERE DIFFICULT….IF THE PICTURES WERE MORE CONCRETE THAT WOULD HELP.”. Robi also added that “YOU COULD SAY A FEW THINGS ABOUT THE FIRST THREE PICTURES, BUT THEN I COULDN’T SAY ANYTHING”. Balázs, however, pointed out that he “REALLY ENJOYED THE ACTIVITY BECAUSE I COULD TELL ANYTHING WHAT I IMAGINED, AND IT COULDN’T BE WRONG.” Robi had a contrary opinion and said that “I DON’T LIKE THIS. WHEN YOU SEE WHAT YOU SEE AND THEN YOU HAVE TO TELL IT”. As for the story about the mouse, it was Lili, Robi and Béla’s favourite. Lili’s reason was that “I REALLY LIKED THE PICTURES, AND THAT WE HAD TO TELL A STORY.” Robi liked it because “I COULD TELL THE STORY WELL, BECAUSE THE PICTURES WERE CLEAR……..HOWEVER, IT WAS A BIT STRANGE THAT WE HAD TO SAY THAT HE PUT ITS [the mouse’s] PHOTO ON THE INTERNET”. According to Béla, this story was “MUCH EASIER. …..BUT I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO SAY THAT HE FELT SOMETHING UNDER HIS PILLOW.”

As for self-assessment, when Balázs and Béla worked together they forgot to do it, so I had to remind them. The same was the case when Anett and Balázs formed a pair. Though, Balázs stated that he had not forgotten it, but he thought that “WE WILL STOP TO TICK.”. In contrast, Robi and Lili, and Béla and Robi assessed themselves properly. However, like previously, all students disregarded grammar and concentrated on the meaning of their sentences while assessing themselves.

### 7.3.4.4 Spot-the-difference (Task 44)

In the case of the spot-the-difference activity, the students did not report major differences between the two versions of the task (See Appendix J and K). They all liked it and considered it, as Béla put it, “EASY TO FIND AND TELL THE DIFFERENCES [in English]”. However, Béla and Balázs mentioned that in the picture describing a meadow (see Appendix K), as Béla formulated it, “IT WAS MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND OUT WHAT THE DIFFERENCES MIGHT BE, BECAUSE THERE WERE FEWER THINGS HERE. IT WASN’T SO STRAIGHTFORWARD. IN THE OTHER PICTURE, WE KNEW THAT IF THERE WERE TWO PEOPLE, THEN THERE MUST BE ONE OR THREE IN THE OTHER ONE.” When Robi was doing this task he “WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT MIGHT BE THE DIFFERENCES. FOR EXAMPLE, IN ONE OF THE PICTURES THE BOOKSHELVES
MAY BE ONLY HALF FULL, OR THE WINDOW MAY BE ON THE OTHER SIDE.” When Lili and Robi worked in a pair, they stated that this was the easiest task (see Appendix K) because, as Lili formulated it, “HERE, WE COULD EXPRESS OURSELVES BEST. BECAUSE WE HAD TO DESCRIBE WHAT WAS IN THE PICTURE, AND OUR PARTNER ALSO DESCRIBED WHAT WAS IN HIS PICTURE.” In this case, the students assessed themselves by comparing the three differences they had found with their partners’.

7.4 Discussion

7.4.1. Classroom and assessment practices

7.4.1.1. Findings on the teacher and the classroom observations

Although the two teachers volunteering to participate in the study should have been informed in more detail about the exact procedure of the research beforehand, their vehement resentment about being observed and interviewed about their classroom practice was surprising. It was especially so in the case of Lenke who was also a mentor working with university students. This meant that her classes were observed by pre-service teachers on a regular basis. Thus, she was supposedly used to being observed and discussing, as she herself put it, her “METHODS AND TEACHING PRACTICE”. Although I acted respectfully and emphasised how grateful I was for their participation, Lenke seemed to be so threatened and offended that she refused to participate further in the study without considering my answer to her grievances.

Anikó’s reaction was less sharp. She was also upset; however, her displeasure seemed to originate more from the fact that she felt slightly misled. Therefore, after I apologised and explained why the sufficient information had not reached them, she finally agreed to cooperate. Still, my request to observe one of her classes seemed to worry her, although she was to specify which one I could visit. Her idea that I should come back and observe another class because the first time, as she formulated it, I would “NOT SEE ANYTHING ABOUT THEM [the students]”, however, seemed to put her at ease.

The first class I observed was an eye-opener. When Anikó told me before my observation that “I CANNOT SHOW YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THESE STUDENTS TODAY; WHETHER THEY WILL PARTICIPATE OR NOT; YOU WILL NOT SEE ANYTHING ABOUT THEM” it was difficult to imagine how that could happen, unless they
were to write a test. I was proved wrong. The whole class of 45 minutes was devoted to a frontal oral activity, which was based on a home assignment. The students mostly did nothing else but shouted in or read aloud the words they had previously collected at home in connection with the topic of ‘traffic’, and completed their lists with new words whenever it was necessary. Those who came up with unfamiliar words did have the opportunity to use English freely and explain the meanings of these words, which most of them did really well. But the rest took the easy way out and rather gave the Hungarian equivalent without the teacher encouraging or helping them to use the English language.

Though children usually enjoy and are good at learning new words, teachers should always make sure that these tasks have a communicative value and are placed in a context (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, pp. 27-28). The context, which is essential for children for “effective language acquisition” (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 5) and “to internalize these items of language” (McKay, 2006, p. 42), was, however, missing from this long activity. Although the topic of traffic was age-appropriate, the teacher did not take the opportunity to draw on the students’ experience and, for example, discuss how they usually got to school, or whether they had ever travelled by a plane, “CRUISER” or “FERRY”. She only seemed to strive to compile a long list of words that was as comprehensive as possible.

Young learners’ attention span is fairly limited (McKay, 2006, p. 6). Therefore, teachers should keep activities short. Interesting and engaging tasks can motivate children to participate and pay attention (McKay, 2006, p. 41). Spending a whole, 45-minute class with collecting words proved neither short nor interesting: this was reflected in the students’ behaviour, as they lost interest and started to talk and fidget towards the end of the class.

On those few occasions when the students had an opportunity to use English Anikó did not provide them with feedback on their performance. She mainly asked for more words that could go under the various headings of the spidergram. She checked if all the students were familiar with certain words, and, if it was necessary, asked the students to explain the meaning of new vocabulary items.

In the first 30 minutes of the second class I observed, the students carried out a motivating oral task. They were to give a presentation in pairs about an object they invented. However, as it later turned out, these presentations had been written previously by the students, and then corrected by Anikó. Therefore, the students’ opportunity to use the language freely was again compromised. Except for one case, neither during nor after the presentations did Anikó take the opportunity to encourage the students to use the target language in context by
asking further questions or inviting the classmates to inquire more about these objects after the
presentations, but said “What else have we got for today?”. Initiating discussion would have
also allowed for all the other students to participate in classwork and not only to listen to their
peers.

Giving immediate feedback about students’ performance is very important so that they
know in what area they should improve (Alderson 2005, p. 208). Besides thanking the students
for their performance, Anikó failed to comment on their presentations. One reason could be that
she thought that since she had already checked the written version, the students did not need
feedback. The other reason might be that, as she formulated it in the interview explaining why
she did not give feedback to those underperforming on a task, the students “CAN SEE
ANYWAY THAT IT DID NOT GO WELL”. One exception was when she noted to one of the
‘speakers’ that he had “SEEMED TO SAY MORE THE OTHER DAY”, which further
reinforced the message that they were better off learning the original text by heart than taking
the risk of expressing their thoughts in English spontaneously. The comment also indicated that
this had not been the first time this student gave this presentation.

The remaining 15 minutes of this class was devoted to revision. They discussed a story
from the coursebook, which they had covered in the previous lessons, in frontal class work.
Anikó was asking questions in English and the students were answering them in English while
looking at their books. The same question-answer sequence would have probably been more
suitable in pairs to give everybody a chance to talk. The class was finished off with two
activities testing new vocabulary. McKay (2006, p. 192) pointed out that “vocabulary is best
assessed in an integrated way through language use in language use tasks”. However, both tasks
required the students to memorize words, expressions and sentences out-of-context, and had
little communicative value. In addition, the second activity was a competition of two students;
whereas, all the others did nothing, but listened to their peers. Competitions are not appropriate
for assessment, since only the winner’s performance is noted and rewarded, which is
demotivating for all the other learners.

To sum up, the findings of these two classroom observations were in line with the results
of other similar studies (e.g. Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009; Nikolov, 2008; Nikolov, 2003a;
Nikolov, 1999b). Although the topics were age-appropriate and the activities had the potential
to encourage students to use English creatively and freely and, thus, to develop their
communicative skills, the teacher failed to act upon these opportunities. The first class was
devoted to only one task which was neither intrinsically motivating nor cognitively challenging
for these students. During the two classes I observed four out of the five activities were implemented in frontal class work. Although the students gave the presentations in pairs, Anikó did not attempt to involve those students who did not present their inventions. Therefore, they did nothing else but listen to what they had heard in the previous class. As for the feedback, the students received hardly any information as to the strengths and weaknesses of their performance.

7.4.1.2 The teacher’s view on the students’ language knowledge and her classroom practice

While describing her students’ abilities and language knowledge, Anikó was thinking in terms of marks, “THERE ARE STUDENTS WHO HAVE MARK 5, BUT SOME OF THEM HAVE MARK 3 OR 4”, and used expressions such as “ABOVE AVERAGE”, “VERY GOOD” and “AT A LITTLE LOWER LEVEL”. She applied loose and fuzzy terms for evaluating her learners’ knowledge but no clear criteria. She compared students to one another and, hence, applied normative assessment, which, however, does not give information on their progress and how well they met the prescribed learning outcomes. While talking about the students who could use the target language fluently and creatively Anikó pointed out that they could communicate “FLUENTLY, BUT NOT WITHOUT MISTAKES.”, indicating that she considered accuracy particularly important, though in ELL the emphasis should be on fluency.

In terms of motivation to learn English, Anikó pointed out the key role the students’ “WELL-EDUCATED” parents and “GOOD SOCIAL BACKGROUND” played in their high level of motivation. Interestingly, she failed to mention the significance of what was going on in the classroom, which is, though decreasing by learners’ age, still considerable in the upper grades (Hardi, 2004; Nikolov, 1999a). Similarly, when it came to the “LESS ENTHUSiastic” students Anikó did not consider the relevance of the English classes and attributed these students’ demotivation to other factors: they were probably less able and, therefore, “HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE GRAMMAR, OR ARE NOT VERY GOOD AT THE OTHER SUBJECTS EITHER.” This answer documents again that Anikó assigned great importance to grammar in language learning, since, according to her, students can lose their motivation if they cannot grasp it.

Since children’s language learning development is relatively slow, the maintenance of their motivation is crucial (Nikolov, 2011). Teachers can accomplish this by providing
interesting, short and varied activities. The emphasis should be placed on meaning rather than form. Grammar should be presented in meaningful contexts and not be the sole object of instruction (McKay, 2006, p. 42; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 25). Anikó’s report on her classroom activities showed that she often relied on the coursebook, Project 3 (Hutchinson, 2003), which is a British publication. The disadvantage of a foreign textbook is that it does not take into account the local circumstances and the specific needs of the given students. Anikó regularly used supplementary activities “TO SUPPORT WHAT’S IN THE BOOK”. She claimed that grammar and vocabulary were the two most important elements of an FL. Therefore, the students often practiced grammar, although they did not like it. Anikó seemed to be aware of what kind of activities her students liked to do, for example, role-play, pair-work and challenging tasks: “THEY LIKE TO COMPETE, AND FEEL THE CHALLENGE, SO THAT THEY CAN SHOW WHAT THEY CAN DO, AND THEY ALSO LIKE ROLE-PLAYS.” However, her responses showed that the core of the classes was not made up of such tasks.

Children differ greatly in terms of their rate of development (Mckay, 2006, p. 5). That is why it is essential in early FL education to make sure that their individual needs are considered and catered for. Otherwise, the more able learners lose motivation, because they get bored, while the less successful students become demotivated, because they lag behind and cannot experience success. In the interview, Anikó reported that she was aware of the differences in her students’ abilities; hence, she let the faster and brighter ones do additional tasks while she dealt with the others. However, she found satisfying these varying needs “ON A DAILY BASIS” time- and energy-consuming. Therefore, she rarely gave her students extra tasks to practise at home, since, as she pointed out, “IT WOULD MEAN THAT I HAVE TO FOLLOW UP AND ASSESS WHAT THEY HAVE DONE”. She thought, however, that private classes could do this job for her, since, as she formulated it in the interview, a child could get individual development there if he needed “SOMEBODY TO PAY ATTENTION ONLY TO HIM”. Though, she regarded these additional classes useful only if students did not use them as an excuse for not paying attention, which, according to her, they tended to do when they took private English classes. This means she was aware of the controversy of not managing learners’ individual differences at school, but relying on extracurricular tutoring paid for by parents.
7.4.1.3 Assessment in class

As for assessment practices, the findings of this follow-up study were in accordance with the results of the first phase of the large-scale project (discussed in chapter 6). For Anikó progress testing was primarily about checking and correcting tasks. However, as Alderson (2005, p. 208) pointed out, mere test scores bear little information on learners’ strengths and weaknesses. Nikolov (2011) emphasised that young learners should see they were progressing and achieving higher levels; therefore, teachers’ feedback should be regular, individualised, stimulating and should follow learners’ performance. In Anikó’s classroom, though, the students received detailed feedback only at the end of the semester or a larger topic.

Children are very sensitive to criticism and may feel intimidated if feedback is given in front of their peers (McKay, 2006, p. 9; Nikolov, 1999a). Despite this fact Anikó gave not only positive but negative feedback to her students in front of the whole class, because ”THERE IS NOTHING HURTFUL ABOUT IT”. Similarly to the participating teachers of the first phase of the large-scale project, Anikó only rewarded high achievements, whereas less successful students were left with no feedback at all. This practice has several drawbacks. Firstly, less able students do not receive information as to what domains they need to improve to get to the next developmental stage in their language proficiency. Secondly, lack of feedback also means negative feedback since it suggests that their performance was not worth mentioning. This is especially demotivating for children who are very sensitive to failure and criticism.

Anikó failed to go into details about students’ weaknesses when she took home their exercise books to check what they had done. The holistic comments she wrote, for example, “UNSATISFACTORY, AND YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT”, gave hardly any clue to the students as to what they should practice or improve. In addition, if tests are marked by teachers and error correction is not part of the learning process, learners do not benefit from seeing their tests with errors corrected.

As Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2003) expressed with regards to young learners’ self-assessment:

Self-assessment is extremely important in that it promotes invaluable learning skills such as monitoring one’s own progress, reflecting on one’s abilities and learning styles, and setting personal goals. It also gives children an insight into the assessment criteria used by others. Furthermore, the children benefit from feeling that they have a say in their assessment. This gives them a certain sense
Anikó wanted to keep this “sense of empowerment” (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p. 10) for herself; she believed that “IT IS DONE PROPERLY ONLY WHEN I DO THE ASSESSMENT.” This answer explicitly states that she wanted to be in control all the time and did not support learner autonomy, which is one of the long term aims of language education. One of the five participating students adopted Anikó’s practice when he claimed, “IT’S [assessment] NOT MY JOB.” Anikó was aware of the importance of self-assessment. As she formulated it, it could help learners to “SEE WHERE THEY STAND. SO THEY DO NOT OVER- OR UNDERESTIMATE THEMSELVES AND IDENTIFY THE AREAS THEY CAN STILL IMPROVE. THIS IS HOW THEY CAN DEVELOP THEMSELVES.” However, she rarely applied self-assessment strategies because she did not consider them “REALISTIC” enough. She believed that “LETTING THEM TO ASSESS … THEMSELVES, THAT’S NOT A GOOD IDEA”. Anikó’s objection to students’ self-assessment might unconsciously arise from the fact that young learners need “guidance” (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p. 10), in other words, some kind of criteria on the basis of which they can form their judgement on their own performance. Since Anikó did not apply such criteria, her learners could not be expected to know how to do so. Anikó formulated a similar idea when she said “I THINK THEY ARE NOT AT THE LEVEL OF BEING ABLE TO MAKE SUCH DECISIONS FOR A 100 PERCENT”.

The role of peer-assessment is similar to that of self-assessment. They allow children to “gain further insight and responsibility in applying assessment criteria” (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p. 11). In addition, it fosters a sense of community in the classroom and makes students realize that they can learn from their peers not only from the teacher (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou, 2003, p. 11). However, Anikó believed that “LETTING THEM TO ASSESS EACH OTHER… THAT’S NOT A GOOD IDEA”.

The results regarding tasks used to assess oral skills were in accordance with the findings of earlier Hungarian studies (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008). Instead of encouraging creative language use Anikó required the students to cram words and texts, thus relying on memory rather than creative use in oral skills. Moreover, when some of the students tried to talk “RIGHT OFF THE TOP OF THEIR HEAD”, i.e. use the FL freely to express an idea, because they had not learned it by heart, Anikó considered it “UNACCEPTABLE”. She
also added that “THOSE WHO ARE MORE ABLE AND CREATIVE MAY CHANGE IT [the text] HOWEVER THEY CAN.” This distinction between low and high achievers can demotivate the less able children and, thus, make them lag further behind.

Scaffolding YLLs is an important feature of DA. It can allow children to solve the task they could not do alone, and, thus, to feel success and development. By providing support teachers can also reveal prospective development (Poehner, 2008a, p. 5), and, hence, can plan the syllabus accordingly. During the introductory phase of a new topic Anikó often helped her students by providing them with hints and leading questions: “I’D RATHER LEAD THEM TO THE SOLUTION.” However, when it came to progress testing she rarely gave them assistance.

7.4.1.4 Practising

Identifying students’ strengths and weaknesses and giving feedback should always be followed by giving them the opportunity to practise, since, as Lidz and Gindis (2003, p. 100) observed, assessment, instruction and remediation “are inseparable”. Anikó applied two techniques of practice: she either involved the whole group in frontal classwork in a lock-step fashion, even if only a few students needed remediation; or instructed the child what to practice at home. The problem with the former one is that it disregards individual needs. Therefore, the more able students can easily get bored of doing something they can do well and, thus, lose motivation, whereas lower achievers do not have a chance to catch up with the others and may be left behind. The latter technique Anikó applied required her to “FOLLOW UP AND ASSESS WHAT THEY HAVE DONE” at home. She did not use it frequently, although, this would probably have been more effective. In terms of the amount of practice, she tailored it either to the needs of “A CHILD WITH AVERAGE SKILLS” or “THE 80 PER CENT OF THE STUDENTS”. If there were a few learners who still did not “UNDERSTAND IT”, Anikó considered it their fault and gave up on them, because they “DID NOT DO THE HOMEWORK” or pay attention.
7.4.1.5 The teacher’s feedback on the diagnostic tests

Anikó’s opinion on the diagnostic tests she had tried out was quite general; she did not go into details, as one would expect of an experienced EFL teacher with sound methodological knowledge. She said that the tasks, both oral and written, were “QUITE GOOD…..BUT THEY DID NOT EXCEED THEIR [the students’] ABILITIES.” Some of the listening tasks, however, proved to be challenging, because they only did the listening activities of the coursebook, which she considered too “STERILE”. According to McKay (2006, p. 209), authentic samples of language should be gradually introduced as early as possible in the early language classroom. Anikó frequently emphasised that they had already covered the topics or grammatical structures certain tasks required, and added that this attributed to the fact that the students could easily tackle the tasks.

Anikó’s main problem with the tasks was the quality of the pictures. In the picture description tasks, both written and oral, she often found it difficult to find out what the characters were exactly doing. This meant that there was ambiguity, and more than one correct solution, depending on what the students saw in the pictures. However, instead of taking this as an excellent opportunity to initiate English discussion about who saw what, in other words to encourage real communication, she disliked that it made correcting and checking more complicated and “LENGTHY”. It seemed that multiple solutions caused her trouble.

When it comes to selecting appropriate tasks for YLLs, teachers should make sure that they are not too easy or too difficult. Otherwise, children easily give up and lose motivation. Anikó preferred “MORE CHALLENGING” tasks. That is why she liked the most a reading comprehension task (task 23 see Appendix M), which the students considered one of the most difficult ones because it contained, as Anikó put it, “WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS THAT THEY HAVEN’T MET BEFORE”.

As for the oral tasks, Anikó’s favourite was telling a story because it allowed students to stretch their imagination and be creative. She claimed that creativity was important because students could show “WHAT KIND OF IDEAS THEY HAVE, OR HOW THEY CAN DEMONSTRATE IT IN THE LANGUAGE, SINCE THAT’S WHAT MAKES IT MORE ENJOYABLE, THE FACT THAT THEY CAN SHOW THEIR PERSONALITY.” Interestingly, however, in class when the students retold a text or a story from the coursebook she wanted them to stick to the book and not to let their imagination run away. Similarly, in the picture description task when the students were creative and came up with more than one solution she considered it problematic. The fact that she attached special importance to grammar
was further reflected when she stated that her students had done really well during the oral activities, because they were familiar with the grammatical structures these tasks required.

7.4.1.6 Assessment of the students’ performance while doing the diagnostic tests

The answers Anikó gave in this part of the interview shed some light on why she did not provide her students with more opportunities to practice free language use. While trying out the diagnostic tests with her students she favoured activities where there was only one correct answer, which was preferably “A NUMBER” or “A TICK”, because otherwise “THE ASSESSMENT CAUSED MORE DIFFICULTIES” and was time-consuming. In tasks where there were several possible answers, for example “99 questions”, Anikó found it challenging to apply the criteria given in the scoring guide, which laid down clearly which sentence was worth how many scores (see Teachers’ booklet Appendix N). In order to circumvent these “DIFFICULTIES” in class, she usually instructed her students which grammatical structures she wanted them to use in their answers. She sometimes applied this technique even when using the diagnostic tests and convinced “THE STUDENTS NOT TO OVERCOMPLICATE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURES. SO THEY SHOULD USE THIS STRUCTURE: THIS IS A MAN WHO DOES THIS AND THAT. AND THIS IS WHERE THEY SHOULD STOP”. By telling students how to describe the pictures she prevented them from using the language freely and also from committing mistakes by doing so. Her replies also suggested that she had not spent much time studying the scoring guide, because she proposed that it should be established whether the teacher could ACCEPT IF THEY [the students] SAY TWO OR THREE WORDS”, which is exactly what the guide specified (see Appendix N).

One of the differences between criterion- and norm-referenced testing is that the former compares student achievement to a preset of criteria, whereas the latter to other students’ performance. During the interview Anikó used these terms interchangeably. Although the assessment of these diagnostic tests was clearly criterion-based, one of her concerns with the scoring guide was that it did not take into account the differences in her students’ language knowledge: “FOR SOME STUDENTS A THREE-WORD SENTENCE WOULD BE AN EXCELLENET PERFORMANCE, WHEREAS OTHERS CAN SAY FIVE OR SIX WORD LONG SENTENCES”. She also pointed out that the scores students got were not converted into marks, which is a feature typical of norm-referenced testing widely used in Hungarian
schools. She did that despite the fact that she herself realized that this assessment procedure provided more details concerning the students’ performance.

7.4.1.7 Scaffolding while the students were doing the diagnostic tests

According to the dynamic approach to assessment, the teacher or a more knowledgeable peer, should continuously provide support while students do a task, since this is the only way to reveal not only matured abilities, but abilities that are in progress (Poehner, 2008a, p. 5). The aim of assistance is not only to make students complete the task but to develop their ability (Lantolf & Poehner, 2006, p. 92). While talking about scaffolding Anikó said that she had helped her students before they started to do the tasks by making sure that they understood what they had to do. However, she did not provide, as she formulated it, “LINGUISTIC SUPPORT” that would have helped the students to carry out the tasks. The reason she gave was that it would have compromised the aim of these tests, which was, as she put it, “TO FIND OUT WHAT THE CHILDREN COULD DO”. In other words, according to her, teacher support is not acceptable when the aim is progress testing. Anikó had similar ideas about peer assistance. Contrary to the principles of the dynamic approach, she believed that peer assistance was also inconsistent with the procedure of assessment and was to be avoided during testing.

7.4.2 Interviews with the students

7.4.2.1 General information on language learning

As for motivation to learn English, the participating students’ answers reflected the results of other studies (Carreira, 2006; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore, 2011; Nikolov, 1995). According to these findings, initially, children want to learn an FL for intrinsic purposes. Later on, however, this tendency starts to fade away and instrumental reasons gradually emerge. In my study, the two girls liked learning English for the sake of the language, whereas the three boys gave more practical reasons, such as because it is “UNDERSTOOD IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD.”

Out of school language use was relatively frequent among these children, which was probably due to the influence of, as Anikó phrased it, the students’ “WELL-EDUCATED”
parents and “GOOD SOCIAL BACKGROUND”. Except for Robi, who was one of the ‘weaker’ students and whose parents considered English less important, they all read books or watched films in English. But even Robi used English out of school once in a while, when he played computer games.

The lack of opportunities in class to use the FL freely seemed to take its toll on the students’ idea of language knowledge. Out of the five participants only one, Béla, judged his proficiency on the basis of his experience with actual language use. Béla believed he was quite good at English, because once he had been able to use it successfully to make himself understood and solve a problem. The others based their opinions solely on their school grades or performance in class or at competitions, although they all used English out-of-school as well.

7.4.2.2 Classroom activities

In young learners’ methodology, the emphasis should be on communicative activities in real-life-like situations. Children should learn vocabulary in context, not in isolation. They should gain knowledge of the grammar implicitly rather than explicitly, because the latter would be cognitively too demanding for them. In addition, classroom activities should encourage production and creative use of language, and learner independence should also be provided by teachers (Brumen, Cagran, & Rixon, 2009). The participating students’ report on what kinds of tasks they usually did in class was in accordance with what Anikó said about the classroom activities. They came from the coursebook or were, as Anett put it, “A LITTLE BIT SIMILAR” to those tasks, and often form-focused. Though YLLs would benefit more from more varied and meaning-centred tasks, the participants seemed to be contented with what they got. According to them, one of the most frequent activities was gap-filling. These tasks focus on grammar and vocabulary, and are easy and quick to check and correct, which is probably the reason for its regular use in Anikó’s classroom. As has been mentioned earlier, YLLs are in favour of vocabulary activities. However, teachers should always make sure that it takes place in a context so that they can internalize the words. According to the students’ report, vocabulary tests where context was not provided were also typical in class.

As for activities that are not in the coursebook, all the participants mentioned the reading diary: they had to read a book in English, do a few additional tasks and write a summary. Its positive influence is reflected in the fact that three out of the five participating students read books in English out of school, too. It is, however a pity that Anikó did not utilise more the
opportunities these books could have offered in terms of oral activities, for example, discussions on the various aspects of the stories or acting out certain parts of the stories.

The oral tasks the students indicated, for example, cramming a text or answering questions in a lockstep fashion, had hardly any communicative value and did not allow for the creative use of the English language. Even when some students tried to tell the story or the text from the coursebook in their own words Anikó discouraged them from using English freely and acting independently by requiring the original text for next time.

When the students were asked to indicate tasks that they liked the most they could hardly come up with any other than the ones in the coursebook. This suggests that either the students did not remember or, most probably, how little Anikó relied on other teaching resources and, thus, failed to break the monotony of using the same type of tasks all the time. As one of the students put it when asked to name the most and the least frequent activities, “THERE ARE NO SUCH ACTIVITIES. WHAT WE DO, WE DO REGULARLY”.

7.4.2.3 Assessment and feedback in class

YLLs should be encouraged to assess themselves and their peers, as the aim is to develop students’ autonomy, which is, however, not fostered by the Hungarian educational system. The students reported that they hardly ever applied self- and peer-assessment in class. They mentioned two occasions when their opinion was asked about their or their classmates’ performance. However, except for one student, they liked the idea of assessing themselves and their peers. One of them could justify it pedagogically: “WE WOULD HAVE A BETTER IDEA WHAT WE NEED TO IMPROVE THAN WHEN WE ARE ONLY GIVEN A CORRECTION.” According to Balázs, these methods would compensate for teacher favouritism, when Anikó “DOES NOT TELL WHAT’S REALISTIC…..BECAUSE THERE ARE STUDENTS WHOM SHE FAVOURS”. He believed that sometimes peers’ assessment would have been more realistic. Robi, the one who did not want to assess himself or his peers, thought assessment was not his but the teacher’s job.

As for what feedback the students got, they described a variety of techniques, some of which contradicted one another. Two stated that during an oral test the teacher took notes, but after it she only said, “It was good,” without further detail. Three students claimed that the teacher read out her notes and told them what to pay attention to next time. This implies that Anikó did not always provide the students with information about the strong and weak points
of their performance and they had no idea what to improve. The two ‘good’ students claimed they did not really receive any feedback on their performance because they did not make mistakes. According to them, however, Anikó commented on the lower achievers’ performance more often. This practice suggests that in her class feedback mainly focused on what the students could not do, and rarely on what they did well. The students’ report also suggested that Anikó concentrated on accuracy while giving information on their performance. It also happened that her feedback was too general or fuzzy and the students did not understand it. Their report also revealed that when she evaluated their classroom performance her feedback was again too general; she only rewarded top achievers, which practice can demotivate less successful students.

In DA, it is important that teachers attend to their learners and ‘diagnose’ their language competence individually (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004). However, according to the participating students, Anikó very rarely gave them feedback on a one to one basis. When she assessed their individual written work, she corrected their mistakes and gave very general feedback to the whole class. These general points provided the individual students with little information as to which language domain needed further practising in order to improve their language knowledge.

In an assessment for learning environment, a key issue is that teachers are to scaffold their learners’ development. According to the participating students, it was not typical of Anikó to help them while writing a test. During oral performance since she expected them to cram a text, the support she gave them mainly aimed at jogging their memory rather than developing their ability by providing hints or leading questions.

Giving students opportunities to practise what causes them difficulties is an essential element of assessment. It is also important that these opportunities are individually tailored to young learners’ needs. Otherwise, they easily get bored and their attention starts wandering. The students indicated that Anikó either involved the whole class in practise or advised them to do so at home and “ASK FOR SOMEBODY’S ASSISTANCE”, i.e. practice without her supervision. This meant that if only a few of them had problems with a particular language domain everybody had to practise it. Interestingly, even the students could see the downside of this practice and came up with a solution. They wanted the teacher to differentiate and teach them at their individual level: “SHE [the teacher] SHOULD SIT ASIDE WITH THAT STUDENT, WHILE THE OTHERS DO SOMETHING ELSE.”
7.4.2.4 The students’ feedback on the diagnostic tests

The oral diagnostic tests the students tried out with Anikó were mostly unfamiliar to them. However, they remembered doing activities similar to the 99 questions, when they had to write and then ask their partner questions. They also mentioned that they sometimes described pictures. However, the students’ report suggested that during these tasks the focus was on practising grammatical rules rather than on using the language for communicative purposes: “WHEN WE DISCUSSED present continuous THERE WAS THIS EXERCISE WHERE THERE WERE PICTURES, AND WE DESCRIBED WHAT THE PEOPLE IN THE PICTURE WERE DOING AT THAT MOMENT.”

Similarly to Anikó, the only difficulty the students had with the written tasks was that some of the pictures were, as they put it, “BLURRED”. This really meant that in some cases more than one description of the picture was appropriate. In the classroom of communicative language teaching, this should not cause any problems. Multiple solutions can increase the opportunities for learners to use the FL creatively and come up with as many ideas as they can, which is one of the aims of early language teaching.

Though the students hardly ever carried out self-assessment in class they claimed they did not find it difficult to follow the instruction and assess their performance. However, according to one of the students’ report, when they were asked to do it, some of them did not take it seriously and wrote the maximum score everywhere, indicating how little importance they attributed to their own opinion.

7.4.3 Piloting the oral tasks

Each oral task fulfilled the requirements of ELL and was suitable for diagnostic assessment. They did not inquire about linguistic forms, but focused on meaning. The students used the FL to give and elicit information, in other words, to use English for communicative purposes. Except for the story about the fly family where the mother was expecting her second child, the topics of the tasks were found to be age-appropriate. The findings of Hungarian studies (Nikolov, 1999b, 2003a, 2008) showed that the majority of activities were carried out in a lockstep fashion where the teacher asked questions and the students answered them. In these tasks the participants worked in pairs and assessed themselves. The students were motivated to understand their peers, because otherwise they could not carry out the task.
7.4.3.1 The 99 questions

The 99 questions task delivered on its promise, because all of the students found it easy and enjoyed doing it. They liked that they could choose from a lot of questions, and that it required little effort on their part to understand and answer these questions. The question, “What is the easiest word for you to spell?” proved to be unusual, because, as one of them formulated it, they did not think about such things. One of the participants pointed out that during the task she also enjoyed using the English language to get information about her peer. The only problem was that some of the participants read the question on the list before answering it. Therefore, teachers should make sure that either the partners have a different list of questions, or they show the number of the question after their partner has answered it.

7.4.3.2 Picture description

The picture description task in which there were representatives of various jobs (see Appendix G) proved to be challenging for the participants. The reason they gave was that they lacked some of the necessary vocabulary to describe the pictures. They pinpointed those professions that are less wide-spread nowadays, such as sailor, watchmaker and shoemaker. Giving proof of his excellent strategic competence, one of the ‘good’ students, Balázs, however, stated that he had no problem at all with this task, because it was enough to name correctly one object from the picture to identify which picture his partner was describing. Similarly to Anikó, the quality of the pictures was an issue for the students. Instead of describing what they saw in the picture they were worried that their description was incorrect, because they did not see precisely what was in the picture. The other task in which the pictures depicted a girl travelling by various vehicles (see Appendix F) posed no difficulty to the participants.

7.4.3.3. Story telling

The participants enjoyed these tasks. Balázs liked this activity because he could let his imagination run wild, and still did the task properly. This is typical of YLLs and often causes headaches to their teachers. However, for Robi, the freedom of saying anything you want was too puzzling. Robi was the only student who did not like self-assessment because he believed that it was not his job, indicating that he had difficulty with learner autonomy. Similarly to the
previous activity, the students found one of the stories, the story of a fly family (see Appendix H) more difficult than the other one. They claimed that the pictures were hard to describe, which, I believe, was due to the fact that the topic of the storyline was not entirely obvious. Young learners do not necessarily know and cannot express in English, what happens when a mother gives birth to a baby and how the first child may feel when the second baby is born. Even if they have experienced jealousy in their life, this story did not work well. The story about Muesli, the pet mouse, who disappeared one day, was, as Béla put it, “MUCH EASIER” and the favourite task of three students.

7.4.3.4 Spot-the-difference

The spot-the-difference activity also enjoyed general popularity and all of the participants considered it easy. Their answers revealed that they had all relied on their strategic competence to a great extent. Even the less successful students could give proof of using this strategy. The participants thought that the picture in which it was easier to extrapolate what the differences could be was easier.

7.4.3.5 The participants’ self-assessment

The participants’ teacher, Anikó, did not support the idea of students’ self-assessment. She thought that their assessment would not be “REALISTIC”, because “STUDENTS CANNOT REALLY DECIDE IF THAT SENTENCE WAS GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT OR NOT.” She believed that when she had tried out the oral tasks her students had ticked everything off if their partner had said something and they had understood it “REGARDLESS OF ITS BEING ACCURATE OR NOT.” When I piloted these oral tasks with the students the findings indicated that it was unusual for the participants to give their own opinion on their performance, which is in accordance with the results of the interviews. While doing the 99 questions task the first time, the best and the most confident learner, Balázs, asked me for help to decide if his answer was correct. In the case of the picture description task, the wording of the instruction confused two of the participants. The students were required to “Put a tick if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture”. Anett and Balázs believed that they could describe the picture if their partner could guess what was in the picture correctly. During story-telling three of the participants forgot to assess their performance the first time, but the second time they
remembered to do so. When, however, the students did carry out self-assessment, they did it well. However, they indeed focused on meaning and neglected accuracy, which is what young learners are supposed to do.

### 7.5 Conclusion

The aim of my study was to find out 1) what kind of oral tasks the EFL teacher used in class in the first six grades of primary school, 2) how they assessed and gave feedback to their students, 3) what the teachers and their students thought of the diagnostic tests they had tried out in a large-scale project, 4) how the teachers assessed their students doing these diagnostic tasks and 5) how the oral tasks worked. The participants included an EFL teacher, Anikó, and five of her seventh graders from a prominent state school in Pécs.

As for the oral tests Anikó used in class to assess her students’ language learning development, the findings revealed that she mostly required the students to cram texts in the coursebook and recite them in class, which was in line with the results of other Hungarian studies on ELL (Bors et al., 2001; Nikolov, 2003a; 2008). When the students used English freely and tried to tell the texts in their own words, she did not appreciate it, but asked them to memorize the original texts for next time. The students’ creative language use was limited even when they presented their own inventions because Anikó wanted them to stick to the written version of their presentations she had edited for them.

The results of the classroom observations and the interviews also showed that Anikó often disregarded the special characteristics of YLLs. The tasks she applied in class were hardly ever intrinsically motivating. They were mainly carried out frontally, although Anikó herself concluded that the students “WOULD LIKE TO DO ACTIVITIES IN PAIRS MORE OFTEN.” Though children’s attention span is short, she did not refrain from devoting a whole class to one activity. Variety did not characterise her classes, as one of the participating children said “WHAT WE DO, WE DO REGULARLY.” The reason for that was probably that the main source of the tasks was the coursebook. Although Anikó claimed that she had regularly supplemented the book, the students’ report revealed that the activities tended to be similar to those in the coursebook and were mainly form-focused. One of the exceptions was the reading diary, which the students enjoyed, and it seemed to have a positive impact: three out of the five participants read books in English out of school. Young learners like learning new words and
expressions, but it is essential that the context is provided, and the task has a communicative
value. The classroom observations and the interviews with the students showed that the opposite
was more typical of the activities Anikó applied to expand students’ vocabulary. In the ELL
classroom, teachers should put the emphasis on meaning, rather than on form. Throughout the
interview it was evident that Anikó attributed particular importance to accuracy. She believed
that “GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY…. BOTH ARE IMPORTANT”.

Although managing a classroom full of active children is difficult, teachers should make
sure that the needs of all the individual learners are met. Children can become demotivated by
activities that are not in line with their abilities, causing boredom and disruptive behaviour.
Although Anikó was aware of the differences in her students’ language knowledge, she did not
regularly accommodate their individual needs. She believed that giving extra tasks and then
giving feedback on them on a daily basis required too much time and energy on her part.
Therefore, usually the whole class practised together, regardless of learners’ needs. She tailored
the amount of practice to the needs of “AN AVERAGE CHILD” she could not specify. It is,
therefore, no surprise that the students themselves expressed their dissatisfaction and suggested
the appropriate technique: “SHE SHOULD SIT ASIDE WITH THAT STUDENT, WHILE
THE OTHERS DO SOMETHING ELSE.”

The results regarding the teacher’s assessment practices were in line with the findings
of the large-scale project (for more details see chapter 6) and international studies carried out
in this field (Butler, 2009b; Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004; Rea-Dickins & Gardner,
2000). While describing the students’ language knowledge, the unclear terms Anikó used
revealed that she had difficulties with capturing her students’ level of abilities. Her feedback
was often too general and did not contain specific information on the strengths and weaknesses
of the students’ performance, suggesting that she did not bear in mind criteria for assessment.
Feedback was often provided in the form of rewards for top performance only and no reward
was given for less good performance. The students hardly ever received individualized
feedback and they did not know in what areas they needed to improve. During assessment
Anikó focused on errors and accuracy rather than fluency or meaning, and what the students
could not do, as opposed to what they could. She did not refrain from giving negative feedback
to her students in front of their peers, although this practice is not conducive to ELL (Mckay,
2006, p. 14). Contrary to Vygotsky’s (1987, p. 211) idea on what you can do with help today,
you can do on your own tomorrow, Anikó believed that if the aim was progress testing, as she
formulated it, “TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY [the students] COULD DO”, no assistance was
acceptable. This belief is in line with the assessment traditions in Hungarian education in
general, not only in FL learning classrooms.

In the classroom of YLLs, self- and peer-assessment play an essential role in the
establishment and development of learning strategies, the main aims of ELL (Nikolov, 2011).
These assessment techniques also encourage children to be conscious of and responsible for
their own learning (McKay, 2006, p. 46), which are also necessary in the sustained process of
eyear FL learning (McKay, 2006, p. 46). Although Anikó understood the positive influence of
self- and peer-assessment, she hardly ever used them because she did not trust her students’
judgement on their own or their peers’ performance. Her concern, which then proved right while
I tried out the oral tasks with the students, was that students disregarded grammatical mistakes
and only concentrated on whether they understood what their classmates had said, in other
words, on the meaning they meant to convey. Hence, she thought that “IT IS DONE
PROPERLY ONLY WHEN I DO THE ASSESSMENT.” As Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou
(2003, p. 99) also stated, although communication is the priority in the ELL classroom, accuracy
does count and also has to be dealt with. However, the focus should be on meaning, especially
if the aim of the task is to assess communicative ability (2003, p. 99), which was the case in
these oral tests. Therefore, the students did what they were supposed to do at this age.

While using the assessment procedures of the diagnostic tasks Anikó thought in terms
of normative and holistic testing following the traditions typical in the Hungarian educational
system. She contemplated that the scoring method of the booklet she tried out did not consider
the differences between students’ language knowledge and that the results were not converted
into marks. Although she realized that it was, as she put it, “MORE NUANCED” and provided
more detailed information on students’ knowledge, she still preferred “MARKS”, i.e. holistic
testing. She mainly had difficulties with those tasks that had multiple solutions, such as the
picture description activities or the 99 questions. In her class, she solved this problem by giving
the students grammatical structures to formulate sentences. In order to make assessment, as she
put it, ”STRAIGHTFORWARD”, she also applied this technique while administering the
diagnostic tests: “I HAD TO MAKE SURE AND CONVINCE THE STUDENTS NOT TO
OVERCOMPLICATE THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTURES. SO THEY SHOULD USE
THIS STRUCTURE: THIS IS A MAN WHO DOES THIS AND THAT. AND THIS IS WHERE
THEY SHOULD STOP”. The interview with Anikó also revealed that she had not properly
studied the scoring guide before using the task. Although the guide included detailed
information on scoring with sample performances, she contemplated that it was not specific enough as to what answers teachers could accept.

Although Anikó was an experienced EFL teacher in a school famous for its language programme, she provided little concrete information as to what exactly she liked or disliked in the diagnostic tests she had tried out with her students. Besides emphasising how easy most of these tasks were and that they had already covered most of the topics and grammatical structures the tests required, she did not go into details regarding how well the tasks had worked with her students. She believed that the students mainly had difficulties with some of the listening tasks, because they were used to listening to the “STERILE” texts of the coursebook. She pinpointed only one problem: the quality of the pictures was not good enough. Therefore, the students came up with varied ideas while describing the pictures. In practice, this means that teachers can have more samples of learners’ language use on the basis of which they can ‘diagnose’ their students’ progress. However, Anikó only saw a disadvantage: creative answers made “CHECKING AND CORRECTING MORE DIFFICULT”.

The students stated that the oral diagnostic tests they tried out with Anikó were mostly unfamiliar to them. According to their report, they did sometimes describe pictures, but the focus tended to be on grammar. As for the writing tasks, similarly to Anikó, the students only indicated the quality of the pictures as a problem. They also believed that it was a negative quality of a task if a picture could be described in various ways.

The oral tasks I piloted with the participants were in line with the principles of testing YLLs. They focused on meaning in a familiar context and had a communicative purpose. The students worked in pairs and assessed themselves, which encourages learners to be conscious of their progress. With one exception, namely, the story of the fly family with the expecting mother in it, the topics proved to be age-appropriate. The students’ reports revealed that the difficulty level of the tasks was appropriately estimated. They were neither too difficult nor easy, but provided enough challenge for the students to be motivated to do them. The participants also claimed that they had enjoyed these activities, mainly because they were easy and, therefore, did not require a lot of effort on their part to do them. Other reasons were that “I COULD TELL ANYTHING WHAT I IMAGINED, AND IT COULDN’T BE WRONG” and that “WE HAD TO TELL A STORY “. Trying out the oral tasks with the students confirmed the findings of the interviews regarding self-assessment: the students were not used to the idea of assessing their own performance. One of Anikó’s objections to self-assessment was that students tended to overlook grammatical mistakes. The results proved her right;
because the participating students did not pay attention to whether their answers or descriptions were grammatically correct, but they focused on if they were appropriate in the actual context. In other words, the participants attended meaning rather than form, which is exactly what YLLs are good at.

The limitations of this study are manifold. Only one of the participating teachers of the large scale project volunteered to take part in the follow-up study. More teachers and students would have been needed to see how the oral tasks worked with learners at various ages and proficiency levels. More research is necessary to find out how teachers assess their learners, what tasks they apply in the classroom and why, and how testing contributes to learning over time. It would be useful to observe teachers using tests of all four skills and to find out how they apply assessment criteria, how they actually provide feedback to learners, how they use the information they gain from tests in their teaching, and how they scaffold their learners’ development from the level they have diagnosed they are at.
Chapter 8: Conclusion and further directions

8.1. Summary of the findings

In my dissertation I have investigated the complex topic of the assessment of YLLs, whose relevance lies in the increasing popularity of the early introduction of FLs (Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006, 2011). Hungary is no exception to this tendency. Although common wisdom is that children behave like sponges when it comes to learning a new language, the literature review demonstrated that success in ELL was not automatic. Several conditions need to be met so that the benefits of an early start can be realised. One such requirement is that young learners’ special characteristics and needs are considered and catered for. In order to do so teachers should keep track of students’ language development, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses, and give feedback on their progress. However, as the literature review also showed, in many parts of the world, including Hungary, FL teachers’ assessment practices and diagnostic behaviour are in need of improvement. Therefore, a large-scale project sponsored by the European Union (TÁMOP 3.1.9) was carried out in Hungary to design and pilot diagnostic tests, and to calibrate items for an item bank that would be available for teachers on the internet at a later stage. The ultimate aim was to contribute to the improvement of assessment practice in the ELL classroom.

The empirical part of my thesis is embedded in this project. The first exploratory study gives an account of its first phase. In this phase 12 primary school EFL teachers volunteered to report how they assessed their students’ development and what tasks they used (see Table 1 on page 4). The participants were asked to complete an English questionnaire and their answers were analyzed to find emerging patterns in their content and frequencies. The aim was to establish a framework for developing diagnostic tests. The second qualitative single-case study is a follow-up to the large-scale project and provides emic perspectives on the topic. One EFL teacher and five of her seventh graders agreed to provide data to allow me to find out what tasks the teacher used to assess her students’ oral skills in class, how she carried out assessment and what feedback she provided during oral assessment (see Table 1 on page 4). I also examined what the teacher and her students thought of the diagnostic tests they had tried out in the last phase of the project.. Data were collected with classroom observations, semi-structured-
interviews with the students and the teacher, and audio and video recordings of the students doing the four oral tasks. The dataset was analysed for themes and issues.

The first study drew a dim picture of Hungarian EFL teachers’ knowledge of age-appropriate methodology and assessment practices. The findings demonstrated that the teachers seemed to favour tasks that required students to read and write, although in primary school children are at the early stages of literacy development. The results that the majority of the submitted tasks were taken from various, mainly international, coursebooks suggest that the participants often relied on these teaching materials, which, however, do not consider the needs of the specific learning environment and students. Among the tasks the participants submitted there were only few authentic games, realia, visuals, or physical activities, which can help to raise and maintain YLLs’ interest and attention. The teachers seemed to be preoccupied with accuracy, students’ errors and what they did not learn or know. The results also showed that frontal and individual tasks were more often applied in class, as opposed to pair or team work where young learners may feel more secure. The teachers’ answers revealed that they did not have a clear view of what task, task difficulty, skills and subskills meant, and, thus, had difficulties when applying these categories to the tasks they chose.

As regards assessment practices, the teachers found it hard to capture students’ level of abilities and distinguish the best performance from less successful achievement. They did not apply a clear set of assessment criteria, but seemed to rely on their intuition. Only top achievers were rewarded; whereas, less able students received no feedback at all, leaving them with no clue as to which language domain needed development. The students were rarely, if at all, provided with detailed feedback regarding their strengths and weaknesses. While describing their students’ performance the teachers gave information that was often too general or had little diagnostic value. The results also suggested that the teachers followed the traditional concept of separating teaching and assessment. They did not scaffold their students’ performance during assessment, which would have helped in the successful completion of the tasks. The teachers’ answers revealed that checking and correcting were not followed by further practice; therefore, students were not given the chance to improve the language areas they had difficulties in.

The second case-study shed light on similar deficiencies in the teacher’s pedagogical skills. Instead of short, intrinsically motivating tasks where the focus is on fluency rather than accuracy, teaching and practicing grammatical rules, memorizing out-of-context words and the monotony of the use of the coursebook activities or similar tasks characterised Anikó’s classes.
She considered having students recite a text the best way to assess oral skills. Since she attributed great importance to accuracy, even at the expense of creative language use, she accepted if “MORE ABLE” students deviated from the original text, but discouraged less able learners to use English freely. Although team and pair work are conducive to ELL, and Anikó was aware that her students enjoyed working in pairs, she mostly applied frontal classwork. Anikó found it time-consuming to accommodate her students’ individual needs. Therefore, she tailored the classes to the needs of an “AVERAGE CHILD”. Generally, the whole group practised together regardless of who actually needed it, and instead of, as the students formulated it, her “DEALING WITH THAT STUDENT, WHILE THE OTHERS DO SOMETHING ELSE.”

In terms of teacher assessment, the results of the case-study were in line with the findings of the first exploratory study. Anikó rarely gave her students detailed feedback on their performance. When she, however, did so, she found it hard to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses. She did not apply criteria, but provided her students with a general, often fuzzy, description of their language knowledge and skills. Instead of focusing on fluency and emphasising what the students did know, she was more concerned with how many mistakes they had made and whether what they had said or written was accurate. Similarly to the outcomes of the first study, rewarding the best performances and ignoring the other students’ results were also typical in Anikó’ assessment practice. According to her, scaffolding students while doing a task was not consistent with testing their knowledge. She refrained from the use of self-and peer-assessment, because she believed students tended to focus on meaning rather than accuracy. Hence, she was of the opinion that only she could do a proper job when it came to assessing students.

With regard to the diagnostic tests Anikó had been asked to try out, she formulated only a few general thoughts. She believed that her students had been able to tackle them easily. She had problems with the tasks that had several possible answers. In the picture description tasks where the students came up with several ideas she had difficulties with scoring the answers. She wanted tests where there was only one correct solution, the number of which could then add up to a mark. Even though she realized that the diagnostic tests allowed her to obtain a more comprehensive analysis of students’ language competence she still preferred tasks where the assessment was more “STRAIGHTWARD”. She seemed to have given little thought to the assessment criteria that were given in the teachers’ booklet and, therefore, had difficulties with applying them. These findings suggested that she persisted on the normative and holistic testing
methods, which are typically applied in the Hungarian educational context, and found it hard to deliver diagnostic assessment. However, since children learn FLs slowly it is essential to test their progress regularly to maintain their motivation by showing them how much they have developed, and that hard work was worth the effort.

The oral tasks I tried out with the seventh graders were proved appropriate for this age-group. With only a few exceptions, the participants enjoyed the activities and they could use the English language freely. They claimed that they did not carry out such tasks in class except for picture description. However, in this latter case the emphasis was on a grammatical structure they had previously covered. The results also suggested that the students were not used to self- and peer-assessment. However, they quickly grasped the idea and liked giving their opinion on their own and their classmates’ performance. The piloting justified Anikó’s reservations about self- and peer-assessment: the students were more concerned if they understood what their peers said and ignored grammatical mistakes.

8.2. Limitations

Despite its valuable findings, the dissertation has limitations. One of them concerns the number of participants. The first exploratory study aimed to elicit data from as many EFL teachers of young learners as possible; however, only 26 teachers volunteered to participate more than half of whom changed his mind when receiving the questionnaire. The second qualitative case-study set out to give a more in-depth perspective and, therefore, was designed to work with only a few participants. However, only one teacher could be recruited to share her thoughts on the diagnostic tests she had been asked to pilot and her assessment practices. Further research is, however, necessary to find out more about how teachers diagnose their students’ strengths and weaknesses; how they give feedback and how they use the information they gained from tests. It would also be interesting to see how other EFL teachers find using these diagnostic tests, how they could follow the assessment instructions and whether and how they would use them in the long-run.

A further limitation of the dissertation concerns the fact that data were mainly collected through self-reports. More classroom observations would be necessary to support and supplement the information elicited by the questionnaire and the interviews. In the case of the second case study, however, the teacher seemed to be threatened by the thought of me observing
her classes. Therefore, besides the two classes I had observed, I was not provided with other opportunities.

### 8.3. Implications

Although the findings of the two studies cannot be generalized, they allow me to shed light on some tendencies and to generate research questions for further studies. The results indicated that primary school EFL teachers had room for improvement in their knowledge of age-appropriate teaching methodology and some of their practices reflected unclear understanding of how children develop. The activities they applied were often not in line with the needs and cognitive skills of YLLs. Tasks that are not calibrated to the characteristics of the specific learning context and group of children may prevent young learners from experiencing success in language learning, causing long-lasting demotivation. As for assessment practices, similar inadequacies were found. The two studies revealed that the teachers had difficulties with “seeing, observing, comparing, interpreting” (Edelenbos & Kubanek-German, 2004, p. 277) their students’ language knowledge; in other words, diagnosing their strengths and weaknesses. The students were rarely provided with feedback on their performance and language development. Due to this practice students did not see how much they had progressed, and lower achievers had a hard time to catch up with their peers, causing them to lag further behind. The difference between good performers and their less successful peers was further increased by the practice of giving regular rewards to the former ones and leaving the latter with no, i.e. negative, feedback. During assessment the teachers seemed to be more interested in what their students did not know rather than concentrating on what they could do, and, thus, helping them to see their progress and feel success.

Since these outcomes echo the findings of previous Hungarian studies (Bors et al., 2001; Lugossy, 2009; Morvai, Öveges & Ottó, 2009; Nikolov, 1999b, 2003b, 2008; Nikolov & Józsa, 2006; Nikolov & Nagy, 2003), it can be stated that the realization of the benefits that early language programmes can offer may be compromised in Hungarian primary schools. The studies also indicated that the teachers knew what was considered good practice, but their beliefs, the students’ and their parents’ expectations, as Anikó formulated it, “OUR KIDS AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THINK IN TERMS OF MARKS”, prevented them from applying these techniques. However, this should not be an excuse. Early language programmes shape
children’s motivation and attitudes towards the target culture, the FL and language learning itself. Therefore, it is essential that teachers apply appropriate methodology; otherwise, as Nikolov formulated it, “the students would have been better off if they had not learned an FL at all” (Nikolov, 2008, p.17).
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire (How to characterize tasks?)
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Appendix A

Questionnaire

How to characterize tasks?

Please choose 10 tasks you have used with your students. Fill in a form for each task along the following lines. Please use the list below (copy-paste 10 times). Then, fill in each feature in **bold** for each task one by one. If possible, add a scanned copy of the task and also describe it in simple terms. If it is a listening or reading task, the texts are also needed. All ten tasks should be in one file and the file should include your name.

1. **Title of task:**

   Use title you found or give it a title.

2. **Source of task** (where it comes from):

   Your own; workshop (give name of tutor, title, place and time of workshop); coursebook (give exact data: Name of author, year of publication, Title of book, place published: Publisher.); website (give address where it can be found and date when you downloaded it from the internet); colleague, etc.

3. **What do you and the students need for this task?**

   Describe what you need to prepare to be able to use this task. What text, visual, realia, etc?

4. **What does the task involve?**

   Describe what students are expected to do with what and in what format (individually, in pairs or groups or whole class) in about 3-4 sentences.

5. **Level of proficiency you think task is good for** (choose from list):

   *Beginner*

   Complete beginner = no English earlier

   False beginner = some English from parents, kindergarten, private lessons, television, stay abroad

   Beginner + = one or two years of 1-3 classes/week of English
**Elementary**

After 2 + years of English in 1-3 classes/week

**Pre-intermediate**

After 3-5 years of English in 1-3 or more classes/week

**Intermediate**

After 6-8 years of English in 1-3 or more classes/week

6. **Age of learners you think task is good for:**

For example: 6-8, or 11-14

7. **Age of learners you used it with:**

8. **Skill(s) you want to develop with this task:**

listening / speaking / reading / writing (one or two)

9. **Subskills you want to develop:**

listening for gist (overall meaning) or for specific information; asking & answering yes/no, or wh questions; intonation & pronunciation; retelling a rhyme, guessing meaning from context; fluency or accuracy, reading aloud, reading for gist, reading for specific information, spelling, memorization, etc...

10. **How are learners assessed on the task?**

Describe how you give learners feedback when you assess task accomplishment. Indicate what a top achiever can do, what you accept as adequate, and what you consider inadequate performance. If you score them or grade them, explain how.

11. **Give examples of how your students succeeded on this task** in 1-2 sentences and add samples (Xeroxed, if possible).

12. **Finish the statement on how your best learners can perform on this task:**

Best students can ..... 

13. **How popular is this task with your students on a 1 to 4 scale?**

1=unpopular – 4 = extremely popular
Appendix B

List of questions asked from the students during the piloting of the oral tasks

1. After each task the students were asked the following questions in Hungarian:
   
a. Hogy tetszett a feladat?
   b. Mire gondoltál miközben a feladatot oldottad meg?
   c. Mi okozott számodra nehézséget?
   d. Mi volt könnyű a feladatban?

2. After completing all of the four oral tasks the students were asked the following
   questions in Hungarian:

   a. Tetszettek a feladatok? Miért/ Miért nem?
   b. Melyik teszett legjobban/legkevésbé? Miért?
   c. Melyik volt a legnehezebb? Miért?
   d. Melyik volt a legkönnyebb? Miért?
Appendix C

List of questions for the interview with the students

1) Háttér információk
   • Mi a neved?
   • Hány éves vagy?
   • Hányadikban kezdtél angolul tanulni?
   • Miért választottad az angolt?
   • Az angolon kívül milyen más idegen nyelvet tanulsz? Hol? Hány éve?
   • Melyiket szereted jobban? Miért?
   • Az iskolán kívül szoktál az angollal foglalkozni? Hogyan, milyen gyakran?
   • Miért jó angolul tanulni?
   • Mi benne a nehéz neked?
   • Mennyire megy neked jól az angol?
   • A szüleid, testvéreid milyen idegen nyelven beszélnek?
   • Milyen szinten beszélik ezeket a nyelveket?
   • Kivel szoktál angolul gyakorolni?
   • Mennyire tartják fontosnak a szüleid az angol tanulást? Miért?
   • Szoktad-e használni az angolt az iskolán kívül?

2) Feladatok az órákon
   • Milyen feladatokat szoktak angol órán csinálni?
   • Melyik a leggyakoribb-legritkább?
   • Milyen szóbeli feladatokat szoktak a leggyakrabban csinálni?
   • Ezek közül melyik számodra a legnehezebb-legkönnyebb? Miért?
   • Melyiket szereted a legjobban-legkevésbé? Miért?
   • Milyen feladatokat szoktak párból megszólalni? Kivel szeretsz párból dolgozni?
   • Miért?
   • Milyen gyakran csináltak olyan feladatokat, amelyek nincsenek benne a könyvben?
   • Milyen feladatok ezek? Mennyire teszenek ezek a feladatok?
3) Önértékelés az órákon
- Te milyen tanuló vagy angolból? Honnan tudod?
- Milyen gyakran értékelitek magatokat az angol órákon? Milyen feladatoknál? Hogyan szokott ez zajlani? Mit szoktatók ilyenkor kapni (jegyet, pontot)?
- Szerinted miért jó, ha a tanuló saját magát értékel?i?
- Milyen gyakran szoktatók egymást értékelni? Milyen feladatoknál? Hogyan szokott ez zajlani? Mit szoktatók ilyenkor kapni (jegyet, pontot)?
- Szereted a társaidat értékelni? Miért?

4) Tanári értékelés az órákon
- Hogyan szokott az angol tanár értékelni benneteket órán?
- Te mit értél tanulsz legtöbbet? Hogyan tud neked segíteni a tanárod?
- Milyen gyakran értékel benneteket az órán a tanár? Hogyan?
- Kiket szokott gyakrabban értékelni az angol tanár?
- Milyen gyakran értékel a tanár egyénileg a feladatokat/teljesítményedet? Ilyenkor mit szokott mondani?

5) Gyakorlás az értékelést követően az órákon
- Milyen gyakran gyakoroltok olyan feladatokat, amelyek előzőleg nem sikerültek jól, és a tanár úgy gondolja, kell az ismétlés?
- Milyen típusú feladatok ezek? (szóbeli, írásbeli)
- Kaptok-e olyan gyakorló feladatokat, amelyeket csak 1-1 diáknak kell megcsinálni, mert előzőleg az nem ment neki jól?

6) Scaffolding az órákon
- Mikor szokott segíteni a tanár? Ha kéretek, vagy ha a tanár látja, hogy szükséged van rá?
- Milyen gyakran segít?
- Hogyan ad segítséget a tanár (megmondja a jó megoldást vagy próbálja egy másik kérdéssel vagy információval rávezetni téged a helyes megoldásra, vagy így is úgy is) ?
- Amikor a tanár értékelni is a feladatokat, hogyan szokott segíteni?
7) Gyerekek összbenyomása a diagnosztikus tesztekől (füzet a diákvált):
- Melyik feladat teszett/Melyik nem? Miért?
- Szoktatok hasonló feladatokat csinálni órán? Melyik volt a legszokatlanabb és legszerűsebb feladat?
- Csináltatok ezekhez hasonló feladatokat a kipróbálás óta?

8) Önértékelés a kipróbálás során
- A kipróbálás során mennyire tudtad követni az önértékelésre vonatkozó utasításokat?
- Hogyan kellett értékelned magad? (Megmutatni a szóbeli-írásbeli feladatokat)
- Mi okozott nehézséget ebben?
- Melyik önértékelés volt szokatlan?
- Melyik típusú önértékelés volt ismerős?
- Mennyire teszett, hogy saját magad kellett értékelni?

9) *Scaffolding* a kipróbálás során:
- Miben volt szükséged segítségre (szóbeli-írásbeli)? Ilyenkor minden esetben segített a tanár? Mikor nem, mikor igen?
- Akkor segített a tanár, ha kérdeztetek valamit, vagy akkor is ha úgy látta, hogy valahol elakadtatok?
- Kik kértek többször segítséget?
Appendix D

List of questions for the interview with the teacher

1) Diákokról
   • Hányan vannak a csoportban?
   • Hogyan jellemezné a csoportban a diákok képességeit?
   • Hogyan jellemezné a csoportban a diákok nyelvtudását?
   • Hogyan jellemezné a csoportban a diákok motivációját?
   • Hány diáknak van alkalma használni a nyelvet az iskolán kívül? Ha igen, hogyan?
   • Hány diákkal gyakorolnak otthon a szüleik?
   • Hányan járnak külön tanárhoz? Miben segíti a különóra a diákok órai munkáját?

2) Feladatok az órákon
   • Melyik tankönyvből tanulnak?
   • Milyen típusú feladatokkal egészízik ki a tankönyv feladatait az órákon?
   • Honnan vannak ezek a feladatok?
   • Pár munka: van-e, milyen gyakran és milyen típusú? Szeretik-e a gyerekek? Miért?
   • Melyik típusú feladatokat szeretik és melyiket nem a diákjai? Amelyiket nem, miért csináltatja mégis?
3) Tanári értékelés az órákon

- Mennyire tartja fontosnak, a diákok tanári értékelését az órákon?
- Hogyan értékel a diákokat az órán?
- Minden feladatnál van tanári értékelés?
- Kiket milyen gyakran értékel? Jókat-rosszakat?
- Mit kapnak a jól-rosszul válaszolók?
- Milyen gyakran kapnak a diákok egyénre szabott értékelést?
- Az értékelést követően mit tesz annak érdekében, hogy ami nem ment a diákoknak, abban legközelebb már ügyesebbek legyenek?

4) Diákok önértékelése az órákon

- Hogyan szokta bevonni a diákokat a saját értékelésüket?
- Mennyire/Miért tartja fontosnak a diákok önértékelését?
- Milyen gyakran szokták órán a gyerekek saját magukat értékelni? Milyen formában?
- Milyen következménye van az önértékelésnek (kapnak e piros pontot, jó vagy rossz jegyet ez alapján)?

5) Gyakorlás az órákon

- Milyen gyakran szoktak gyakorolni? Hogyan?
- Milyen gyakran ad egy-egy diáknak külön-külön feladatot, hogy gyakorolja (akár órán vagy otthon) azt ami korábban neki nem ment jól?
6) Scaffolding az órákon

- Mikor szokott segíteni a diákoknak? Ha kérik, vagy ha ön úgy látja, hogy
  szükségük van rá?
- Hogyan ad segítséget? (Megmondja a jó megoldást vagy próbálja egy másik
  kérdéssel vagy információval rávezetni a diákot a helyes megoldásra, vagy így is
  úgy is?
- Hogyan differenciál a diákok között miközben a feladatokat oldják meg?)
- Ha értékelni a feladatot akkor miben szokott segíteni a diákoknak?

7) Tanár összbenyomása a diagnosztikus tesztekről (füzet a tanár előtt)

- Mennyire voltak nehézek a feladatok?
- Melyik volt a legnehezebb-legkönnyebb, miért?
- Mennyire tetszettek a feladatok? Melyik tetszett legjobban-legkevésbé, miért?
- Szoktak-e hasonló feladatokat csinálni órán? Melyik volt a legszokatlanabb és
  legsikeresebb feladat?

8) A tanár mit gondol, hogyan vélekedtek a tanulók a feladatokról

- Mi okozott problémát a gyerekeknek a feladatok megoldása során?
- Mennyire voltak nehezek a gyerekeknek a feladatok? Legnehezebb-legkönnyebb a
  gyerekek szerint?
- Mennyire találták a tanulók ismerősnek a feladatokat?
- Melyik volt számukra a legjobban-legkevésbé ismerős?
- Hogyan sikerültek a feladatok a gyerekeknek (gyengébbeknek-jobbaknak)?
9) Tanár véleménye az értékelési szempontokról (szempontsorok a tanár előtt)

- Mennyire tudta a tanári füzetben megadott értékelési szempontokat megvalósítani?
- Mi okozott nehézséget az alkalmazásuk során?
- Melyik feladatot volt a legnehezebb-legkönnyebb értékelni?
- Mi volt újszerű az értékelési szempontsorokban?
- A diákok értékelése során miben segített a szempontsor?
- Hogyan tudta értelmezni azt, hogy „appropriate” és „relevant answer/description”?
- Miben segítettek a minta válaszok 42-es feladatnál?
- Hogyan lehetne az értékelési szempontokat még alakítani, hogy még hatékonyabban tudják alkalmazni az órákon?

10) Scaffolding a kipróbálás során

- Mikor volt szükségük a diákoknak segítségre?
- Ilyenkor minden esetben segített a diákoknak? Mikor nem, mikor igen?
- Kik kértek többször segítséget?

11) Diákok önértékelése a kipróbálás során

- A kipróbálás során meg tudták-e valósítani a füzetben adott utasítások alapján a gyerekek az önértékelést?
- Mennyire tartották be a gyerekek a szabályokat?
- Mennyire tetszett nekik az önértékelés lehetősége?
- Mi okozott a diákoknak nehézséget az önértékelésben az írásbeli feladatok során?
- A szóbeli feladatok során mennyire volt ismerős a diákoknak ez a típusú önértékelés?

- Mi okozott nehézséget a szóbeli feladatok során az önértékelésben?
Appendix E

99 questions

1. What’s your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your address?
4. What is your favourite food?
5. What food do you dislike?
6. What is your favourite colour?
7. What colour do you dislike?
8. What is your favourite school subject?
9. What is your favourite sport?
10. Which sport don’t you like?
11. Who is your favourite sportsman?
12. Who is your favourite singer?
13. Who is your favourite film star?
14. When do you go to bed on weekends?
15. What do you have for breakfast on Sundays?
16. What clothes do you wear in the summer?
17. What clothes do you wear in the winter?
18. How many lessons do you have a day?
19. Where do you have lunch on weekdays?
20. What kind of books do you read?
21. What kind of music do you listen to?
22. What’s your hobby?
23. What sports do you do?
24. How many people are there in your family?
25. What’s your friend’s name?
26. What’s your father’s name?
27. What’s your mother’s name?
28. How many sisters do you have?
29. How many brothers do you have?
30. How many friends do you have?
31. Think of something red.
32. Think of something black.
33. Think of something yellow.
34. Think of something green.
35. Think of something pink.
36. Think of something white.
37. Think of something black and white.
38. Think of something blue.
39. Think of something orange.
40. Think of something brown.
41. Think of something purple.
42. What colour is your favourite T-shirt?
43. What colour are your eyes?
44. What colour is your hair?
45. What colour are ducks?
46. What colour are foxes?
47. What colour are pigs?
48. What is the colour of frogs and of alligators?
49. What is the colour of snow?
50. What is the colour of mice and donkeys?
51. What colour are zebras?
52. What colour is your favourite animal?
53. What is your favourite ice cream?
54. What is your favourite fruit?
55. What fruits don’t you like?
56. What is your favourite drink?
57. What is your favourite farm animal?
58. What is your favourite domestic animal?
59. What is your favourite wild animal?
60. What is your favourite zoo animal?
61. What is your favourite story?
62. What is your favourite film?
63. What is your favourite TV programme?
64. What is your favourite nursery rhyme?
65. What is your favourite song?
66. Who is your favourite teacher?
67. Which animal has four legs?
68. Which animal has two legs?
69. Which animal has no legs?
70. Which is a wild animal?
71. Which is a domestic animal?
72. Which animal can fly?
73. Which animal can swim well?
74. Which animal can sing well?
75. Which animal can run fast?
76. Which animal can live in water?
77. Which animal is very big?
78. Which animal is very small?
79. Which animal can you see in the Zoo?
80. Which animal is very long?
81. Which animal lives in trees?
82. When do you get up on weekdays?
83. When do you get up on weekends?
84. When do you go to bed on weekdays?
85. How many hours do you usually sleep at night?
86. What do you eat for lunch on Wednesdays?
87. What do you have for dinner on Tuesdays?
88. What clothes do you wear in the spring?
89. When do you brush your teeth?
90. What clothes do you wear in the autumn?
91. How do you go to school?
92. What TV programmes do you watch?
93. What do you do in the afternoon on weekdays?
94. Who helps you with your homework?
95. Who cooks lunch on Sundays?
96. What do you like to do in the summer?
97. What do you like to do in the autumn?
98. What do you like to do in the winter?
99. What do you like to do in the spring?
Appendix F

Oral task 42A: picture description (vehicles)

Task 42: Work in pairs. Put a tick √ if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture, and an X if not. Take turns until both of you have a √ or an X next to all letters.
Appendix G

Oral task 42B: picture description (jobs)

Task 42: Work in pairs. Look at these 9 pictures (A-I) about jobs. Put a tick √ if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture, and an X if not. Take turns until both of you have a √ or an X next to all letters.
Appendix H

Oral task 43A: story-telling (The fly family)

Task 43: These 9 pictures show a story: The Story of a Fly Family. In picture A, you can see 3 flies: the mother, the father and Sam, their son. Soon they will be 4 and not 3! Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and tell the story: what can you see in the pictures? Take turns. Tick the picture you if you could talk about it. Put a x if not.
Appendix I

Oral task 43B: story-telling (Muesli, the mouse)

Task 43: These 9 pictures show a story: The Story of Muesli the Mouse. In picture A, you can see a boy, Michael, and his pet, Muesli.

Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and tell the story: what can you see in the pictures? Take turns. Tick the picture you if you could talk about it. Put a $x$ if not.
Appendix J

Oral task 44A: spot the difference (library)

Task 44 Work in pairs. Find out what the differences are between picture A and picture B.

One of you, student A, can see picture A and your partner, student B, can see picture B. Take turns: Student A starts, “In my picture there are three people. What about your picture?” Student B says, “In my picture there are four.” Then it’s B’s turn to say something about picture B and ask a question. Find 3-3 differences. Circle the differences in your picture. At the end of the task, compare the circles in your pictures.

Score: ___
Appendix K

Oral task 44B: spot the difference (meadow)

Task 44: Work in pairs. Find out what the differences are between picture A and picture B.

One of you, student A, can see picture A and your partner, student B, can see picture B. Take turns: Student A starts, “In my picture there is one bush. What about your picture?” Student B says, “In my picture there are two.” Then it’s B’s turn to say something about picture B and ask a question. Find 3-3 differences. Circle the differences in your picture. At the end of the task, compare the circles in your pictures.

Score: ___

Ez a feladat

1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Appendix L

Sample spidergram
19. TUDD MEG, MIT TUDSZ ANGOLUL!

főzeti

Angol feladatok gyerekeknek

WOOF! WOOF!
Kedves Tanulóm!

Arra kérünk, hogy adj őszinte választ az alábbi kérdésekre. A válaszokhoz karikázd be a megfelelő számokat!

1 Mi az édesanyád legmagasabb iskolai végzettsége (karikázd be):
   (1) 8 általános (2) szakmunkás- képző (3) érettségi (4) főiskola (5) egyetem

2 Te milyen iskolát szeretnél végezni?
   (1) 8 általános (2) szakmunkás- képző (3) érettségi (4) főiskola (5) egyetem

3 Az angolt mennyire kedveljed?
   kedvenc tárgyam 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem szeretem

4 Az angolóránk mi a legjellemzőbb rád?
   mindig figyелеlek 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 sose figyелеlek

5 Szelinted mennyire megy neked jól az angol?
   nagyon 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 semennyire

6 Milyen gyakran foglalkozol az angollal az órákon kívül?
   gyakran 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 soha

7 Szelinted mennyire hasznos angolul tudni?
   nagyon 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 semennyire

8 Az angolon kívül még melyik 2 nyelvet tanulhadsz szívesen? Karikázd be!
   1 német 2 spanyol 3 kínai 4 olasz 5 francia 6 japán 7 orosz 8 hongvát 9 román 10 szlovák

Köszönjük, hogy kiböjtöd a feladatokat és a válaszold a kérdésekre. Thank you. A feladatok készítői.

Minden feladat megoldása után értékelj majd a feladatot az alábbi kisábra segítségével.
Karikázd be a megfelelő számot!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ez a feladat</th>
<th>1 könnyű volt</th>
<th>4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 ismerős volt</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 tetszett</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 11: Students' sheet

LISTEN, YOU WILL HEAR SEVERAL WORDS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS. YOU MUST MATCH THE WORDS TO THE DEFINITIONS. HERE IS AN EXAMPLE: LISTEN TO DEFINITION “A” AND CHOOSE THE WORD THAT MATCHES THE DEFINITION FROM THE LIST. PUT THE NUMBER OF THE CORRECT WORD IN THE BOX UNDER “A”.

A: This is a job. People who do this job travel a lot in the sky. They fly special vehicles in the air: airplanes and helicopters. Choose from the list. It’s a pilot! So, A is 0.

Now, listen to the words you can see on your sheet first.

0 pilot 5 dog 11 eyes
1 yellow 6 enter 10 cat
2 sleep 7 river 12 hotel
3 game 8 nine 13 eat
4 black 9 swim

Put your answers here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ez a feladat

1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 12: Look at the picture showing a street in a small town. Listen to what you hear about it. Something is wrong in every sentence. First, put down the mistake and then correct it.

Listen to the example: 0.

0: not walking but running

1: not but

2: not but

3: not but

4: not but

5: not but

6: not but

7: not but

8: not but

9: not but

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Task 13: Listen to these definitions of sports. Choose the words from the list of A to H. There is one extra definition. 0 is an example. Listen to the example:

A  showjumping  0
B  basketball
C  skiing
D  chess
E  swimming
F  tennis
G  skating
H  water polo

Ez a feladat 1 kényny volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt  
2 ismerős volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt  
3 tetszett  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 14: Listen to these short definitions (A-G) and guess what they mean. Choose words from this list (1-9). The first one (A-0) is an example. There are two extra words.

0 OMLETTE
1 PAPRIKA CHICKEN
2 HAM AND EGGS
3 ROAST BEEF
4 CABBAGE SOUP
5 FISH AND CHIPS
6 SALAD
7 HAMBURGER
8 SPAGHETTI

Put your answers here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ez a feladat

1 könnyű volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2 ismerős volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3 tetszett  4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 15: Listen to 8 dialogues (A to H). Choose the correct place (1, 2, 3 or 4) where people are talking. A is an example.

Choose from these:

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In a street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At a playground</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>At a cinema</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In a park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ice cream shop</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>At an airport</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At an airport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In the street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>At a museum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ice cream shop</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At a museum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In a park</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At a cinema</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At an airport</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In a kitchen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>In a kitchen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At a cinema</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In a street</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At a museum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In a kitchen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ice cream shop</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At an airport</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>In a park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>At a playground</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put the correct numbers in here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ez a feladat
1 környű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2 ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3 tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 21: Read the texts 1-13 and match them with the pictures B – J. The first one (A-0) is an example. There are 4 extra.

0 In this picture you can see a farm animal. It is eating grass in a meadow.
1 In this picture two animals are climbing up a tree.
2 In this picture a boy is working in the kitchen. He is washing up the dishes.
3 In this picture you can see a cat sleeping.
4 In this picture two people are playing chess. One is a man, the other one is a boy.
5 In this picture you can see a room where people wash their hands or teeth.
6 In this picture you can see a woman. She works at a hospital and her job is to help patients.
7 In this picture there is a small lake and a bird is swimming in it. In the background there are trees.
8 In this picture a girl is doing housework. She is cleaning the carpet.
9 In this picture a boy and his dog are running and having fun.
10 In this picture boys are playing a ball game.
11 In this picture you can see a girl and her pet. She is giving her dog a bone for dinner.
12 In this picture you can see a baker. His job is to bake bread and rolls.
13 In this picture you can see a classroom with a teacher and her pupils.

Put your answers here:
Task 22: Read these short definitions (A-G) and guess what they mean.
Choose words from this list (1-9). The first one (A-1) is an example. There are two extra words.

A. This is a large place where the ground is high.
B. This is a piece of land covered with trees.
C. This is a structure built over a river.
D. This is a place higher than a hill.
E. This is a long stretch of water.
F. This is a large body of water surrounded by land.
G. This is an underground passage.

1. HILL  4. TUNNEL  7. FOREST
2. RIVER  5. MOUNTAIN  8. LAKE
3. BRIDGE  6. WATERFALL  9. ROAD

Put your answers here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ez a feladat:  
1. Könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt  
2. Ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt  
3. Tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 23

Animal Facts
Read these short texts (A-H) about animals and find the animal they describe (1-4). Write 1, 2, 3 or 4 on the lines. A=1 is an example.

A) ____ The young animals are protected by adults for a long time.

B) ____ It is very difficult to see them even in daytime.

C) ____ They can eat something bigger than their own body in one piece.

D) ____ They can stay under water for a long time.

E) ____ They can run faster than people, and have a very good nose.

F) ____ No other animal can attack and eat them.

G) ____ A lot of other animals may die out because of them.

H) ____ They can chew and eat the whole body of other animals.

1 Grizzly bears
• One of the world's largest land predators, grizzly bears weigh four times as much as an average man.
• Grizzly bears can easily outrun humans.
• Shy and elusive, these great swimmers have a sense of smell hundreds of times more sensitive than ours.
• Bear cubs usually stay with their mothers for two and a half years.

2 Pythons
• Faster in water than on land, pythons can remain submerged for 30 minutes at a time.
• A full-grown Burmese python can easily swallow an alligator ... or an entire adult human.
• Pythons never stop growing, reaching up to 27 feet and weighing hundreds of pounds.
• Introduced to new habitats by the pet trade, Burmese pythons are eating Florida’s local wildlife onto the endangered species list.

3 Asian elephants
• While their African cousins live on the open savannah, Sri Lanka’s Asian elephants live in small herds in the jungle.
• Of the country's 4,000 Asian elephants, only seven percent of males grow tusks.
• Hidden among the trees, the elephants are perfectly camouflaged and almost invisible.
• Elephants can run fast and kill 60 people a year in Sri Lanka.

4 Hyenas
• Spotted hyenas are the second largest predators in Africa.
• They travel as a pack and have no natural predators.
• With the most powerful jaws in the animal kingdom for their body size, they can consume every part of a carcass, including bones and teeth.
• Hyena females are dominant and more aggressive, and are known to bring down lions, water buffalo ... and even humans.
Task 24: Read 8 dialogues (A to H). Choose the correct place (0 to 8) where each dialogue takes place. One place is extra. A-0 is an example. Put the numbers in the boxes.

A
“Hi. Can I help you?”
“Yes. What’s the buying rate for the euro?”
“1.2 US dollars to the euro.”
“OK. I’d like to change two hundred euro, please.”
“All right. May I see your passport?”

B
“Good morning! Please take a seat. What’s the problem?”
“I have a terrible toothache. I couldn’t sleep all night.”
“All right, let’s see. Please open your mouth wide.”
“Will it hurt?”
“No, I’ll just have a look first. Er… I think you need a filling.”

C
“Hi Dave. What’s the score?”
“Bolton is leading 2 to 1. You’ve just missed the last goal!”
“I know. I just went to see the players warm up for the next game.”
“Who do you think will win?”
“I support Bristol City. They have a great goalkeeper and some very good strikers.”

D
“Georgie, get out of the shower! You have been in there for half an hour!”
“Mum, please come over here. I can’t find the shampoo.”
“OK, I’m coming. We’ll wash your hair quickly, and then you must brush your teeth.”
“Yes, Mum. Will you dry my hair for me?”
“Of course, darling.”

E
“Excuse me. Is there a supermarket near here?”
“Yes. There’s one near here.”
“How do I get there?”
“At the traffic lights, take the first left and go straight on. It’s on the left.”
“Thank you.”

F
“Evelyn, you are 10 minutes late!”
“Sorry, Miss. I overslept.”
“Again?”
“It’s my alarm clock. It didn’t ring. I think it’s broken.”
“I think you should get a new one, or you’ll miss too many lessons.”
“OK. I’ll ask my Mum to get one today.”

G
“Look, Meagan, there come the clowns!”
“I don’t like clowns. They are so boring! I’d rather look at the acrobats or the magician.”
“They’ll come later.”
“Great! Can we see some animals, too?”
“Yes. There will be a lion tamer, and two elephants performing tricks.”

H
“Can I help you?”
“Yes, I’m looking for a T-shirt.”
“What size are you?”
“I’m a small.”
“How about this one?”
“Yes, that’s nice. Can I try it on?”

Choose from these places:

0 In a bank
1 In a bathroom
2 In a street
3 At a dentist’s
4 At a clothes shop
5 At a school
6 At a football field
7 In a kitchen
8 At a circus

Put your answers in here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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<th>H</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 könyv volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 néhány volt
2 újság volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 be nem született
Task 25: This is a short article from the internet. Read the text and fill in the missing words (B – H) from the list of 1 – 8. There is an extra word you don’t need. See the example (A – 0).

**Sleepy Air Canada Jazz passenger wakes up in airplane hangar**

Apr 13th 2010, 17:54 by A.H. | TORONTO

SOME people can’t sleep on planes. Some sleep all too A________. Take Kris Lines, a British law professor. After staying awake from B________ to Calgary, he took what he thought would be a quick catnap on the 90-minute second leg of his C________ to Vancouver, at the back of an Air Canada Jazz plane. When he woke up, he discovered that his flight had D________ 90 minutes earlier and he was now in the hangar. He might still be E________ if a surprised mechanic hadn’t nudged him awake. Mr Lines, who was offered an apology and a 20% F________ on his next Air Canada Jazz flight, says the company informed him via e-mail that the flight attendant forgot to do a final walk-through because he was busy G________ wheelchair-bound passengers. An airline spokeswoman H________ that it was an isolated incident, and hoped it did not happen again.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 well</th>
<th>1 sleeping</th>
<th>2 said</th>
<th>3 London</th>
<th>4 helping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 eating</td>
<td>6 journey</td>
<td>7 landed</td>
<td>8 discount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Put your answers in here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ez a feladat

1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 31: Look at these 11 children in a park. Write as much as you can about what they are doing.

Example: 1 Andrea is hiding behind a tree.

2 Bill
3 Daniel
4 Diana
5 David
6 Henry
7 Jim
8 Jenny
9 Lydia
10 John
11 Thomas
Task 32: Write the sentences your teacher dictates. The first and last sentences are written for you. This is a story about a naughty rabbit.

Once upon a time there was a naughty rabbit called Julia.

She never ever wanted to run away from home again.

Words missing:

Words incorrectly spelt:

Your final score:
Task 33: Look at the pictures about Susan and finish the sentences. A is an example.

**In picture A Susan is reading a book.**

**In picture B** ________________________________

**In picture C** ________________________________

**In picture D** ________________________________

**In picture E** ________________________________

**In picture F** ________________________________

**In picture G** ________________________________

**In picture H** ________________________________

**In picture I** ________________________________
Task 33

1. könnyű volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1  nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt  4 - 3 - 2 - 1  ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett  4 - 3 - 2 - 1  nem tetszett

16
Task 34: This is an interview with a boy in the SPECIAL HOBBIES magazine. Some of the words are missing. Fill in the blanks using the words below. Use each word only once and there are 2 extra words that you will not need.

Choose from these words:

Christmas, December, email, every, huge, many, mountain, ride, special, streets, thousand, tourists, weekend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today's interview is with Cho Chui from Chongqing, China. What's your <strong>special</strong> hobby?</th>
<th>□</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I ride my _____________ bike in my city.</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is that so special?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mark all the _____________ I've cycled on a map. I want to ride on _____________ street by _____________ 31, 2011.</td>
<td>□ □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a plan! How _____________ streets are there?</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, 13 _____________, on my 2010 map.</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That's a _____________ number! Can you _____________ so many streets?</td>
<td>□ □</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope so. I ride my bike every _____________ □</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good luck with your plan, send us an _____________ when your mission is accomplished.</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 35: These two pictures come from the SPOT THE DIFFERENCES MAGAZINE. Write about 7 differences between picture A and picture B.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________________________________________
Task 41 Students' answer sheet

Put in the boxes the number of your question.
Then put a tick if your answer is correct, and a cross if not.

Yes = √  No = X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of ?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| √ or X |   |   |   |

---

Ez a feladat

1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
99 Questions

1. What’s your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your address?
4. What is your favourite food?
5. What food do you dislike?
6. What is your favourite colour?
7. What colour do you dislike?
8. What is your favourite school subject?
9. What is your favourite sport?
10. Which sport don’t you like?
11. Who is your favourite sportsman?
12. Who is your favourite singer?
13. Who is your favourite film star?
14. When do you go to bed on weekends?
15. What do you have for breakfast on Sundays?
16. What clothes do you wear in the summer?
17. What clothes do you wear in the winter?
18. How many lessons do you have a day?
19. Where do you have lunch on weekdays?
20. What kind of books do you read?
21. What kind of music do you listen to?
22. What’s your hobby?
23. What sports do you do?
24. How many people are there in your family?
25. What’s your friend’s name?
26. What’s your father’s name?
27. What’s your mother’s name?
28. How many sisters do you have?
29. How many brothers do you have?
30. How many friends do you have?
31. Think of something red.
32. Think of something black.
33. Think of something yellow.
34. Think of something green.
35. Think of something pink.
36. Think of something white.
37. Think of something black and white.
38. Think of something blue.
39. Think of something orange.
40. Think of something brown.
41. Think of something purple.
42. What colour is your favourite T-shirt?
43. What colour are your eyes?
44. What colour is your hair?
45. What colour are ducks?
46. What colour are foxes?
47. What colour are pigs?
48. What is the colour of frogs and of alligators?
49. What is the colour of snow?
50. What is the colour of mice and donkeys?
51. What colour are zebras?
52. What colour is your favourite animal?
53. What is your favourite ice cream?
54. What is your favourite fruit?
55. What fruits don’t you like?
56. What is your favourite drink?
57. What is your favourite farm animal?
58. What is your favourite domestic animal?
59. What is your favourite wild animal?
60. What is your favourite zoo animal?
61. What is your favourite story?
62. What is your favourite film?
63. What is your favourite TV programme?
64. What is your favourite nursery rhyme?
65. What is your favourite song?
66. Who is your favourite teacher?
67. Which animal has four legs?
68. Which animal has two legs?
69. Which animal has no legs?
70. Which is a wild animal?
71. Which is a domestic animal?
72. Which animal can fly?
73. Which animal can swim well?
74. Which animal can sing well?
75. Which animal can run fast?
76. Which animal can live in water?
77. Which animal is very big?
78. Which animal is very small?
79. Which animal can you see in the Zoo?
80. Which animal is very long?
81. Which animal lives in trees?
82. When do you get up on weekdays?
83. When do you get up on weekends?
84. When do you go to bed on weekdays?
85. How many hours do you usually sleep at night?
86. What do you eat for lunch on Wednesdays?
87. What do you have for dinner on Tuesdays?
88. What clothes do you wear in the spring?
89. When do you brush your teeth?
90. What clothes do you wear in the autumn?
91. How do you go to school?
92. What TV programmes do you watch?
93. What do you do in the afternoon on weekdays?
94. Who helps you with your homework?
95. Who cooks lunch on Sundays?
96. What do you like to do in the summer?
97. What do you like to do in the autumn?
98. What do you like to do in the winter?
99. What do you like to do in the spring?
Task 42: Work in pairs. Look at these 9 pictures (A-I) about jobs. Put a tick ✓ if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture, and an X if not. Take turns until both of you have a ✓ or an X next to all letters.
Task 43: These 9 pictures show a story: The Story of Hamilton the Hamster. In picture A, you can see a butcher’s shop, the butcher and a hamster. Hamilton lived in the shop, but he had no home.

Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and tell the story: what can you see in the pictures? Take turns.

Tick the picture you if you could talk about it. Put a x if not.
Task 44: Work in pairs. Find out what the differences are between picture A and picture B.

One of you, student A, can see picture A and your partner, student B, can see picture B. Take turns: Student A starts, “In my picture there are five bananas. What about your picture?” Student B says, “In my picture there are two bananas.” Then it’s B’s turn to say something about picture B and ask a question. Find 3-3 differences. Circle the differences in your picture. At the end of the task, compare the circles in your pictures.

Score: ___

Ez a feladat
1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 44: Work in pairs. Find out what the differences are between picture A and picture B.

One of you, student A, can see picture A and your partner, student B, can see picture B. Take turns: Student A starts, "In my picture there are five bananas. What about your picture?" Student B says, "In my picture there are two bananas." Then it's B's turn to say something about picture B and ask a question. Find 3-3 differences. Circle the differences in your picture. At the end of the task, compare the circles in your pictures.

B

Buy two, pay one!!

Score: _____

Ez a feladat
1. könnyű volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett 4 - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Task 45 - Student score sheet

Put in the boxes the number of your question.
Then put a tick if your answer is correct, and a cross if not. Yes = V       No = X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of ?</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V or X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. könnyű volt   4. - 3 - 2 - 1 nehéz volt
2. ismerős volt   4. - 3 - 2 - 1 ismeretlen volt
3. tetszett   4. - 3 - 2 - 1 nem tetszett
Appendix N
Teachers’ booklet 19

19. füzet TUDD MEG, MIT TUDSZ ANGOLUL!
Tanári útmutató

A füzet a négy nyelvi alapkészséget mérő feladatokat tartalmaz, mindegyikből 5-öt.
A feladatok nem folyamatos sorszámot kaptak!

A tesztfüzet felépítése:

11-15: hallott szöveg értése
21-25: olvasott szöveg értése
31-35: íráskészség
41-45: beszédkészség
Kedves Kollega,

Köszönjük, hogy vállalod az angol feladatok kipróbálását. Tudjuk, rengeteg munkával jár, de azt reméljük, hasznosak lesznek. Nagyon sok műlik azon, hogy lakás és segítőkész tanárok mit hoznak ki a sok munkával előkészített feladatokból. Reményeink szerint, hosszabb tévő sikerű majd a jól működő feladatokat ingyen elérhetővé tennünk minden érdekődő számára. A következőket kérjük:

1. Olvasd el a rövid bevezetőt, amelyben ismerteljük a projekt céljait, néhány alapelvet, és a lebonyolítás részleteit.

2. Utára nézd át a diákok feladatlapját (és a hanglevélétkeket), a feladatok megoldásaik, illetve az értékelési szempontokat ebben a tanári füzetben.

3. Belátásod szerint osszad be, hogy mikor, melyik feladatot oldják meg a tanulók az angol órákban. Egy őrán megoldhatnak 1-2, vagy akár 4-5 feladatot is, a készségeket is kombináljatt testvés szerint.

4. Minden feladatról kérjük a véleményedet, hasonlóan a tanulók véleményéhez. Erre azért van szükség, mert csak a konkrét osztálytermi kontextusban derül ki, hogy egy feladat hogyan működik. Arra kérünk, a felmérés végén te is tőld ki egy tanulói füzetben a keretezett értékelő skálákat. Ha a feladatokhoz kézzel beírdod a megjegyzéseidet, küldőn köszönjük. A neved erre is írjat rá, hogy a kérdőívekkel össze tudjuk párosítani. El fogjuk olvasni.

5. A tanulói csoportról is kérünk háttértájékozatot, egy rövid kérdőív segítségével. Ez ebben a füzetben van. Ezt annyi példányban kell kitölteni, ahány csoporttal kipróbálod a feladatokat.

6. A saját szakmai háttéredről is kérünk néhány adatot, hogy az eredményeket ezek tőkéreben is tudjuk majd elemezni. Ha valamelyik kérdésre nem szívesen válaszolász, hagyd üresen.

7. Egy rövid levelet is tartalmaz ez a füzet. Arra kérünk, olvasd fel a gyerekeknek.


10. A beérkezett feladatlapokra a kifizetéseket decemberben utaljuk.

A feladatkészítő csapat nevében üdvözlettel,

Nikolov Marianne
A projekt célja

Célunk olyan angol feladatok készítése, kipróbálása és továbbfejlesztése, amelyek alkalmazásak 6–13 éves általános iskolások nyelvtudásának diagnostikus mérésére és fejlesztésére a legfrissebb nemzetközi és hazai kutatások eredményei alapján. A kipróbálások során azt szeretnénk megtudni, hogyan működnek a feladatok különböző iskolákban, ahol a diákok nyelvtanulási háttére eltérő. Ezért háttér adatokat is gyűjtjük. A kapott eredmények alapján fogjuk megállapíthatni, hogy melyik feladatnak milyen a nehézségi foka.

Előídesleg célunk nem a tanulók nyelvtudásának felmérése, de az adatokból, óvatosan erre is következtethetünk majd. Nem titkok cél, hogy a diákok tanuljjanak a feladatok megoldásából! Ezért fontos a feladatok ellenőrzése. A másik ok, hogy az elemzésekhez szükségünk van a pontos megoldásokra. Másképpen nem tudjuk meg, mely feladatokat milyen gyakran kérjük, és kik elveszik.

Mit jelent a diagnostikus nyelvtudásmérés?

Nyelvtudásmérést (testing for learning). A tanulók erős és gyenge pontjait térképezzük fel, hogy megtudhatók-e, melyik részterületen, hogyan tudják őket a meglévő tudásuk szintjéről a leghatékonyabban fejleszteni. A diagnostikus nyelvtudásmérés akkor lehet hatékony, ha további tanulásra motivál, és segíti az előrehaladást.

Mit mérnek a feladatok?

A leggyakrabban használt tantervek témakörei alapján összeállított nyelvtudásmérő tesztek azt mérik, hogy az adott életkorban, a nyelvtanulással hozzátévelegesen eltöltött idő arányában mit kell tudnia megérteni a hallott és olvasott szövegből, és mit kell tudnia írásban és szóban a tanulóknak. Az adott feladatokon a részletjelentések pontos adattól szolgálnak arról, hogy hol tart a tanuló a nyelvtanulási folyamatban. Ha egy feladatot az elértető 9 ponttól a tanuló 2 pontot ér el, az ugyanolyan fontos információ, mintha 6 vagy 9 pontot érne el.

A feladatok a nyelvtudásos, együtt a stratégiai használatot is mérnek. Minden feladatnak fontos jellemzője, hogy a nyelvi jelentésre, és nem a nyelvi formára épül. A feladatok megoldásában fontos szerep jut a kontextusnak, amely segíti a tanulót abban, hogy a szövegösszetételeből a jelentést kidolgoz. Nem kell minden egyes szót értenünk ahhoz, hogy a feladatot sikeresen megoldják. Tehát ezek a feladatok nem azt mérik, amit tanultak, hanem amit tudnak. Természetes, ha nem tudnak minden, és amit tudnak, azt sem tökéletesen!

A folyékonyaság ebben az életkorban fontosabb, mint a hibátlan nyelvhasználat. A folyékonyaság bátorsága a természetes nyelvi fejlődést támogatja, és könnyebben vezet sikeres élményhez, ami visszahozza a nyelvtanulási motivációját. A kipróbálás során várhatóan lesz olyan diák, aki egy feladatban csak 1–2 pontot tud jól megoldani, egyszerű vagyokat ír vagy mond, míg egy másik társa hosszabb válaszokra képes.

Mik az előzetes kipróbálások tapasztalatai?

A tavaszi kipróbálások során a tanárok és a diákok egyaránt kedvezően nyilatkoztak a megoldott feladatokról. A legfontosabb eredmény az, hogy a tanárok félreveszteken meglepődtek azon, mi mindent tudnak a tanulók, amit szeretném nem tanultak. Többet és jobban tudnak, mint gondolták!

Hogyan épül fel a feladatlap és milyen sorrendben próbáljuk ki a feladatokat?


A feladatokat a tanár beállítása szerinti sorrendben próbáljuk ki a csoport. Javasljam, hogy egy nyelvi foglalkozáson egyenlő többszöröséből oldják meg feladatokat. A feladatok eltérő nehézségeknek, és az egyes feladatokon belül az itemek (elemek) nehézsége is eltér. Azt szeretnénk megtudni, melyek könnyebbek és melyek nehezebbek.
A sorrendre egy beszédfeladat esetében teszünk javaslatot: minden feladatlapban van egy 99 szöbeli kérdésből álló sorozat, amely szintenként részben eltér (ez a 41., 45. feladat). A feladatot úgy kell megoldani, hogy a tanulók véletlenszerűen húznak számokat 1 és 99 között, amelyek kérdéseket sorozzák (ld. részletesen feladattal). Ezt a feladatot háromszor javasoljuk megoldani: az első alkalmannal, egyszer, frontális osztálymunkával hallják és válaszolják meg a gyerekek a 99 kérdést úgy, hogy egy dobozból egyenként számokat húznak. Egy következő alkalmannal párhuzamosan oldják meg a feladatot: így ez lesz az első (41.) feladat. Majd ugyanez a feladat pármunkában az ötödik, utolsó beszéd feladat (45.).

Ehhez a feladathoz a tanári füzetben van egy 1-99 számot tartalmazó lap. Ezt fénynézésben kell minden tanulópár számára. Ez az egyetlen lap, amit másodni kell.

Arra is kíváncsiak vagyunk, a szokatlan feladattípus hogyan válik be.

Milyen adatokat gyűjthetünk?

Az elemzésekhez objektív, számszerűsített adatokra van szükségünk. Ezért a feladatokat úgy terveztük meg, hogy ez megoldható legyen. Ez esetenként szokatlan lehet a tanövények feladatához képest. Minden item esetében tudnunk kell, hogy hány diák oldotta meg helyesen vagy helytelenül, mert ebből tudható, hogy melyik része könnyű, nehéz, vagy túl nehéz. A feladatok megoldásán kívül a tanulók és a tanárok véleményére is kíváncsiak vagyunk.

Hogyan értékeljük a feladatok megoldását?


Hogyan tanulnak ebből a gyerekek?

Alapelveink, hogy a tanulók visszajelzést kapjanak arról, hogyan oldották meg a feladatot. Ezt a feladatok megoldását követő közös önellenőrzés biztosítja: a diákok színes ceruzával vagy tollal jelölnek, helyes-e vagy helytelen az megoldásuk (kipipálják vagy x-et írnak). Ezt minden feladat esetében érdemes elvégezni, mert ebből tanulnak. Ekkor a válaszokon már nem módosíthatnak, de megtudják, hogyan teljesítettek. Ezzel az eljárással a jó osztálytermi gyakorlatot is szeretnénk megerősíteni. Erről szó van a gyerekeknek szóló levlében.

Nincs ellentmondás a feladatok kipróbálása és az önellenőrzés között?

A feladatok kipróbálásának a napi osztálytermi folyamatba kell illeszkednie. A gyerekeknek szóló levél egyértelművé teszi, hogy a feladatok megoldását követő közös ellenőrzés során kizárólag színeszel (más színmel) írjanak a feladatlapra. Bizonyosan, hogy a tanulók szívesen követték ezt az utasítást, és hasznosnak fogják találni ezt az eljárást. Másolóban már bevált.

Hogyan tudjuk meg, hogyan működnek a feladatok?

Három forrásból: (1) a tanulók megoldásaitól, (2) a tanulók visszajelzéseiből, hogy az egyes feladatokat mennyire találtak könnyűnek, ismerősenek, és mennyire tetszett nekik, illetve (3) a tanárok hasonló kérdésekre adott válaszai alapján.

Hogyan működnek az angol nyelvű utasítások?

Minden feladatnál angol nyelvű utasítás és példa tartozik. Kutatásokból tudjuk, hogy a gyerekek és felnőttek többsége nem olvassa el az utasítást, a példát sem nézi meg, hanem hozzálát a feladat megoldásához. Ennek ellenére a következő átfogó stratégiát javasoljuk, amely bevált a kipróbálások során.
1. Minden feladat előtt a diákok hallgassák meg, olvassák el az utasítást.

2. Kérjünk meg egy diákot, hogy mondja el magyarázattal, mit kell csinálni. A példa segít ebben.

3. A feladat tisztaállása után mindenki hozzájárul a feladat megoldásához.

4. A feladatokat a diákok, a párnákkal kivételével, önállóan oldják meg. Szükség szerint segíteni kell nekik, ha ezt kérik, de megoldásuk a nyelvtudásuk szintjét tükrözte!

Hányoszor hangzik el a hangfelvétel?

Minden beszédértés feladatban a hangfelvétel készen hangzik el. Először az utasítást hallják, majd a példát. A feladat szöveget (a példa nélkül) megismétlők (Now, listen again), a feladat végét This is the end of the test jelzi. A feladatok a füzetben megadott sorrendben vannak.

Milyenek a hangfelvételek és mennyi szünet van a felvételekben?

A felvételeket normál beszédtempóban, néhány másodperces szünettel beiktatásával készítettük el négy brit, amerikai és kanadai anyanyelvű növel és férfival. Néhány kiszínező feladat esetében elképzelhető, hogy kevés időt hagyunk a színek kiválasztására, ezért a színeket elő kell készíteni, de ez is elhangzik.

Melyik feladat egyéni és melyik pármunka?


Hogyan értékel a tanár a szóbeli feladatokat?

A beszédekészség mérésére olyan, az életkori sajátosságoknak megfelelő, érdekes feladatokat dolgoztunk ki, amelyeket a gyerekek közvetlen tanári felügyelet és értékelés nélkül oldanak meg párban. Mivel az osztálytermi folyamatban nem tud egyszerre mindenki figyelni a tanár, míg a tanulók párban megoldják a feladatot, ő egy tanulópár teljesítményét értékelni a megadott pontozási szempontoknak megfelelően. Ha van idő és alkalom többetek értékelni, az hasznos. Azt el kell kerülni, hogy amíg egyik pár beszélget, a többiek unatkoznak. A beszédfeladatoknak eltérő a pontozási útmutatója. A fent említett 99 kérdéssoros (41, 45.) feladat esetében a szinteknek megfelelően finomodik a skála (eltérő a 01-07 és a 08-21 füzetekben).

Hogyan válasszuk ki a szóbeli értékelésre a tanulópárt?

Azt a két tanulót javasoljuk kiválasztani, akik a csoportban a legvalószínűbb, hogy a legkevesebb szorongással, értékelhető megoldásokat hoznak létre. Teljesítményükéről tudni fogjuk, hogy ők valószínűleg a jobb nyelvtudásti, legmagabiztosabb tanulók. Az értékelést a tanulók feladatlapján kell jelölni, a feladatnál részletesen mondón. A szóbeli feladatokat a moztani mérés mellett más formában is kipróbáljuk.

Mi történjen a feladatlapokkal a kipróbálások közötti időben?

A feladatlapokat a tanulók kizárólag az arra kijelölt angol órákon kapják meg. Haza nem vihetik őket, és az angoltanár felügyelete nélkül abban nem dolgozhatnának.

Hogyan történik a füzetek lekódolása és kioszthatása?

Az első angol órán, anukor a kipróbálások megkezdődnek, a tanulók kitöltenek a feladatlap első lapján a kódot. A számokat a tanár diktálja nekik, mivel az osztályuk kivételével nem ismerik azokat.

Hogyan biztosítsuk a részvevők személyiségi jogainak védelmét?
Minden tanuló kizárólag kóddal fog szerepelnii a felnérisben. A feladatlapokra ceruzával írják fel a nevüket, amit a bekiülés előtt ki kell radírozni. A névre azért van szükség, hogy a tanulók ugyanabban a füzetben dolgozzanak minden órán. A nemüket is jelöljék!

A nyelvtanárok az adatbázisunkban névvel szerepelnek, mivel egyénileg vesznek részt a projektben. Erre a kifizetések miatt van szükség: tudnunk kell, hogy melyik kollégia hány diákkal dolgozik. A projekt lezárása után ezt a listát meg fogjuk serümisíteni. A projekt jelentésében a köszönőnyilvánításokhoz is szükségünk van a tanárok és az iskolák nevére. Aki kéri, hogy ne szerepeljen a neve, nem tesszük közzé.

Mi történik, ha egy tanuló hiányzik egy órán?

Ha egy feladat nincs kitöltve, jelentheti azt, hogy a diák hiányzott, vagy nem látott hozzá. Ha megoldható, a hiányzók külön dolgozhatnak az elmaradt feladatok megoldásán. Ha nincs, ott folytatják, ahol a többiek tartanak.

Előfordulhat-e hiba egy feladatban?

A feladatokat hosszú folyamat során, sokszoros ellenőrzéssel készítettük elő. Elképzelhető, hogy sajnos mégis maradt hiba valahol. Ha van ilyen, szívesen vesszük a jelzést, hogy a végleges feladatokban javítsassuk őket.

Ki ad tanácsot a felmerülő kérdésekre?

Az előkészítési folyamatot hasonlóan, minden kérdésre email-ben 24 órán belül igyekszünk válaszolni. (A levelet mindkét címre kérjük: borsidi@yahoo.com, nikolov@nostromo.pte.hu).

Jó munkát! The stage is yours.
Kérdések a nyelvi csoport nyelvtanulási hátteréről


1 A csoportban tanulók többsége hányadik osztálytól kezdve, heti hány órában tanul(t) angolul és egy másik idegen nyelvet az iskolában?

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<thead>
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<td>Tanultak-e második idegen nyelvet?</td>
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<td>(Nem = 0; Igen = 1)</td>
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2 A csoportban tanulókat hogyan választották ki az iskolában?
(1) tanulmányi eredmény alapján  (2) angol nyelvtudás alapján
(3) jelentkezés alapján  (4) véletlenszerűen (pl. ABC)  (5) nincs csoportbontás

3 A csoportban tanulók többsége mennyire motivált az angol tanulására?
(1) nagyon  (2) közepesen  (3) alig

4 A csoportban tanulók többsége milyen képességű?
(1) jó  (2) közepes  (3) gyenge

5 A csoportban tanulók többségének szülei mennyire tartják fontosnak az angol tanulását?
(1) nagyon  (2) közepesen  (3) alig

6 Hányadik évé tanítod ezt a csoportot angolul?__________

7 Milyen mértékben vagy elégedett a csoport angol tudásával?
(1) nagyon  (2) közepesen  (3) alig
Kérdések a csoportot tanító tanár szakmai hátteréről

Kedves Kolléga,

Az alábbi néhány adatra van szükségünk. Karikázd be a választ.

1 Némedi: férfi (1) nő (2)

2 Életkorod: (1) 30 alatt (2) 31-40 (3) 41-50 (4) 51-60 (5) 61 fölött

3 Legmagasabb iskolai végzettséged: (1) főiskola (2) egyetem

4 Tanári végzettséged (többféle is jelölhetsz):
   (1) tanító angol műveltségetülettel
   (2) 1 vagy 2 szakos általános iskolai angol szakos tanár
   (3) 1 vagy 2 szakos középiskolai angol szakos tanár
   (4) tanító angol nyelvvizsgával
   (5) egyéb:
Rövid levél a diákokhoz

Kedves angolul tanuló diákok!

Megköszönjük, hogy bekapcsolódtak a *Tudd meg, mit tudsz angolul* programba. Angoltanárókat szívesen váltalja, hogy kipróbál veletek 20 feladatot a következő hetek angol óráin. A következőket kérjük töltse.

Ezek a feladatok hozzájárulnak a szerződés angolul tanuló diákok számára készülékek. Van köztük könnyű és kicsit nehezebb. Azt szeretnénk megtudni, hogy ti hogyan tudjátok őket megoldani. Ezzel segítik a munkánkat.

Könnyen lehet, hogy nem tanultatok mindent, ami a feladatokban előfordul. Arra vagyunk kíváncsiak, hogy mi az, amit ki tudtok találni! Sokat tudtok, amiről nem is tudjátok, hogy tudjátok! Minden kérdésre próbáljatok meg válaszolni.

Néhány dolog újdonság lehet.

1. Minden feladatot kék vagy fekete tollal vagy fekete ceruzával töltse.
3. Minden feladatról szeretnénk tudni a véleményedet. Egy kis vicces keretben kiskézássátok a megoldások után, hogy a feladat mennyire könnyű vagy nehéz, mennyire ismerős vagy sem, és mennyire tetszett. 4 a legjobb, az 1 a legrosszabb érték.
4. Az összes feladatot több órán át oldjátok meg. (Az összes feladat megoldásához több tanóra szükséges.) Az első alkalommal töltse a kódot a lap tetéjén. Tanárokat segít ebben. A nevetetek ceruzával írjátok fel, de a beküldés előtt ki kell radírozni. Minden tanuló kódal szerepel.
5. Az első oldalon néhány magyar kérdésre adjatok választ.
6. A következő félévben megtudjátok, hogy összesítve hogyan sikerültek a feladatok.

Köszönjük munkákat. Reméljük, hogy tetszenek a feladatok és tanultok belőlük.

Good luck!

A feladatkészítő csapat
**Task 11**

**Key**

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</table>

Now, listen to the definitions.

**B:** This is a bright colour. It is the colour of lemons, bananas, and of some birds and flowers. In the fall the leaves on the trees turn this colour.

**C:** This is a domestic animal. Its hair is usually brown, black or white, and sometimes it has spots. It eats meat, chews bones, and sometimes chases cats. This animal is a great pet, but it can work, too, with hunters and policemen, for example.

**D:** This is a number. If you add 3 plus 6, this is what you get. If you add 1 to 8, this is the result. If you have ten apples and eat one, this is how many apples you will have left. This number is bigger than 8 and smaller than 10. What is the number?

**E:** This is what you do when you are hungry. You can do it at home, at school, at a restaurant, or even in a park. When you do this, you often drink, too. When you are finished, you are full.

**F:** These are parts of the human body. They can be brown, green or blue. You use them to see with. If you have problems with them, you wear glasses.

**G:** This is a building where people can stay when they travel. It has rooms in it and people pay for using these rooms. Some are elegant and very expensive; others are cheap and plain.

**H:** This is what you do in water, for example, if you want to get from one side of a pool to the other. You can not only do this in pools, but also in lakes and in the sea. If you can’t do this, you’ll sink.

**I:** This is what you do at night. You go to bed, close your eyes, and then you do this. When you are finished, you wake up.

**J:** This is a long stretch of water. The largest ones in Hungary are the Danube and the Tisza. The longest one in the world is the Nile, but some people say the Amazon is even longer.

---

**Task 12**

**Key and text**

1. not good bye, but hello/how are you (doing)?/nice to meet you
2. not chocolate but ice cream
3. not a cat but a boy
4. not many but one/1
5. not (a) chair but (a) table
6. not (a) dog but (a) shop window/shoes/things
7. not (to the) park but (to the) toyshop/other side/left/dog
8. not left but right
9. not (a) sandwich but (a) tool

Each item is 2 points: meaning correct: 1; spelling correct: 1

Look at the picture showing a street in a small town. Listen to what you hear about it. Something is wrong in every sentence. First, put down the mistake and then correct it. Listen to the example: 0.

0. This is our street on a Friday afternoon. There are some people on the street, but it’s not a busy time. School has just finished. You can see the school building in the top right corner of the picture. A boy is walking down the steps. -- He is not walking but running!

1. Two men have just met in front of the school. They are shaking hands and saying “good bye” to one another.

2. There is an ice cream cart between the school and the park. A boy is buying some chocolate.

3. To the right there is a small park. A girl is taking a photo of a cat lying on the grass.

4. There is a small fishpond in the park with many fish in it.

5. On the left side of the street there is a nice café. A man is sitting outside and reading a newspaper. The waiter is cleaning a chair.

6. Next to the café a woman is looking at a dog not far away from her.

7. Two people are crossing the street. They are walking to the park.

8. In the background there is a gas station and there’s a news stand to the left of it.

9. Two men are working in the street. On is down in a whole and the other one is giving him a sandwich.
**Task 13**

Key and text

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>showjumping</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>basketball</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>chess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>swimming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>skating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>water polo</td>
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</table>

Listen to these definitions of sports. Choose the words from the list of A to H. There is one extra definition. 0 is an example. Listen to the example:

0 (read out all numbers)
This is a sport where people ride horses in competitions. They try to jump quickly over large objects such as walls and fences.

1 This is a game played by two people on a square board. Each player has 16 black and white pieces. The players move the pieces on the board. The player who can trap the opponent’s king wins.

2 This is a water sport. People move through water by moving their arms and legs. You can do this sport in a pool, or in natural waters like a lake or a sea.

3 This is a game played on a grass field by two teams. Each team has 11 players. The object of the game is to kick a ball into the opposing team’s goal.

4 This is a game played by two players on a court. The players use a racket to hit a small ball to each other over a low net. They get points when the other player cannot return the ball.

5 This is a winter sport. You need to wear special boots. The boots have a thin metal bar fixed to the bottom. This helps you move over the ice.

6 This is a water game. It is played with a ball in a pool by two teams. Each team has seven players. Each team tries to throw the ball into the other team’s goal.

7 This is a game played on a court by two teams of five players each. They get points when they throw a large ball through a metal ring and net.

8 This is a winter sport. People fasten long, narrow, smooth pieces of wood, plastic, or other hard material to their feet to move over snow.

**Task 14**

Key and text

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Listen to these short definitions (A-G) and guess what they mean. Choose words from this list (1-9). The first one (A-0) is an example. There are two extra words.

A This is a hot dish made of eggs.
B This is a meat dish, a Hungarian speciality usually eaten with dumplings and sour cream.
C This is a typical meal in Britain. It is a hot dish and you can buy it on the street, too.
D This is a very healthy dish made of vegetables only.
E This is a pasta dish. It comes from Italy.
F This is a typical cooked breakfast.
G This is the most widely known American food.
Task 15
Key and text

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Listen to 8 dialogues (A to H). Choose the correct place (1, 2, 3 or 4) where people are talking. A is an example.

A
“What are those old drawings about next to the oil paintings?”
“They show what the town was like 100 years ago.”

B
“Can I help you?”
“I’d like two scoops of vanilla and one scoop of chocolate with some whipped cream, please.”

C
“Excuse me! Can you tell me where the nearest supermarket is?”
“Go as far as the first traffic lights and turn left.”

D
“Look at that beautiful oak tree there! The leaves are all turning brown.”
“Lovely! I like walking among the trees in autumn. I sometimes sit on a bench and read a book.”

E
“Would you like to watch Shrek 4, Jane?”
“Yes! But what if some parts are a bit scary? Can I cover my eyes?”

F
“What would you like for breakfast, Jane?”
“Some bread and butter and a glass of milk, please.”

G
“Hello. I’d like to check in this suitcase, please.”
“Please put it on the belt. Do you have any hand luggage?”

H
“Hey, Mark! Let’s go down the slide once again!”
“I’d rather go on the swings now.”

Task 21
KEY
Read the texts 1-13 and match them with the pictures B – J. The first one (A-0) is an example.

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Task 22
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Task 23
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Task 24
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Task 25
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Task 31

KEY
Example: 1 Andrea is hiding behind a tree.
2 Bill is falling down (a tree/ a branch) /falling (out of a tree).
3 Daniel is sleeping / resting/ lying/ (on his back) (under a tree).
4 Diana is looking for / trying to find /something / her drink. She is sitting (on the ground /on a blanket /on something). Her hand is in a bag.
5 David is fishing /sitting (by a lake/pond) / David is catching fish.
6 Henry is running with a/his dog / running after a dog. Henry and a/his dog are running.
7 James is roller skating /sitting down, falling down /standing up, doing sports.
8 Jenny is playing with a ball/Lydia. Jenny/Lydia is throwing the ball.
9 Lydia/Jenny is catching the ball. Jenny and Lydia are playing (with a) ball / hitting a ball.
10 John is playing football/kicking a ball. A ball is hitting John (*s head).
11 Thomas is riding his/a/the bike /bicycle. Thomas is cycling / riding.

Scoring:
Sentence is true (!) / relevant, written correctly = 4 points. Parts of above sentences in (brackets) are not required. David is fishing. = David is fishing by a lake. = 3

- Sentence is true /relevant, with 1 mistake = 3 points.
- Sentence is true/relevant, with 2 mistakes = 2 points.
- 1 or 2 words relevant to picture = 1 point
- No answer or sentence/word irrelevant to picture = 0 point.
- E.g.: Henry running with his dog: 3; Henry is run after dog: 2; Henry running: 1; I love music: 0

Total: 40 points
Put points (0-4) before numbers (2-11).

Task 32

Key
Dictation Instructions: First, read each sentence through once. Then go back and read each sentence again stopping for 2 seconds at each slash in the text. Leave a break of 10 seconds after each sentence. Then, go on to the next sentence. At the end, read the whole text again and allow students to work on their texts for one more minute. Then, have the students check their writing in a different colour pencil or pen.

Scoring: There are 7 sentences and 60 words in each story. Each correctly written word is worth 2 points for a possible total of 120; 1 point is deducted for each word misspelled and 2 points are deducted for each word missing. This way, children are encouraged to attempt to write every word even if they are not sure of the spelling.

Write the sentences your teacher dictates. The first and last sentences are written for you. This is a story about a naughty rabbit.

Once upon a time there was a naughty rabbit called Julia. Julia lived in a big cage. She was a pet / and her family loved her, / but she always wanted to run away / from home. One day, / she pushed her door open / and got out. She was hopping happily / around the garden, / when she saw Bernard, the dog, / running frolic. Julia turned quickly, / jumped back into her cage / and stayed there. She never ever wanted to run away from home again.
Task 33
Key
Each sentence is worth 0 - 4 points:
4 points if sentence is correct (shortest in key)
Minus 1 point if
(a) 1 word is missing or wrong word choice
(b) 1 word is misspelt
(c) word order is incorrect
(For example, if 1 word is missing + another word is misspelt + word order is incorrect = 1 point. Or: 2 words are misspelt = 2 points. Or: 1 word correct = 1 point. Nothing written or word(s) in Hungarian, or 1 word misspelt = 0 point)
Total: 36 points
A Susan is reading a book.
B Susan/She is looking at photos/cards. She is playing cards. She is putting pictures/photos/cards on the wall.
C Susan/She is playing the violin.
D Susan/She is playing the piano.
E Susan/She is hiking/walking-going up a hill/on a path/in the mountains. She is going on a walking tour.
F Susan/ She is playing a game on her computer/ a computer game. She is working on/using a computer. She is looking at a screen/using a mouse.
G Susan/She is watching TV/ a film/ a programme. She is changing channels.
H Susan/She is watching a film/movie (at the cinema/movie). She is at the cinema/movie. She is watching a love/happy/sad story.
I Susan/She is drawing (a picture of flowers). She is drawing/painting something. She is making/colouring a picture/vase.

Task 34
Key
Today’s interview is with Cho Chui from Chongqing, China. What’s your special hobby?
I ride my mountain bike in my city.
Why is that so special?
I mark all the streets I cycled on a map. I want to ride on every street by December 31, 2011.
What a plan! How many streets are there?
Well, 13 thousand, on my 2010 map.
That’s a huge number! Can you ride so many streets?
I hope so. I ride my bike every weekend.
Good luck with your plan, send us an email when your mission is accomplished.

Task 35
Key
These two pictures come from the SPOT THE DIFFERENCES MAGAZINE.
Write about 7 differences between picture A and picture B.
Scoring:
Expected answer: students write one sentence about each picture: 14 sentences.
Sentence is true (1) / relevant, written correctly = 4 points.
Sentence is true / relevant, with 1 or 2 mistakes = 3 points.
Sentence is true/relevant, with 3 mistakes = 2 points.
2-3 words relevant to picture=1 point
1 word: no answer; sentence/words irrelevant to picture = 0 point.
Two sentences combined with and, but, because = +1 point.
Examples:
Some students will write under picture A and B; not a problem. Others will write: “in picture A, in picture B”...; also ok. If there is a mistake in “in picture A/B”, reduce score only once, not every time there’s a mistake in the phrase! Examples are not on this specific task.
A boy is running with his dog (in picture A), = 4
(In picture A) boy running after a dog, = 3
Boy run after dog (in picture A), = 2
Boy running, = 1
Boy/ I love hamburger, = 0
E.g.: In picture A, a boy is running with a dog, but in picture B he is walking with a dog, = 9 points
Put points for each sentence on right margin after sentences, and total at the bottom of page.
Total: 63 points

Task 41
Questions on various topics
What you need: list of questions + numbers 1 to 99 on small slips of paper
Student picks a number randomly. Teacher (later a student) asks the question of that number from the list.

Two ways of doing task:
1: This is frontal class work; practice session. To make sure that all students know what the questions are, children take turns picking numbers randomly from a hat/box. Numbers are NOT put back. Child says/shows number, teacher asks the question, and student answers it.
2: This is a pair work task. Students work in pairs (A&B). Each pair has 99 numbers in a box/hat and a list of 99 questions. One student (A) draws a number, and asks the question on the list. The other student (B) answers it. B puts the number in his/her table and a tick or cross under it, if correct/incorrect. Then they swap and go on like this (B draws the number, asks the question, and A answers it). Each student should ask and answer 9 questions. After each turn, they need to agree if the answer is correct or incorrect. If they cannot agree, the teacher should help them.
Numbers are NOT put back. So, 18 questions are used randomly.
Teacher scores two students each time while the group is doing the pair work. Teacher puts students’ scores under their ticks and X-es in a different colour pen. Students can see their scores!
Scoring: Answers must be appropriate and relevant. One word answers are acceptable, if appropriate!
3 points: it is appropriate and relevant; a sentence or so long; 1 mistake in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation.
2 points: it is appropriate and relevant; 2+ words long; 2 mistakes in vocabulary and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
1 point: it is appropriate and relevant; 1 or 2 words long; 2+ mistakes in vocabulary and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
0 point: it is not relevant or more than 3 mistakes in vocabulary and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
99 Questions

1. What’s your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your address?
4. What is your favourite food?
5. What food do you dislike?
6. What is your favourite colour?
7. What colour do you dislike?
8. What is your favourite school subject?
9. What is your favourite sport?
10. Which sport don’t you like?
11. Who is your favourite sportsman?
12. Who is your favourite singer?
13. Who is your favourite film star?
14. When do you go to bed on weekends?
15. What do you have for breakfast on Sundays?
16. What clothes do you wear in the summer?
17. What clothes do you wear in the winter?
18. How many lessons do you have a day?
19. Where do you have lunch on weekdays?
20. What kind of books do you read?
21. What kind of music do you listen to?
22. What’s your hobby?
23. What sports do you do?
24. How many people are there in your family?
25. What’s your friend’s name?
26. What’s your father’s name?
27. What’s your mother’s name?
28. How many sisters do you have?
29. How many brothers do you have?
30. How many friends do you have?
31. Think of something red.
32. Think of something black.
33. Think of something yellow.
34. Think of something green.
35. Think of something pink.
36. Think of something white.
37. Think of something black and white.
38. Think of something blue.
39. Think of something orange.
40. Think of something brown.
41. Think of something purple.
42. What colour is your favourite T-shirt?
43. What colour are your eyes?
44. What colour is your hair?
45. What colour are ducks?
46. What colour are foxes?
47. What colour are pigs?
48. What is the colour of frogs and of alligators?
49. What is the colour of snow?
50. What is the colour of mice and donkeys?
51. What colour are zebras?
52. What colour is your favourite animal?
53. What is your favourite ice cream?
54. What is your favourite fruit?
55. What fruits don’t you like?
56. What is your favourite drink?
57. What is your favourite farm animal?
58. What is your favourite domestic animal?
59. What is your favourite wild animal?
60. What is your favourite zoo animal?
61. What is your favourite story?
62. What is your favourite film?
63. What is your favourite TV programme?
64. What is your favourite nursery rhyme?
65. What is your favourite song?
66. Who is your favourite teacher?
67. Which animal has four legs?
68. Which animal has two legs?
69. Which animal has no legs?
70. Which is a wild animal?
71. Which is a domestic animal?
72. Which animal can fly?
73. Which animal can swim well?
74. Which animal can sing well?
75. Which animal can run fast?
76. Which animal can live in water?
77. Which animal is very big?
78. Which animal is very small?
79. Which animal can you see in the Zoo?
80. Which animal is very long?
81. Which animal lives in trees?
82. When do you get up on weekdays?
83. When do you get up on weekends?
84. When do you go to bed on weekdays?
85. How many hours do you usually sleep at night?
86. What do you eat for lunch on Wednesdays?
87. What do you have for dinner on Tuesdays?
88. What clothes do you wear in the spring?
89. When do you brush your teeth?
90. What clothes do you wear in the autumn?
91. How do you go to school?
92. What TV programmes do you watch?
93. What do you do in the afternoon on weekdays?
94. Who helps you with your homework?
95. Who cooks lunch on Sundays?
96. What do you like to do in the summer?
97. What do you like to do in the autumn?
98. What do you like to do in the winter?
99. What do you like to do in the spring?
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Task 42
Key
Work in pairs. Look at these 9 pictures (A-I) about jobs. You describe what the job of the person is: what he or she does. Your partner should guess the letter of the picture and the job. A-0 is an example: You say, "He has a pistol and works with cows." Your partner says, "A, a cowboy". Put a tick √ if you could describe (not if you could guess) the picture, and an X if not. Take turns until both of you have a √ or an X next to all letters.
Teacher scores two students each time while the group is doing the pair work. Teacher puts students’ scores in their task next to their ticks and X-es in a different colour pen. Students can see their scores!
Scoring: Answers must be appropriate and relevant. One word answers are acceptable, if appropriate!
3 points: It is appropriate and relevant; a sentence or so long; 1 mistake in vocab or grammar or pronunciation.
2 points: It is appropriate and relevant; 2+ words long; 2 mistakes in vocab and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
1 point: it is appropriate and relevant; 1 or 2 words long; 2+ mistakes in vocab and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
0 point: it is not relevant or more than 3 mistakes in vocab and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.
SAMPLE answers:
B: This man works with sick/ill people. You go to this person when you are ill.
C: This man looks into your mouth. He checks teeth.
D: This person works at school and teaches math.
E: This man sells beef, chicken and pork.
F: This person can mend your washing machine of car.
G: This man has a farm. He has animals and grows vegetables.
H: This person designs/plans houses and bridges.
I: He makes/bakes bread.

Task 43
These 9 pictures show a story: The Story of Hamilton the Hamster. In picture A, you can see a butcher’s shop, the butcher and a hamster. Hamilton lived in the shop, but he had no home.
Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and tell the story: what can you see in the pictures? Take turns. Tick the picture you if you could talk about it. Put a x if not.
Teacher scores two students while the group is doing the pair work. Teacher puts students’ scores under their picture. Students can see their scores!
Scoring: What students say must be appropriate and relevant. One word sentences are acceptable, if appropriate! Score 4 pictures for student A and student B.
Each student can get 4 points for one picture; a total of 16.
4 points: an appropriate and relevant description of the picture in one sentence; 0-1 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation. OR more than one sentence but 0-2 mistakes.
3 points: an appropriate and relevant description of the picture in one sentence; 2 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation. OR more than one sentence but 3 mistakes.
2 points: a few appropriate and relevant words about the picture.
1 point: 1 or 2 words relevant to the picture.
0 point: text is not relevant; or in Hungarian, or says nothing.
Task 44
Key
Work in pairs. Find out what the differences are between picture A and picture B. One of you, student A, can see picture A and your partner, student B, can see picture B. Take turns: Student A starts, “In my picture there are five bananas. What about your picture?” Student B says, “In my picture there are two bananas.” Then it’s B’s turn to say something about picture B and ask a question. Find 3-3 differences. Circle the differences in your picture. At the end of the task, compare the circles in your pictures.

Teacher scores two students while the group is doing the pair work. Teacher puts students’ scores next to A or B in their task sheet. Students can see their scores!

Scoring: What students say must be appropriate and relevant. One word sentences are acceptable, if appropriate! Score 3 turns for student A and 3 turns for student B. If they go on for longer than 3+3 turns, score their best 3 turns. Ask them to stop after their 5th turn.
Each student can get 6 points for one turn; a total of 18.
6 or 5 points: an appropriate and relevant statement + question. 0-2 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation.
4 points: an appropriate and relevant statement + question. 3-4 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation.
3 points: either an appropriate and relevant statement or a question. 1-2 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation.
2 or 1 point: either an appropriate and relevant statement or a question. 3-4 mistakes in vocabulary or grammar or pronunciation.
0 point: text is not relevant or more than 5 mistakes in vocabulary and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.

Task 45 see 41
Assessment of Young EFL Learners in the Hungarian Educational Context

Angolul Tanuló Diákok Értékelése a Magyar Általános Iskolákban

Hild Gabriella

Témavezetők: Dr. Nikolov Marianne, DSc
Dr. Lugossy Réka

Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Bölcsészettudományi Kar
Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola
Alkalmazott Nyelvészeti Program

2014
Az értekezés témája és céljai

Világszerte, így hazánkban is, elterjedt tendencia, hogy a gyerekek egyre fiatalabb életkorban kezdenek el egy idegen nyelvet tanulni, ami többnyire az angol (Nikolov és Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006). Edelenbos, Johnstone, és Kubanek (2006, 8. o.) elemzése szerint a korai nyelvtanítás célja nem csupán az idegen nyelv elsajátítása, hanem egy szélesebb értelemben vett hovatartozás érzés kialakítása, illetve annak bemutatása, hogy milyen lehetőségei, jogai és kötelességei vannak a többnyelvű Európa polgáraként a gyerekeknek. A hatékony korai nyelvi programok jelentőségét tovább növeli az a tény, hogy a későbbi nyelvtanulás alapjai is itt alakulnak ki (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 7. o.). Hasonló következtetéseket fogalmaz meg Nikolov (2004, 29. o.), amikor azt állítja, hogy a „szükséges feltételek bármelyikének hiányában inkább későbbre kell halasztani az idegen nyelvi program beindítását, mivel a korai negatív hatások nem csak a célnyelv iránti hozzáállásra lehetnek rossz hatással, hanem általában a nyelvtanulástól is el lehet a gyerekek kedve.”

Az alsó tagozatos tanulók lassan haladnak az új nyelv elsajátításával, ezért a sikeres nyelvtanulás érdekében a motiváció felébreszítése és fenntartása különösen meghatározó ebben az életkorban. A kutatási eredményekből tudjuk, hogy az eszközjellegű motiváció, amely felnőtt korban tölt be fontos szerepet és a nyelvvizsgák teljesítésével kapcsolatos, nem befolyásolja a gyerekek órai motivációját. Azonban az érdekes, önmagukban (intrinszik) motiváló és kognitív szintjüknél megfelelő feladatok, valamint a sikerélmény, és ha a tanuló látja, hogy milyen sokat fejlődött és gyakorlással azt is elérheti, ami eddig nem ment neki megalapozza a további tanulási motivációit. Ennek érdekében a nyelvtanároknak rendszeresen adatokat kell gyűjteniük diájai nyelvi fejlődéséről, és az így kapott információk alapján alakítani a tananyagot. Nagyon lényeges a tanári visszacsatolás is, amikor a tanulók is megtudják, hogy melyek az erős és gyenge pontjaik. A diagnosztikus mérés ezeknek a követelményeknek a teljesítésében nyújt segítséget a tanároknak (Nikolov és Szabó, 2012). A diagnosztikus értékelés során a cél nem a diákok teljesítményének osztályozása, hanem nyelvtudásuk hiányosságainak feltérképezése, majd a diagnózisnak megfelelően képességeik fejlesztése (Nikolov és Szabó 2012). Nagyon fontos eleme ennek az értékelési formának a diákok részletes és informatív tájékoztatása a tudásukról, azaz a visszajelzés. Matricák, piros pontok vagy osztályzatok kiosztása nem merít ki ez utóbbi kategóriát, és a kutatások is alátámasztják, hogy nem eredményeznek javulást a tanulók tudásában (Garrison, Chandler és

Annak ellenére, hogy az alsó tagezatban a tanári értékelés kulcsfontosságú, mind a nemzetközi, mind a hazai tanulmányok között kevés azoknak a száma, amelyek ezzel a témával foglalkoznak. Magyarországon nem végeztek olyan kutatást, amelynek elsődleges célja a nyelvtanárok osztálytermi értékelésének vizsgálata lett volna. Dolgozatom ezt a hiányt igyekszik pótolni. Az értekezés két tanulmányra épül, melyek az Európai Unió által támogatott TÁMOP 3.1.9 projekt egy-egy fázisát mutatják be. A projekt célja egy olyan angol feladatbank összeállítása volt, amely 6 és 12 éves tanulók diagnosztikus értékelésére alkalmas, kipróbált és validált eszközöket tartalmaz. Az első fázisban 12 általános iskolai angol nyelvtanárt kérünk meg arra, hogy a kiküldött kritériumoknak megfelelően jellemezzen tíz angol feladatot, amelyeket az első hat évfolyamon gyakorlatukban sikerrel használnak diáikjaik nyelvtudásának mérésére. A következő lépésben, az előző fázis eredményeire építve 18 feladatot állítottunk össze. Összesen 18 általános iskolai nyelvtanárt kérünk fel, hogy diáikjaik nyelvtudás- és képességszintjéhez igazodva válaszjanak ki nyolc feladatot, azokat próbálják ki, és a megadott kritériumok szerint értékeljék őket. Az utolsó fázisban az addig összegyűjtött adatok alapján kidolgozott diagnosztikus tesztek kerültek kipróbálásra. Dolgozatom első tanulmánya az első fázis eredményeit mutatja be. A második tanulmány a harmadik fázisban elvégzett, egy általános iskolai angol nyelvtanár és őt hetedik osztályos diájkának esetbemutatásán keresztül nyújt betekintést a tanári osztálytermi értékelés magyarországi gyakorlatába.
1. sz. táblázat. A disszertáció felépítése

Bevezetés
• Témaválasztás indoklása
• Célkitűzések

I. Szakirodalmi áttekintés
1. fejezet: Kutatások a korai nyelvoktatás témakörében
• A kritikus periódus elméleti magyarázatai: neurológiai, kognitív és affektív
• Idegen nyelvi kontextusban is igaz a ‘minél fiatalabbb a tanuló annál jobb’ nézet?
2. fejezet: A korai nyelvtanuló és tanára
• Bevezetés
• A korai nyelvtanuló
  o Kognitív folyamatok
  o Tanulási stratégiák
  o Írás- és olvasáskészség
  o Sebezhetőség
  o Motiváció
  o Szorongás
  o Fizikai jellemzők
  o Szociokulturális háttér
  o Konklúzió
• A nyelvtanár
  o Tanári szakértelem
  o Tanári hittvallás
  o Konklúzió

3. fejezet: Korai nyelvoktatás Magyarországon
• Bevezetés
• Háttér
• Szabad nyelvválasztás
• Tantervek
• Az általános iskolai nyelvtanárok végzettsége
• A nyelvtanárok módosztartani tudása és nyelvi fejlődésülete
• Korai nyelvtanítási programok minősége és hatékonysága
• Konklúzió

4. fejezet: A korai nyelvtanulók nyelvtudásának mérése
• Bevezető
• Diagnosztikus tesztelés
• Dinamikus mérés
• Érvényesség és megbízhatóság a dinamikus mérés során
• A nyelvtudás konstruktszma
• A kritériumorientált tesztek
• A korai nyelvtanulókat tanító tanárok osztálytermi értékelési gyakorlata
• A korai nyelvtanulók értékelésének alapelvei
• Konklúzió

II. Két empirikus tanulmány a korai nyelvtanulók osztálytermi értékeléséről a magyar általános iskolákban
5. fejezet: Hátter a kutatásokhoz
• Kutatás kontextusa
• Résztvevők ismertetése
• Kutatásmódszertan ismertetése
• Konklúzió
6. fejezet: Általános iskolai nyelvtanárok nézetei arról, hogy milyen feladatok alkalmazhatóak a korai angol nyelvtanulók tudásának mérésére
• Az eljárás
• Eredmények
• Az eredmények tárgyalása
7. fejezet: Magyar hetedik osztályos nyelvtanulók tudásának mérése az angol mint idegen nyelv kontextusában: Egy angol nyelvtanár és diákjainak esettanulmánya
• Az eljárás
• Eredmények
• Az eredmények tárgyalása
8. fejezet: Konklúzió és további kutatási irányok
• A tanulmányok összefoglalása
• A vizsgálatok korlátai
• Implikációk
A disszertáció két fő részre és ezen belül nyolc fejezetre oszlik (lásd fent 1 sz. táblázat).

Az első részben (1-4. Fejezet) a kutatásaimhoz kapcsolódó elméleti hátteret mutatom be. Az első fejezet áttekintést ad a korai nyelvtanulással kapcsolatos kutatásokról. Ennek a fejezetnek az első része a kritikus periódus hipotézise mellett és ellene szóló neurológiai, kognitív és affektív érveket tárgyalja. Ezt követően arra keresem a választ, hogy vajon idegen nyelvi környezetben is helytálló a 'minél fiatalabb a nyelvtanuló annál jobb' nézet. A második fejezet a korai nyelv tanulás két legszempontosabb szereplőjét a korai nyelvtanulót és a tanárat mutatja be. A fejezet első része a korai nyelvtanulók azon sajátosságaira világít rá, amelyek idegen nyelvi fejlődésük szempontjából a legfontosabbak, és amelyek mentén nyelvtudásuk fejleszthető és mérhető. A második részben először azt vizsgálom, hogy milyen követelményeket kell teljesítenie az alsó tagozatos idegen nyelv tanítóknak diáikjaik sikeres nyelvtanulása érdekében. Ezt követően bemutatom, hogy a tanárok hitvallása mennyiben befolyásolja osztálytermi gyakorlatukat. Mivel a disszertáció mindkét empirikus tanulmányának résztvevői magyar oktatási intézményekből jöttek, a harmadik fejezet vázolja a korai idegennyelv-oktatás magyarországi helyzetét. A negyedik fejezet összefoglalja azokat a legfontosabb szempontokat, amelyeket a korai nyelvtanulók teljesítményének értékelése során szem előtt kell tartani. Ennek a fejezetnek az első része a nyelvtudás mérés két kurrens vonulatát a diagnosztikus mérést és a dinamikus tesztelést mutatja be. Ezt követően kitérek a megbízhatóság, az érvényesség és a nyelvtudás konstruktionálás problémájára. Mivel a két empirikus tanulmány során használt diagnosztikus mérőeszközök a kritériumorientált teszteknél használtak, ez utóbbi témát is röviden vázolom. Az negyedik fejezet végén a korai nyelvtanulók nyelvtudásának mérését vizsgáló empirikus kutatások eredményei ról számolok be.

A disszertáció második része négy fejezetből áll (5-8 Fejezet). A ötödik fejezet a két kutatást helyez el a kontextusban, és információt nyújt a résztvevőkről, valamint a kutatásmódszertanról. A hatodik fejezet tartalmazza az első feltáró jellegű, kvalitatív tanulmányt, amely a már említett EU projekt első fázisának eredményei ról számol be. Összesen 12 általános iskolai, angol nyelvtanár és azok diáikai vettek részt ebben a fázisban. A kutatás célja annak bemutatása volt, hogy az általános iskolában az angol nyelvet tanítók milyen feladatokat használnak a diákok nyelvi fejlődésének a mérésére. Az adatokat angol nyelvű kérdőív segítségével gyűjtöttem, és az elemzésekhez leíró statisztikát és a kérdőívek tematikus elemzését alkalmaztam. A hetedik fejezet mutatja be a második, kvalitatív esettanulmányt, amely az EU projekt harmadik fázisában került kivitelezésre. Itt került sor az első tanulmányban felmerülő kérdések további vizsgálatára. Az esettanulmányban egy jó nevű, pécsi általános
iskola angol nyelvtanára és öt hetedik osztályos diákja vett részt. A célem az volt, hogy közelebbről bemutassam, hogyan értékel a nyelvtanár a tanulókat, hogyan történik az órai visszacsatolás, és az EU projekt második fázisában a tanár és a diákok által kipróbált szóbeli feladatok hogyan működnek.

2 sz. táblázat: A kutatás kérdései, adatgyűjtő eszközei és az elemzés módszerei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kutatási kérdések</th>
<th>Adatgyűjtő eszközök</th>
<th>Az elemzés módszerei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Első kutatás</strong></td>
<td>Általános iskolai nyelvtanárok nézetei arról, hogy milyen feladatok alkalmaznak a korai angol nyelvtanulók tudásának méréšére</td>
<td>Angol nyelvű kérdőív</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résztevők: 12 angol nyelvtanár</td>
<td>1) Milyen tesztfeladatokat használnak a tanárok a diákok idegen nyelvi fejlődésének mérésére az angol órákon?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Hogyan értékelik a tanárok a diákok angol nyelvtudását?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Második kutatás</strong></td>
<td>Magyar hetedik osztályos nyelvtanulók tudásának méréése az angol mint idegen nyelv kontextusában: Egy angol nyelvtanár és diákjainak esettanulmánya</td>
<td>Angol nyelvű kérdőív</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résztevők: 1 tanár 5 hetedik osztályos tanuló</td>
<td>1) Milyen szóbeli feladatokat használ a tanár a diákok nyelvtudásának mérése során?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Hogyan értékelni a tanulók teljesítményét és hogyan ad visszajelzést a tanár?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Mi volt a véleménye a résztevő tanárnak és tanulóiának az EU projekt harmadik fázisában általuk kipróbált diagnosztikus tesztekéről?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Hogyan értékelte a tanár a diákokat miközben a diagnosztikus teszteket oldották meg a kipróbálás során?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Hogyan működnek a szóbeli diagnosztikus tesztek?</td>
<td>Félig-strukturált interjú</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Az adatgyűjtés során a tanárral és a diákokkal félít-strukturált interjúkat készítettem, hang és képfelvételeket készítettem arról, ahogyan a résztvevő tanulók megoldják a szóbeli feladatokat, és két tanórát figyeltem meg. Az így kapott adatokat tematikusan elemeztem. A nyolcadik fejezet összefoglalja a dolgozat eredményeit, és vázolja a vizsgálatok korlátoit és implikációit.

A két vizsgálat kutatási kérdései, adatgyűjtő eszközei, és az adatok elemzésének módszerei a 2 sz. táblázatban találhatóak. A következőkben a két kutatás lényeges eredményeit ismertetem részletesebben.

A kutatás eredményei

Az első kvalitatív tanulmány az EU projekt első fázisának eredményeit mutatja be. Ebben a fázisban 12 általános iskolai angol nyelvtanár vállalta, hogy beszámol arról, hogyan értékelik diáikjaik nyelvi fejlődését, és milyen feladatot használnak erre a célra az első hat évfordulóban. A válaszadókat megkértük, hogy válasszanak ki, majd egy angol nyelvű kérdőívben megadott kritériumok alapján, jellemezzenek tíz angol feladatot, amelyeket az első hat évfordulón gyakorlattal használnak diáikjaik nyelvtudásának mérésére. A kérdőív olyan kérdésekre, mint például milyen késések és részkésések mérnek a feladatok, hogyan teljesítenek a legjobb, a közepes és a leggyengébb tanulók, vagy milyen népszerű a diákok körében az adott feladat, kereste a válaszokat. A résztvevők által összesen beküldött 119 feladat nagy eltérést mutatt mind a minimumnak, mind a megadott kritériumoknak.

A válaszadók által kiválasztott feladatokat illetően az eredmények egyezést mutattak korábbi, a magyar korai nyelvoktatási vizsgálat kutatások megállapításaival (Morvai, Öveges és Ottó, 2009; Nikolov, 2003, 2008). Az eredmények azt mutatták, hogy a résztvevő tanárok módszertani és a gyerekek életkori sajátosságaira vonatkozó ismeretei hiányosak. Sok esetben a beküldött feladatok, például verseny, parti játékok, kreatív feladatok, nem voltak alkalmasak értékelésre. Mivel az általános iskola első hat évfolyamára járó diákoknak az olvasás és az írás még anyanyelvükön is sokszor problémát okoz, az idegen nyelvi tananyagban szóbeli tevékenységeknek kell tülsúlyban lenniük (Curtain és Dahlberg 2004). Ily módon az értékelés során is fontos, hogy a beszédértést és beszédkészséget mérő feladatokon legyen a hangsúly. A kapott eredmények azonban ennek az ellenkezőjét mutatták. A tanárok által beküldött feladatok többsége olvasás és/vagy írások mér, és több mint fele egyszerre kettő vagy három készséget is mér. A részkészségek elemezésekor az is kiderült, hogy néhány esetben a
megkérdeztettek az adott készséghez nem illő részkészséget jelöltek meg (pl. intonáció/kiejtés – olvasás/írás, konkrét információ beszédértés – beszéd-/olvasás-/írás készség). Ezek az adatok két problémát is jeleznek. Az egyik, hogy a tanároknak sok esetben nehézséget okozott megállapítani, hogy pontosan melyik készséget és részkészséget méri az adott feladat. A másik, hogyha egyszerre több készséget is mér egy feladat, akkor nem lehet pontosan beazonosítani, hogy mely területeken vannak a tanulóknak problémái, következőképpen, mit kell még fejlesztenie. Másik hiányosság, amelyre a kutatás rávilágított, hogy a feladatok, amelyek a résztvevő tanárok szerint a korai nyelvtanulók tudásának mérésére alkalmasak, többségében frontális vagy egyéni munkára épültek. Ezeknek a munkaformáknak a hátránya, szemben a pár vagy csoport munkával, hogy nem teszik lehetővé, hogy a jobb képességű tanulók segítsenek, és ily módon biztonságérzetet adjanak gyengebb társaiknak, ami hátráltatja ez utóbbi tanulócsoport előrehaladását. A korai nyelvtanulók másik jellemzője, hogy a számukra érdekes, az idegen nyelv használatára összöző tevékenységeken keresztül tudják igazán megmutatni nyelvtudásukat (McKay, 2006, 47. o.). Ennek megfelelően a válaszadók által beküldött feladatok jelentős része magas pontszámot kapott a népszerűségi skálán a diákoktól. Azonban akadt olyan is a feladatok között, amely nem nyerte el a tanulók tetszését; ily módon alkalmatlan volt nyelvtudásuk mérésére. Az adatok elemzése alapján elmondható, hogy résztvevő tanároknak nehézséget okozott olyan kategóriák, mint például feladat, feladat nehézségi foka, készségek és részkészségek, alkalmazása, amelyekkel nyelvtanárokként tisztában kellene lenniük.

Ami a tanárok által alkalmazott értékelési eljárásokat illeti, az eredmények megegyeznek más, hasonló nemzetközi tanulmányok eredményeivel (Butler, 2009; Edelenbos és Kubanek-German, 2004; Rea-Dickins és Gardner, 2000). A résztvevő tanárok nehezen tudták a tanulók nyelvtudásának szintjét meghatározni, és különbséget tenni a legjobb, a közepes és a gyenge teljesítmény között. Az értékelési folyamat leírása során pontos kritériumok helyett homályosan megfogalmazott gyakorlatotról számoltak be. Arra a kérdésre, hogy hogyan értékelik a tanulók teljesítményét a feladatokban, a válaszadók leggyakrabban azt említették, hogy milyen módon díjazzák a legjobb tanulókat. Ez a gyakorlat motiválja a jó diákokat, de figyelmen kívül hagyja a gyengebbeket, akik így joggal hihetik, hogy az ő eredményük említésre sem méltó, azaz negatív visszajelzést kapnak, aminek következtében elbátorítalanodnak, elbizonytalanodnak. Ezen túl problémát jelent, hogy mivel a tanár semmilyen konkrét információt nem adott a teljesítményükről, így azt sem tudták meg, hogy mely területeken vannak még hiányosságaik. Ez a gyakorlat a gyengebb tanulók
motivációjának jelentős visszaeséséhez vezethet. Sok esetben a válaszadók nem említettek a díjazáson kívül egyéb értékelést. Azonban, ha a jutalmazást nem egészíti ki a tanárnak a tanuló teljesítményéről nyújtott pontos visszajelzése, akkor ez önmagában, még ha segít is a motivációt fenntartani, esetleg növeli azt, nem vezet a nyelvtudás terén javuláshoz. A válaszokból az is kiderült, hogy a feladatok ellenőrzését és javítását ritkán követte gyakorlás. Ha azonban a diákoknak nincs lehetősége a gyakorlásra, valószínűleg nem fognak javulást tapasztalni a tudásukban, és ez is a motiváció elvesztéséhez vezethet. A gyakorlás lehetőségének megteremtése azért is lényeges, mert a diagnosztikus mérésnek az értékelésen kívül a fejlesztés is alapvető feladata (Garrison, Chandler és Ehringhaus 2009). A pontozás elengedhetetlen része a nyelvtanulók értékelésének (McKay 2006). Azonban ennek alkalmazására nagyon kevés utalás volt található a válaszokban. Az önértékelés és a társak értékelése a diákok saját tanulásukkal szemben érzett tudatosságra és felelősségre ösztönzi (McKay 2006), ezért különösen nagy a jelentőségük a korai nyelvtanulás esetében. Ennek ellenére igen kis számban említették a résztvevők az értékelés folyamatának leírásakor ezeknek a technikáknak az alkalmazását. A válaszok arra is engedtek következtetni, hogy a tanárok követték a traditionális gyakorlatot, amelyben a tanulás/tanítás és az értékelés két egymástól elkülönülő folyamat (assessment of learning), és ennek megfelelően az értékelés során a diákok az esetek nagy részében nem kaptak segítséget. Ez a gyakorlat szemben helyezkedik az utóbbi évek egyre elterjedtebb elképzelésével (assessment for learning), amely szerint a tanárnak a segítséget kell adnia az értékelés során is, ha szükség van rá, hogy a tanulók tudásuk legjavát tudják nyújtani.

A dolgozatom második tanulmánya az első kutatás során felmerülő kérdéseket vizsgálta közelebbről egy jó nevű általános iskola angol nyelvtanára, Anikó, és öt hetedik osztályos tanulójának, Robi, Béla, Balázs, Anett és Lili, esetén keresztül. A cél annak feltárása volt, hogy 1) milyen szóbeli feladatokat használ a tanár a gyerekek nyelvtudásának mérése során, 2) hogyan értékel a diákokat és hogyan ad visszajelzést a teljesítményükéről, 3) mi volt a véleménye a résztvevő tanárnak és tanulónak az EU projekt harmadik fázisában általuk kipróbált diagnosztikus tesztekről, 4) hogyan értékelte a tanár a diákokat miközben a diagnosztikus teszteket oldották meg a kipróbálás során, és 5) hogyan működnek a szóbeli diagnosztikus tesztek. Az eredmények jól illeszkednek az első kutatás megállapításaihoz. A tanár módszertani tudásának számos hiányosságára derül fény. A korai nyelvtanuló figyelmét rövid, változatos, érdekes és önmagukban motiváló feladatokkal lehet lekötni. Az is fontos ebben az életkorban, hogy a feladatok elvégzése során a hangsúly a jelentésen és nem a
nyelvtani szabályokon van (McKay 2006). Az adatok elemzése ezzel szemben arra mutatott rá, hogy Anikó óráin gyakoriak voltak a nyelvtani gyakorlatok, kontextusból kiemelt szavak számonkérése illetve tanulása, és a tankönyvi illetve ahhoz hasonló feladatok monoton ismétlése. Noha a pár és csoportmunka sok szempontból hatékonyabb korai nyelvtanulók esetében, és Anikó is tisztában volt vele, hogy diákJai jobban szeretnék társaikkal közösen dolgozni, óráira a frontális, kérdés-válaszra épülő osztálymunka volt a jellemző. Anikó úgy vélte, hogy a tanulók beszédkészségét legjobban memorizált szövegek felmondásával lehet méni. Mivel a nyelvhelyességnek nagy jelentőséget tulajdonított, akár a kreatív nyelvhasználata rovására is, csak a „jobb képességű” diákok esetében fogadta el az eredeti szövegtől való eltérést. Anikó úgy gondolta, hogy a diákok egyéni képességeinek és igényeinek a kielégítése sok időt vesz igénybe. Ezért az órákat egy „átlag gyerek” igényeihez igazította. Ez azt jelentette, hogy például gyakorlás során az egész csoport ugyanazt a feladatot oldotta meg függetlenül attól, hogy kinek volt rá igazán szüksége. Ezzel a gyakorlattal szemben az egyik diák is megfogalmazta ellenérzését, amikor azt mondta, „aki k tudnak haladni azoknak, nem kéne ott kullogniuk. Azzal a gyerekkel félreül, a többiek me g csinálnak valami feladatot”.

A tanári értékelést illetően is egyeznek az esettanulmány eredményei az első kutatás megállapításaival. Hasonlóan az órai munkához az értékelés során a hangsúly a nyelvi formán és nem a jelentésen volt. A diákok szóbeli értékelése során a tanár számára fontosabb volt, hogy minősítse a diákok teljesítményét, minthogy részletes visszajelzést adjon arról, hogy mi tudnak és mit nem. Anikót úgy tűnt jobban érdeklő, hogy mi az amit a diákJai nem tudnak, és hány nyelvtani hibát vétenek a feladatok elvégzése során, mint az, hogy mennyit tanultak és fejlődtek; ezt a hozzáállást a visszajelzései is tükrözték. A korai nyelvtanulók esetében fontos, hogy a tanár rendszeresen részletes visszajelzést adjon a nyelvutáskról és arról, hogy mennyit fejlődtek, így segítve a motiváció fenntartását. Anikó esetében a tanulók ilyen részletes információkat elsősorban a félév vagy az év végén kaptak. Az adatok azt is mutatták, hogy az értékelés során Anikó nem előre meghatározott kritériumok alapján értékelte a tanulókat, amiből az is következett, hogy a gyerekek nem mindig értékelte a tanári visszajelzést, mert túl általános és homályos volt. Anikó esetében is jellemző volt, hogy az órán csak a legjobb teljesítményt nyújtó gyerekeket dicsérte meg és adott nekik piros pontot, míg a gyengébbek teljesítményéről nem esett szó. Úgy vélte, hogy a segítség nyújtás a diákok tudásának felmérése során nem megengedett. Anikó nem támogatta az ön- és a társak értékelését sem, mert úgy gondolta, hogy a gyerekek inkább a jelentésre koncentráljanak, és figyelmen kívül hagyják a
nyelvhelyességet. Ezzel szemben, ahogyan ő maga fogalmazta, „ahol én értékelem az ott rendben van”.

Anikó a korábban általa és hetedikes diájak által kipróbált diagnosztikus tesztekéről csupán néhány általános gondolatot fogalmazott meg. Véleménye szerint a diákok könnyen meg tudták oldani a feladatokat. Aníkónak csupán azokkal a feladatokkal voltak problémái, ahol egynél több megoldás is lehetséges volt. Nehézséget okozott számára a válaszok pontozása a képleírás esetében, ahol a tanulók egyszerre több ötlettel álltak elő. Anikó úgy vélt, hogy azok a tesztek jól, ahol csak egy jó megoldás létezik, hiszen azoknak a számát könnyen össze lehet adni és máris megvan az érdemjegy. Aníkó ellenére, hogy ő maga is belátta, hogy a diagnosztikus tesztek sokkal átfogóbb képet nyújtanak a diákok nyelvi képességeiről, továbbra is olyan tesztfeladatokat részesített előnyben ahol az értékelés “egyértelmű” volt. Anikó válaszaiból kiderült, hogy kevés időt töltött a tanári útmutatóban részletesen leírt értékelési szempontok tanulmányozásával; ezért nehézségekbe ütközött, amikor ezeket alkalmaznia kellett a diákok értékelése során. Az adatok elemzése arra is rávilágított, hogy Anikó ragaszkodott a normatív és holisztikus tesztelési módokhoz, hűen a magyar oktatási tradíciókhoz, és ezért nehezére esett a diagnosztikus mérés. Ez utóbbi mérési módnak azonban különösen fontos szerepe van a korai nyelvtanulók esetében. Mivel a gyerekek nyelvelsajátítása lassú folyamat, motivációjuk fenntartása érdekében lényeges, hogy rendszeresen felmérjük mennyit fejlődtek, így mutatva meg nekik, hogy milyen sokat tudnak és, hogy a kemény munka megérte az erőfeszítést.

A szóbeli feladatok, amelyeket kipróbáltam a résztvevő hetedikes diákokkal, alkalmasnak bizonyultak ennek a korcsoportnak. Néhány kivételével a tanulóknak tetszettek a feladatok és az, hogy szabadon használhatták az angol nyelvet. Elmondásuk szerint a képleírást leszámlítva nem szoktak hasonló feladatokat órán megoldani. A képleírás esetében is azonban az órán a hangsúly egy-egy nyelvtani szerkezetnek a gyakorlásán volt nem a szabad nyelvhasználaton. Az adatokból az is kiderült, hogy a diákoknak eleinte szokatlan volt saját maguk és társaik értékelése; de hamar belejöttek, és szívesen mondók el véleményüket a saját és osztálytársaink teljesítményéről. A próba igazolta Anikó fenntartását e két utóbbi értékelési módszerekkel kapcsolatban: a diákokat valóban jobban érdekelte, hogy megértik-e azt, amit a társaik mondanak nekik, mint az, hogy nyelvtani szempontból helyes-e a mondat. A gyerekek életkori sajátosságaikból fakadóan a nyelvtanárnak is hasonlóan kellene eljárnia.
A kutatás korlátai

Az eredmények bemutatása után meg kell említeni a kutatás korlátait is. Ezek egyike, hogy a résztvevők alacsony száma miatt a kapott eredmények nem alkalmasak általánosításra. Az első feltáró jellegű, kvalitatív kutatás során a cél az volt, hogy minél több általános iskolai nyelvtanártól gyűjtsünk információkat, ez magyarázza a kérdőív alkalmazását. Azonban felhívásunkra összesen 26 tanár jelentkezett, akik közül végül csupán 12 küldte vissza a kért adatokat. A második kvalitatív esetanulmány esetében az első kutatás során felmerülő kérdéseket szeretnénk volna közelebbről, mélyebbről megvizsgálni, ezért csak néhány, az EU projekt harmadik fázisában is résztvevő tanár és diájkainak részvételére volt szükség. Azonban mindösszesen egy tanár vállalta, hogy megosztja gondolatait az általa kipróbált diagnosztikus tesztekről és értékelési módszereiről. További vizsgálatok szükségesek annak feltárására, hogy hogyan mérik fel a tanárok diájaik nyelvtudását, milyen feladatokat használnak az órán, és az így kapott információk milyen mértékben járulnak hozzá a tanulók fejlődéséhez. Továbbá hasznos lenne megfigyelni, hogy hogyan és milyen értékelési szempontokat alkalmaznak a tanárok, hogyan hasznosítják a felmérés során nyert adatokat a tanításuk során, és hogyan segítségük, hogy az általuk diagnosztizált szintről eljussanak a következőre.

Szintén mindkét tanulmánynál kapcsolatban megjegyzendő, hogy az adatgyűjtés elsősorban önbevalláson alapult. További órai megfigyelésekre van szükség, hogy kiegészítjük és igazoljuk a kérdőívvel és az interjúk során gyűjtött adatokat.

Összegzés

A disszertáció elméleti és gyakorlati eredményeit összefoglalva elmondható, hogy a dolgozat számos tekintetben hozzájárult a magyar általános iskolai angol nyelvtanárok értékelési gyakorlatának megismeréséhez. Az első tanulmány kérdőívvel gyűjtött adatok segítségével igyekezett feltérképezni, hogy az angol nyelvtanárok milyen feladatokat tartanak alkalmasnak diájaik nyelvtudásának mérésére, és ezeket hogyan alkalmazzák. A második esetanulmány közélebbről vizsgálta meg, hogy hogyan zajlik a tanári értékelés az angol órákon. Az eredmények azt mutatták, hogy a résztvevő általános iskolai angol nyelvtanárok tanítási módszertana és értékelési gyakorlata fejlesztésre szorul. Az általuk alkalmazott feladatok sok esetben nem feleltek meg a korai nyelvtanulók igényeinek és kognitív fejlettségi szintjének. Az olyan órai tevékenységek, amelyek nem az adott gyerekek életkori
sajátosságaihoz és tanulási szituációjához vannak igazítva, megakadályozhatják, hogy a tanulók sikereket érjenek el a tanórán, ami hosszútávon negatívan befolyásolhatja a nyelvtanulási kedvet.

A tanárok értékelési módszereit illetően is hasonló hiányosságokra világítottak rá a kutatások. Az eredményekből kiderült, hogy a tanároknak nehézséget okozott megállapítani a diákok nyelvtudásának szintjét, és diagnosztizálni erős és gyenge pontjaikat. A gyerekek ritkán kaptak visszajelzést teljesítményükről és nyelvi tudásukról, amelynek köszönhetően nem látták pontosan, hogy mennyit fejlődtek. Ez a gyakorlat különösen ártalmas a gyengébb diákok esetében, akik így nem tudják, hogy mit kell tenniük annak érdekében, hogy felzárkózzanak ügyesebb társaikhoz, és így a két tanulócsoport képességei közötti távolság egyre nagyobbnak lesz.

A jók és a gyengébbek közötti különbséget tovább növelte, hogy míg a jól teljesítők dicséretet és piros pontot kaptak az órán, a kevésbé ügyes diákok teljesítményéről szó sem esett, ami negatív visszajelzésként értelmezhető. Az értékelés során a tanárok jobban hangsúlyozták, hogy mi az, amit a tanulóik nem tudnak ahelyett, hogy arra koncentráltak volna, hogy mire képesek, így segítve elő, hogy legyen sikerelményük és lássák, hogy milyen sokat fejlődtek.

Mivel dolgozatom eredményei megegyeznek más, a magyar korai nyelvoktatást vizsgáló kutatások megállapításaival (Bors, L., Lugossy, R., és Nikolov, M., 2001; Lugossy, 2009; Morvai, Öveges és Ottó, 2009; Nikolov, 1999, 2003b, 2008; Nikolov és Józsa, 2006; Nikolov és Nagy, 2003) általánosságban is megfogalmazható, hogy Magyarországon a korai nyelvtanítású programok hatékonysága és hasznossága sok esetben megkérdőjelethető. A két tanulmány arra is rámutatott, hogy a tanárok tisztában vannak azzal, hogy mi a jó gyakorlat, de hitvallásuk, a diákok és a szülők elvárásai, ahogy Anikó, a második tanulmány résztvevő tanára is megfogalmazta, „a mi gyerekeink és az oktatási rendszerünk jegyekben gondolkodik”, megakadályozzák őket abban, hogy a helyes módszereket alkalmazzák. Ez persze nem jelenthet kifogást, hiszen ezeknek a korai programoknak nagyon fontos szerepe van a gyerekek életében. Nagyban meghatározzák a motivációjukat, a célkultúrához és annak nyelvéhez, valamint magához az idegen nyelv tanulásához fűződő viszonyukat. Éppen ezért létfontosságú, hogy korai nyelvtanulókat tanító szakemberek a helyes módszertant kövessék; ellenkező esetben, ahogy Nikolov (2008, 17. o.) is írta, „a gyerekek jobban jártak volna, ha nem részesülnek ilyen nyelvtanulási élményekben.”
Hivatkozások


A témához kapcsolódó saját publikációk és tudományos munkák


