

CLAIRE SELBY'S METHOD FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO VERY YOUNG
LEARNERS ON THE BASIS OF NURSERY SCHOOL KRAINA MARZEŃ IN OPOLE

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INTRODUCTION

In XXI century, the processes of globalisation are considered to create a new quality of interpersonal relations going beyond states' borders; therefore, the need of communication between people who belong to different nationalities and speak different languages appeared. International community was faced with subconscious choice of a language which would function as means of people's interaction at the global level. English has unofficially become lingua franca, and now it is widely used for communicative purposes in various fields such as politics, economy, business, trade, science, culture, and tourism. In order to fully participate in this international structure, one has to be able to speak English fluently. Parents seem to understand that need, and they put pressure on their children to begin English learning since their early years. What is more, very young children are thought to have special linguistic abilities to acquire their second, third etc. language which enable them to switch from mother tongue to other language effortlessly. These abilities are irreversibly disappearing with age. Therefore, it is a matter of great significance to begin language acquisition around the age of three.

For these reasons, the author decided to take a closer look on methods which were designed to teach English to very young learners. This age group requires approaches which are different from those applicable to young learners, teenagers or adults. The methods suitable for very young children focus mainly on kinaesthetic and visual channel of perception, and offer the wide range of resources such as games, songs, stories, and animations which children find really involving.

The present paper places focus on describing relatively new approach to teaching English to very young learners - Claire Selby's method. As it is being applied in nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole, the author decided to compare theoretical assumptions of this method with its practical implementation in this particular kindergarten in the form of descriptive case study.

The first chapter of the present paper puts emphasis on explaining the notion of very young learners, providing their traits derived from the level of cognitive development,

and transferring these characteristics into the classroom context. It also includes the description of methods which can be applied to teaching English to very young learners with special focus on the assumptions underlying Claire Selby's method such as innatist view on human language, optimal conditions under which effective English teaching in a group of very young learners takes place, the concept of spiral language system, and bilingual programme development. The last subsection of the first chapter concerns review of conducted research in the field of teaching English to this age group focusing on different ways of introducing vocabulary.

The second chapter begins with providing definitions and characteristic features of case study approach which was used to conduct the research. The remaining part of the chapter refers to the study carried out on the group of children attending nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. It includes description of Tick Tock group and its teacher; procedure of the study which involves non-participant observation, interview with the teacher, and questionnaires filled in by the parents. Then the author of the present paper presents results of the study and compare them with theoretical assumptions of Claire Selby's method.

CHAPTER ONE
METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS
THEORY AND RESEARCH REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the definitions of very young learners, provide their characteristics derived from general level of cognitive development, and underline the implications of introduced theory for the process of teaching language to this age group; describe certain methods of teaching English to very young learners with a focus on Claire Selby's methodology; and review existing research concerning this particular topic.

1.2. Defining very young learners

Nunan (2011) defines young learners as children who are from 3 to 15 years old. At the same time he emphasises the fact that distinguishing many subgroups according to children's chronological age is not useful as learners' cognitive development is a matter of greater importance in defining young learners. The author refers to Pinter's statement that a more suitable segmentation of learners would be dividing them into younger learners and older learners. The former is described as children "at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling." (p. 11)

Reilly and Ward (2011), however, tend to subdivide young learners into smaller groups. They define very young learners as children who are not able to read and who have not started their compulsory education yet. Very young learners are on average from three to six years old, and they may attend nursery school or kindergarten. The authors also state that very young learners can be classified as learners belonging to a pre-school stage. On the other hand, Selby (2012) defines very young learners as children between the ages of three and five.

As it is claimed by many authors (e.g. Nunan, 2011, Reilly & Ward, 2011), the level of children's intellectual development is a matter of greater significance than chronological age in defining very young learners. Jean Piaget, the unquestionable authority in the field of child's psychology in 20th century, introduced the theory of cognitive development in which the interaction between a child and the environment as well as child's effort to solve problems occurring in its surroundings are crucial in the process of learning. A child can be described as an active constructor because its knowledge is not innate; it results from actions taken by the child, and it is built through its interaction with the environment. As the child develops, actions are performed in its mind, and through this internalisation, thinking appears. (cit. in: Cameron, 2005).

According to Piaget and Inhelder (1996), a child can develop through assimilation and accommodation. The former is when a child repeats a particular action in order to achieve expected results; the latter concerns adapting child's performance to alternating conditions of environment. These two processes are usually connected. The assimilation precedes accommodation and if it does not lead to intended results, a child may modify its action and thus accommodation appears.

Piagetian theory of cognitive development is based on the assumption that the child's intellectual development is gradual, and it ceases with the formation of logical thinking (cit. in: Cameron, 2005). Piaget distinguished three main stages of knowledge constructing through which every child passes in the first sixteen years of its life: sensorimotor stage (0-2 years), preoperational stage (2-7 years), and operational stage (7-16 years). The latter is divided into two other segments: concrete operational stage (7-11 years) and formal operational stage (11-16) (cited in Brown, 2000). In consecutive phases of development, different ways of thinking appear; successive stages may be, in fact, described as complete reorganisations of thinking. In addition, the further phases of development are considered to be more complex from previous ones (Schaffer, 2009). Miller (2011) defines Piagetian stage of development as:

A period of time during which the child's thinking and behaviour in a variety of situations tend to reflect a particular type of underlying mental logical structure, or general way of thinking. That is, each stage has a different structure, or set of mental actions, which allows a particular type of interaction between the child and the environment. (p. 661)

For the purpose of this diploma paper, the most significant phase to discuss in detail is preoperational stage, as it emphasises features which are characteristic for very young learners. Firstly, children who are from two to seven years of age are able to think symbolically. They can create objects representations which enable them to manipulate images of these items in their head (Piaget & Inhelder, 1996). It can be noticed during children's play, when they, for instance, simulate that they are drinking from an empty cup or they imagine that a crayon is a magic.

Secondly, according to Piaget, very young children are egocentric; they are able to see the world only from their own perspective. Children's egocentrism has not a pejorative meaning, and it is not connected with egoism; children do not simply understand that other people are able to perceive objects and situations differently. This trait can be demonstrated by Piaget's famous experiment with the model of three hills. Children are sat in the front of the model; then they are shown pictures of it taken from various angles and they are asked to point to the picture which represents what they see while looking at the model. Children are able to do it with ease. Then a small figurine is placed on the different side of the model, and children are asked to point to the picture which represents what figurine sees while looking at the model. Children point to the picture showing what they can see (Schaffer, 2009).

Third characteristic of children in the early preoperational stage is that they are not able to distinguish which items are animate and which are not. Moreover, they assign the features of living organisms to inanimate ones. This tendency is called animism and it evolves during this phase. Initially, every object is considered by children to have feelings, be conscious, and able to think. Then children regard moving objects as living ones. Later in preoperational stage, they assign life to things which moves spontaneously. Finally, children realise that only humans and animals are animate (Schaffer, 2009).

Another feature distinctive for children at this level of cognitive development is rigidity of thoughts. This notion can be understood twofold. Firstly, it concerns irreversibility of thinking which is defined by Schaffer (2009) as tendency to think about objects and events as being suggested by child's first experience with them. For this reason, children in preoperational stage cannot reverse courses of action in their minds, or they are not

able to subtract, as subtraction is the reverse process to addition. Secondly, the child is not able to adjust itself to changes in appearance of objects. Schaffer (2009) illustrates this fact with the example of a dog wearing cat's mask which is considered by children in preoperational stage to be a cat. When the mask is pulled off, the children claim that this animal is a dog.

Finally, according to Piaget, children between 2-7 years of age are incapable of thinking deductively and inductively. However, the form of reasoning which is characteristic for this age group is described as transductive. It means that children have a tendency to create a causal connections between two details which are not originally linked (cit. in: Schaffer, 2009). For instance, when they go to sleep at night, they tend to say that the sun goes to sleep as well. Excluding animism, which is also present in this example, the reason for sun's sleep, in child's opinion, is that children go to sleep, and in this way two independent actions are jointed together. What is more, children can reverse causal connections; they wrongly perceive a sequence of a cause and an effect of an event (Schaffer, 2009). Although children in preoperational stage can think symbolically, they are restricted by above-mentioned features. Consequently, they cannot easily manipulate pieces of information which are taken from the environment. For this reason, Piaget described this stage as preoperational.

This theory may be criticised for underestimating the influence of adults and peers on child's development. It also puts emphasis on actions performed by a child which lead to intellectual growth, diminishing the role of communication in constructing child's knowledge and skills (Cameron, 2005). Piaget considered the language to be the side effect of actions undertaken by the child, and he did not assign any communicative functions to it (Schaffer, 2009). In contrast to Piagetian study, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of child's development stresses the importance of language in cognitive development and places a child in the social context (Cameron, 2005).

Vygotsky's theory puts emphasis on social factors which are considered to be crucial in development of thinking process. The child absorbs culture and social interactions, as Blanck (2002) claims, "in the form of neuropsychic systems" which become the "part of the psychological activity of the human brain" (p.44). These systems form a base for development of more advanced mental processes in which social contexts

and signs, culturally linked to various objects, are deeply rooted. What is more, the child is not left alone as far as learning is concerned; it is supported by adults who surround it and help in development by drawing its attention to different objects and events, asking questions, and telling tales. Adults explain the environment to the child; they perform the role of a mediator of the world. According to Vygotsky, children's intellectual capabilities can be firstly noticed in adult and child's collective actions; later capabilities are adopted and used by a child (cit. in: Schaffer, 2009). This support is very important for cognitive development; it enables the child to perform tasks which would be impossible to do without adults' help (cit. in: Cameron, 2005).

What is more, according to Cameron (2005), such activities as well as the help provided by adults, more competent peers, or teachers in the classroom context construct the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Chaiklin (2003) presents slightly different opinion, stating that the concept of ZPD refers to the level of child's development rather than to tasks which the learner is able to perform. Vygotsky defines ZPD as the difference between what the child has already known and what it can learn with adults' help (cit. in: Tudge, 2002). Adults help children reach the borders of their ZPDs and then establish next zones which include different, more complex tasks and activities. What is more, every child possesses such a zone, and at the same time, every child's ZPD is different. Dissimilarities result from the fact that the child can use adult's support fully or partly, and thus effects of adult's efforts may vary (cit. in: Cameron, 2005).

Another important aspect of Vygotsky's theory is language development and its functions. Firstly, language serves as a tool for transferring social experiences as Vygotsky claims that children rely on the previous generations' output (cit. in: Schaffer, 2009). Secondly, the appearance of the language provides a child with new opportunities to experience the world, and thus it fosters child's cognitive development. Thirdly, language contributes to children's self-organisation because they start to assign symbols to words and use it to interact with the environment (Blanck, 2002). It is possible to observe this phenomenon among children talking to itself during a play. These monologues are called the egocentric speech. With increasing age, most of it becomes internalised; children speak less aloud and egocentric speech develops into inner speech (Cameron, 2005). The egocentric speech is seen from Vygotskian perspective as the transitional form

in which the child has not yet distinguished inner speech from social functions (Wretsch & Addison Stone, 1986). With the development of inner speech, children gradually become independent from the reliance on adults as far as thinking is concerned (cit. in Cameron, 2005). It may be concluded that language is transformed into thoughts around the pre-school age (Schaffer, 2009).

Vygotsky studied language development by observing the emergence of children's speech. He discriminated between "outward talks and what is happening in the child's mind" (cit. in: Cameron, 2005, p.5). The results of the study show that a child, initially, uses one word which may possibly represent various meanings (cit. in: Cameron, 2005). For instance, by saying 'mommy', the child can mean 'there is mommy' or 'come here, mommy'. As the idiolect improves, the child can divide its thoughts into smaller parts and express them with words which represent these thoughts (Cameron, 2005).

The role of the language in child's cognitive development is strongly emphasized also in Bruner's theory. Vygotsky states that adults explain the world to children, whereas Bruner focus on the procedure of using the language by adults in order to help children in fulfilling tasks. Such a spoken support from parents and teachers is called scaffolding (cit. in: Cameron, 2005). Cameron (2005) mentions actions undertaken by American parents during effective scaffolding of their children. These include the following: awakening children's interest in the tasks, making activities simpler by dividing them into smaller parts, reminding children of the objectives of the tasks in order to keep their interest, emphasizing the most important actions to be done, showing other ways of completing some parts of the tasks, managing children's annoyance during the tasks, and providing children with the models of completing the tasks. In addition, parents were able to adjust their help to children's needs and competence.

According to Bruner, routines and formats are important and helpful in language development. They create appropriate environment for scaffolding to take place. The notion of the routine is illustrated by an instance of a parent reading books to a child from the age of infancy every day, at the similar hour. Cameron (2005) indicates that with child's increasing age, changes are introduced in both, types of books and actions taken by the child and parent, but elementary format remains the same. Firstly, the parent owns the initiative; it provides the child with pictures descriptions and short instructions. When the

child starts to communicate verbally, it participates more in the routine. The parent uses different methods to help the child in understanding the story such as repetitions or vocabulary appropriate for child's age. When reading skill is developed, the parent can choose books with more complicated vocabulary and adjust its scaffolding to child's competence.

1.3. Very young learners in the classroom context.

Piagetian, Vygotsky's, and Bruner's theories arguably carry practical implications for teaching English to very young learners. Piaget does not assign the significant function to language in child's cognitive development; nevertheless, he stresses the importance of the environment for children, as they construct their competence through experiencing the world. Teachers can create appropriate environment for children's actions to take place. In other words, teachers should provide opportunities for language learning to children, and they will possibly take advantage of these opportunities in their own ways (Cameron, 2005). In addition, Piagetian abovementioned experiments can give the teachers pieces of advice about sorts of activities which could be used and which should be avoided during lessons. For instance, experiment with the perspective of children in preoperational stage shows that it is difficult for them to see the world from different perspective; consequently activities such as role playing and pair working should be minimised in very young learners' classroom. Another example concerns children thoughts being irreversible. Teacher should provide children from three to six years of age with step-by-step instructions which are adequate and comprehensive for them.

Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development can be also used in the process of teaching English to very young learners. Teachers can take on the roles of the language mediators, who assess what children are able to do now, and what they can be taught next. Recognition of ZPD may be helpful in lesson planning; teachers can choose appropriate tasks in order to help learners reach the borders of their zones and thus develop their linguistic skills (Cameron, 2005). Another implication of Vygotsky's theory for teaching language to very young learners concerns regarding learning process as the sign of internalisation. Cameron (2005) states that learning new language by young

learners is possibly divided into two phases. Firstly, the language is used meaningfully; then it is internalised and becomes the part of children's linguistic competence.

Bruner's scaffolding can be successfully used by teachers in their classrooms. Cameron (2005) refers to Wood's work who provides three main teacher's roles during scaffolding. These are emphasising what is important by suggesting, praising, and preparing tasks which direct learners' attentions to significant issues; following helpful strategies such as practicing what learners have learnt, and treating organisational issues explicitly; and helping children remember the task and its objectives. When children are focused on one part of the task, they may not perceive the task or its aims holistically. Teacher's role during scaffolding is to remind learners these aspects.

According to Cameron (2005), routines and formats, which create advantageous environment for scaffolding to take place as it was claimed by Bruner, are also present in the classrooms. For this reason, during lessons, situation in which children can successfully learn new language can be created. Cameron (2005) refers to the example of putting scissors and paper out of the boxes and distributing them among students in the class. At the beginning teacher's language is simple and repetitive, thus learners are able to grasp the meaning and intention from the context. With time, teacher's language becomes more complex, but routine stays the same. Consequently, learners are able to understand even more difficult utterances. Moreover, when words used by a teacher are in children's ZPDs, they become internalised. Cameron (2005) states, "routines then can provide opportunities for meaningful language development" (p. 11).

Apart from children's features derived from abovementioned theories, Reilly and Ward (2011) provide characteristics of very young children from the perspective of practical application of these traits in the classroom context. First group of features given by authors can be described as psychological whereas second group is more connected with activities which children of this range of age are supposed to do in the classroom.

Firstly, the authors state that children who are from three to six years old require more individual attention than older learners. It seems to be teacher's responsibility to fulfil this need, and it can be done, for instance, when learners are working individually, when drawing or colouring a picture. Teacher is supposed to walk around the classroom, check pupils' work, and solve occurring problems.

The second feature which, according to Reilly and Ward, distinguishes very young learners from others is having shorter attention span. It means that small children cannot focus for a long time on doing one type of exercise. Consequently, tasks should not exceed ten minutes; however, if learners seem to be absorbed, the teacher can slightly prolong the exercise. What is more, small children respond to stimuli very naturally, and they find colourful pictures and loud sounds, which are not connected with teaching and learning process, very interesting. Very young learners should not be expected to sit and listen; it is natural, that young learners move around the classroom.

Third characteristic concerns the silent period. According to Krashen (1992), there is an evidence to suggest that children firstly take in the input provided by a teacher, and after some time they start producing the language effortlessly. Although learners initially do not communicate in second language, they can repeat words and sentences and create new ones. Children can also react through pointing and gestures to demonstrate their understanding. Consequently, the teacher should not demand from a young children speaking in a target language in order to avoid putting them under unnecessary pressure. Speech will emerge naturally, as soon as the child is prepared.

Very young learners can be also described as imaginative, very creative, and not afraid of expressing their thoughts and feelings. The reason for the above-mentioned features may be that young children are not restricted by experiences derived from school and, therefore, their minds remain open to new pieces of information (Reilly & Ward, 2011). What is more, the consequence of children's imagination may be that they are not able to distinguish between reality and fiction, and they can invent an imaginary friend (Reilly & Ward, 2011).

Reilly and Ward (2011) also alludes to the fact that very young learners are sometimes difficult to work with, as they can be self-centred, not eager to participate in tasks, not willing to cooperate, and not easy to organise. On the other hand, authors state that learners in the late pre-school stage gradually begin to socialize with their peers, and participate in games, organized by teachers or child minders.

The following characteristics are arguably being developed during the pre-school period; they are not present from its beginning and they are strictly connected with abilities needed at the next level of education – in the primary school.

Reilly and Ward (2011) claim that children during the pre-school phase “develop better eye-hand coordination” (p.8). Consequently, their drawings become more precise and realistic, they are able to use scissors, fold paper, and stick or glue. According to Reilly and Ward (2011), children in this stage also start to learn how to handle basic tasks which involve putting puzzles together; and finding differences, similarities or things which do not match to other items. In addition, learners begin to organise, array, and match objects or picture together. In late pre-school stage, they learn how to use some abstract concepts such as quality, position, size, and amount.

Moreover, authors state that learners of this range of age are able to listen to the stories, predict following actions, and answer questions concerning the story. They can also tell their own stories and, in the late pre-school stage, they may start to read provided that they have a minder who ensures that they have an access to appropriate books and who is ready to read the same stories aloud many times (Reilly & Ward, 2011).

1.4. Methods of teaching English to very young learners.

In the field of language teaching, various definitions of method are found. Richards and Rodgers (2001) define a method as “the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning” (p. 1). A further definition is given by Anthony who describes the method as the strategy for providing students with language material which is in accordance with particular approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The author defines an approach as the assemblage of interdependent theses concerning language teaching and learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). An approach is the broader notion; it contains many different methods. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will use these two notions interchangeably.

Language teaching appeared to be universally regarded as the profession in 20th century, and thus the number of approaches increased at that time. Consecutive methods were usually introduced in opposition to previous ones; there was simultaneously a tendency to apply useful assumptions from previous paradigms to next approaches (Brown, 1994). Subsequent methods put emphasis on different aspects of language teaching. Initially, approaches focused on grammar, and the main aim of learning foreign

language was to read the literature written in the target language. For this reason, Grammar-Translation method dominated language teaching until 1940s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In 20th century the need for communication between citizens of European countries appeared, and the main goal for language teaching was to speak. Scientists were interested in children first language acquisition at that time and they tried to create the method which would make use of these observations. As the result, the Direct Method, focused on using of the target language, was established (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The ones of the first methods which applied to English teaching were the Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching. These were introduced in Great Britain in 1920s and are based on the spoken language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In the mid-1950s, in the United States increasing number of foreign students caused the need for teaching English as the foreign language. For this reason, inter alia, the new approach, called Audiolingualism, was introduced. It is based on the behaviouristic theory, which sees the process of language learning as the habit formation and underlines the role of environment in this process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In 1970s and 1980s the accelerated development in the field of approaches to language teaching occurred. Many different methods appeared within the mainstream, which stressed the importance of the communication in language teaching. Communicative Language Learning, which was introduced in 1980s, became the base for other later established methods, such as the Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, or Content-Based Instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). They underline psychological aspects of language teaching such as self-esteem, interaction with others, or applying individual strategies (Brown, 2007). Alternative approaches, such as Silent Way, Suggestopedia, or Multiple Intelligences were also introduced at that time. These were usually applications of assumptions from other scientific disciplines to language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Currently, the teachers can choose from the wide range of approaches. Nevertheless, not every method can be applied to work with very young learners. Considering youngsters' features and needs, teachers can make use of Total Physical Response (TPR) in their language laboratories which focuses on teaching elementary speaking skill. This method was introduced by Asher, and can be classified as alternative

paradigm; its underlying assumption is that the language, belonging to the left brain hemisphere, can be successfully learnt through movement which is regulated by right hemisphere. Asher states that right hemisphere should be activated before the left one in order to produce language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Asher considers the process of learning the second language as similar to children first language acquisition. He claims that humans are biologically equipped with ability to acquire language which he called the bio-program. The path of language acquisition is the following: children learn through obeying parental commands; they listen to parents' utterances and react with motor activities before they are able to produce speech. As soon as the listening skill is developed, children begin to use a language naturally. According to Asher, language teaching should follow the same schemata; teachers use imperatives deftly, and in this way learners acquire grammatical structures and words. They start to use a language when they feel they are ready (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Asher also alludes to the fact that during the language teaching stress should be reduced to a minimum. In this way, conditions for language learning would be similar to those present during children's first language acquisition. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The theory of learning in TPR is based on the behaviouristic view which underlines the importance of stimuli and response. It also derives from the trace theory which states that if learners repeat particular connections in their memories frequently and with the appropriate level of intensity, stronger memory associations are built, and learners are arguably able to recall pieces of information by retracing effortlessly. It can take the verbal form or it can be done through movement. The latter is emphasised in TPR method. In addition, TPR focuses on meanings of words which are provided mainly through imperative drills and role plays; grammar is taught inductively. What is more, errors correction should be limited as it may constrain learners at the early stage of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In the context of very young learners, they are naturally curious about the world which surrounds them and absorb it using not only sight but also hearing and acting; they are open to variety of stimuli (Selby, 2012). Reilly and Ward (2011) state that TPR is useful in very young learners' groups because it involves children's senses, as they learn through

experiencing; they perform and mime teacher's instructions. TPR builds on children's natural curiosity and directs it towards language learning.

Another approach which can be possibly applied to very young learners is Helen Doron's method introduced in 1985. In fact, it was initially aimed at teaching English to young children through songs, rhymes, and stories. Later the method was developed and adjusted to needs of teen learners. It is based on the assumption that language learning should resemble children's first language acquisition. The method put emphasis on such skills as understanding and speaking which should precede reading and writing as it happens while acquiring mother tongue (*Helen Doron English, 2015a*).

There are four main principles underlying Doron's method. Firstly, it is significant to expose learners to English not only during classes but also at home through background hearing. It should be done twice a day and it should last around 15-25 minutes. Secondly, teachers using this method should provide positive reinforcement as much as possible in order to encourage children to further learning. Thirdly, learners are organised into small groups including 4-8 learners. In such conditions, children can both benefit from working with others within the group and from individual attention given to every learner by a teacher. Finally, Doron's method is enjoyable for learners, as it contains lot of dynamic and amusing activities adjusted to children's age (*Helen Doron English 2015c*).

Taking into consideration very young learners, there are special materials prepared for children between 2 and 6 years of age which are based mainly on music and motor activities. Children learn English from episodes of *Fun with Flupe!*; these are adventures of Paul Ward who magically jump into his book and help Granny Fix to repair different objects. It is composed of 24 episodes including 50 songs which can be easily memorised. Doron also prepared materials for practicing reading and writing which can be used through mobile application at home (*Helen Doron English, 2015b*).

In 21st century the need for teaching English to very young learners arose as scientists from German Centre for Research and Innovation agreed that it is optimal for children to begin second language learning before they reach the age of three in order to fully use their natural linguistic abilities (Selby, 2012). As a result, Selby (2012) introduced the method which is aimed at teaching English to very young learners. The author explains that a child is born with language box; innate capability to acquire and apply language.

[Such an assumption is arguably comparable to that presented by Chomsky, who claimed that every child possesses inborn language acquisition device (LAD) which is responsible for building child's internal language system (Brown, 2000). Krashen, as far as second language acquisition is concerned, represented the view that language can be acquired or learnt. The former is a subconscious process which resembles Chomsky's construction of the language, and is, therefore, effective, whereas learning is considered to be a conscious procedure and it does not lead to communicative fluency (Brown 2000).] Language box is open only during the first seven years of child's life, and it contains following abilities.

Firstly, younger children can create multilingual conceptual maps in which elements belonging to different languages (language buttons) are put into different bags of buttons. There are as many bags of buttons as languages which a child is exposed to. It means that children can fluently change languages of their utterances provided that they started to learn it at the young age. With age, other brain's areas become responsible for language learning, and thus the switch between two languages demands more effort to be done (Selby, 2012). Other skills include automatic grammar application and excellent pronunciation which enables children to produce sounds present in any language to which they are exposed. As they are getting older, the language box is gradually closing, and unique abilities are being lost (Selby, 2012).

Selby (2012) alludes to effectiveness of teaching English which depends on three main factors: (1) children's types of intelligences; (2) motivation; and (3) meaningful learning. The author claims that in order to effectively teach a new skill or material to very young learners, teacher has to present them in many different ways which would use different channels of children's perception. Selby (2012) refers to Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences which states that people possess eight areas of abilities (linguistic, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical, and naturalistic) which are developed in variable degree; they influence the way of solving particular problems by individuals. This theory implies using variety of teaching techniques which involve different types of intelligences in order to make more children participate in learning. Teachers can diagnose their pupils, find their strong points, and choose appropriate tasks for them.

In addition, Selby (2012) states that very young learners are motivated intrinsically as they are eager to play, to take linguistic risk, and to experiment with linguistic forms. Very young learners have also the internal need for co

mmunication which results from survival instinct, thus the message is more important than the form. However, according to Selby (2012), the most important aspect which motivates students to learn is having fun, laughing and enjoying learning.

The process of meaningful language learning arguably involves storing systems activation. Baddeley (2002) claims that there are three types of human memory: sensory, short-term, and long-term. The first one includes echoic and iconic retention (other senses have not been fully investigated yet). Sensory memory lasts for less than one second and is connected with human perception. After being perceived, a visual or auditory stimulus can be processed in short-term memory what lasts a few seconds. According to Baddeley (2002), some pieces of information, usually retained in the form of meaning, are kept in long – term memory. In the case of second language acquisition, this latter memory seems to be crucial. Baddeley (2002) adds that when the material is organised in meaningful structure it is easily memorised. The organisation can be understood threefold. Firstly, it concerns the way in which pieces of information are grouped in one's long-term memory. Secondly, organisation refers to the material which will be acquired. Finally, organisation is important in the process of learning a new material, so it remains accessible and can be easily summoned. Selby (2012) states that in order to place newly-taught words in long-term memory, very young children have to pass through five stages of learning: hear, repeat, understand, recognise, use in appropriate context (see also Smith, 2002).

Selby's method of teaching English to very young learners is based on spiral language system which provides children with repetitions and different contexts for language learning. Such contexts enable them to create connections between their previous knowledge and newly-learned elements. The system can be analysed from two levels: first considers basic tools needed for language teaching such as sounds, pictures, interest, repetition, actions, and links; the second level describes effective use of these tools to construct the model of teaching (Selby, 2012).

In the category of sounds, Selby (2012) includes songs which should be written uniquely for the course, use correct and modern language, and have new melodies

adjusted to stresses present in particular words in order to make learners remember them. Music also is considered to create atmosphere which attracts children's attentions. Other examples of using sounds for language teaching are stories with plots adjusted to learners age, dialogues, and rhymes. Selby (2012) considers songstories as central in the spiral system as far as model teaching is concerned. They can be defined as stories containing songs embedded in the narration which present main events, emotions as well as vocabulary. The main function of songstories is to introduce children to the new world and then to create sets of associations which grow together with children's language competence (Selby, 2012).

Pictures, which are the second element of spiral language system, include linguistic games, flashcards, cartoons, cartoon strips, illustrated rhymes, and interactive pictures. They are very useful in creating associations in children's minds and they facilitate remembering words through sense of hearing. What is more, pictures help in describing what cannot be described to very young learners using other techniques. They create the contextual framework for understanding one word or more complicated stories (Selby, 2012). Selby (2012) considers animation as intensifying the role of picture in the context of teaching English to very young learners; animation is supposed to create a complete world with few easy to remember words which enables learners to understand the plot.

The third element which constitutes spiral language system is children interest in material proposed by the teacher (Selby, 2012). Such an interest is stimulated by learners' motivation which, according to Dornyei (2005), is dynamic. The author distinguishes three stages of motivation progression. Firstly, during preactional stage, learner's ambitions are turned into motivation. The next phase is called actional, and it includes sustaining the motivation throughout the task. The final phase, postactional stage, focuses on assessment of the task from the perspective of time. Each stage is characterised by different motives. The teacher can organise them and assign to particular phase of motivation to improve the process of language learning. Selby (2012) claims that students can become motivated when the teacher chooses topics which are considered attractive for particular age group; attracts learners' attention by reference to their emotions such as excitement, surprise, or awaiting; contains humour in classes as it arouses interest in the

topic and helps with remembering. These elements together with learners' age, cultural context and learners' language level influence the way of teaching (Selby, 2012).

Next aspect which is considered to construct spiral language system is repetition. It should be based on context in which new material is presented what facilitates remembering. Selby (2012) states that a learner should be exposed to new material five times in order to acquire vocabulary or grammar. In addition, the same material should be presented each time in a different context, for instance, through sounds, pictures, songs, stories, DVDs, or games. Selby (2012) claims that repetitions should not be random. They have to be carefully planned so the child can have contact with particular word five times in appropriate time intervals to place it in the long-term memory. According to Selby (2012) this planning should be based on creating integrated language matrix which consists of topics included in a curriculum and the way of repeating new material.

Next elements of Selby's spiral system are actions (cf. TPR). Children can be characterised as being full of energy which can be directed into English lessons. Selby (2012) states that physical actions support remembering new material as they bring new experiences which use many senses and activate tactile, sound, and pictorial memory paths. Through actions, children are able to link a sound or a picture with particular activity, and thus foster the process of remembering.

Such links created in learners' memories also constitute Selby's spiral language system. The author introduces three ways in which these connections contribute to English learning. These are the following: organising words in groups which share similar features, for example by grouping stories, songs, and games round related topics; linking new vocabulary with words which a learner has already known; and connecting words learned in one environment with words learned in another one. Links are thought to be the dynamic power which foster language development.

Selby's method stresses the importance of applying praises, rewards, and encouragement in teaching English to very young learners as it is useful in building their self-confidence. What is more, it motivates children to further work. Praises should be adjusted to learners' performances; the better performance, the stronger praise. In addition, Selby (2012) states that praises, rewards, and encouragement should be given regularly during lessons as teachers would not forget to apply them.

What is more, Selby (2012) considers team work as being useful in English learning. The author's team include school, home, and pupil. The latter performs central role in learning process, and it can be supported by parents as well as by classmates in order to achieve better results in learning English.

In addition, Selby (2012) indicates what teachers can do to establish proper relations between them and learners and to form a good first impression. The author also provide teachers with propositions concerning lessons organisation such as introducing conventional signals to control a situation in the classroom and to keep the discipline, teaching language which will be used for giving instructions, and using repetitive schemas which help learners to understand what actions they are supposed to perform.

Selby (2012) goes on to describe materials which can be used during lessons such as songs, stories, games, flashcards, posters, puppets, pop-outs, manual tasks, realia, technology, performances, and worksheets. In Selby's method the emphasis is put on songs and stories. What is more, they are considered to be the foundations on which lessons are built. According to Selby, an appropriate song should have simple text and catchy melody, it should refer to learners' emotions and contain motor activities, What is more, it should include context and its content should refer to particular topic of the lesson. A song can perform two functions during the lesson; it can play the central role and be the base of vocabulary for other activities or it can help in organisation of the lesson, for instance, by indicating the end of one activity and the beginning of another one.

Stories are arguably important in teaching English to very young learners as they offer context for learning. Szpotowicz and Szulc-Kurpaska (2009) state that stories are appropriate for young learners because children are used to hearing them in their mother tongue. Consequently, young learners are naturally motivated to listen and involved in a story. Selby (2012) provides features characteristic for stories aimed at very young learners. First of all, stories should be connected with children's interests and include elements which refer to learners' previous experience with a language. In addition, stories should contain simple grammar structures, meaningful illustrations, and humour. Szpotowicz and Szulc-Kurpaska (2009) add that flops make a story more attractive for very young learners as they can make a guess and discover some hidden elements. Selby

(2012) also considers songs which are the part of a story as successful tool of teaching English to very young learners.

Stories suitable for pre-school children should be balanced. They should contain language accessible to children, and at the same time they should include new words whose number, according to Selby, should not exceed twenty percent of all vocabulary. Moreover, stories should adjust communicated emotions to learners' emotional level and sensitivity, and they should contain appropriate number of twists of plot which involve learners. Otherwise, they can be simply bored or confused.

Stories can be introduced using various media: classic books, books with compact discs, and animations on DVDs. Selby (2012) presents exemplary way of conducting a lesson. It begins with presentation whose main aim is to introduce new vocabulary in order to enable learners to focus on new words, to understand the story accurately, and to arouse their interest. The teacher may accomplish this aim by using flashcards, realia, and illustrations from the story. Learners can also perform activities presented in the book. The next step is to introduce the story. Learners role is to listen for vocabulary presented earlier during the lesson. The teacher repeats or replays the story, and very young learners are supposed to react appropriately to teacher's instructions. According to Selby, acting out the story is the most effective exercise. Very young learners can repeat main expressions from the story and make gestures which are consistent with these expressions.

Selby (2012) also describes the use of flashcards as very practical and popular among teachers. The possible reason for this is simplicity that flashcards involve; one flashcard represents one item, activity or phenomenon and thus enables learners to recognise clearly the word and its meaning (*Super Simple Learning*, 2014). Selby (2012) provide the teacher with ideas of how flashcards can be used in the classroom. Firstly, they can be helpful in presenting new vocabulary. Selby recommends creative use of flashcards which involves learners' emotions. The teacher can prepare a bag with flashcards. The child takes one card and present it to the rest of the class. Such a presentation introduces an aura of mystery.

Secondly, according to Selby, flashcards can be also used for repeating familiar vocabulary. Such a repetition can also include an element of creativity. The teacher can

introduce a game in which learners imagine that one of them is going to a shop in order to buy some vegetables. Children are supposed to make a shopping list by, for example, raising their hands and propose some vegetables presented on flashcards.

Thirdly, flashcards can serve as a tool of broadening children's vocabulary. Selby (2012) illustrates it with an example of exercise in which one learner keeps a flashcard with the car. The whole class is supposed to pronounce this word. Then willing learner join with a card presenting, for instance, blue colour. The rest of the class says: "The blue car." The exercise can be repeated using other cards.

What is more, Selby (2012) claims that flashcards can be used for placing words in broader context and creating links between various topics. The author provides an example of an activity, called word salad, in which learners are supposed to draw two random cards from a bowl or a box and construct one meaningful phrase containing the words. Such an exercise, however, can be too difficult for very young learners. For this reason, the above-mentioned application of flashcards is suitable for older children.

Finally, use of flashcards can stimulate learners' active participation in tasks. When children do not speak English yet, they can communicate with the teacher through pictures, and present their language competence by pointing to appropriate card. When learners are able to say single words, they can name pictures presented on flashcards, repeat after the teacher, and imitate activity (Selby, 2012).

Selby established her own brand, Yellow House English, which publishes materials of her authorship. They include such titles: *Baby Beetles* which consists of animation and songs appropriate for the youngest children who do not speak English yet; *Tom and Keri* which is comprised of animated stories, songs and rhymes designed for children up to six years of age who begin to speak in second language; *DJ and Me* which is aimed at teaching speaking to young learners, being from five to eight years old; and *Rock English* which focuses on developing reading skill in children who are from seven to ten years old (Yellow House, 2015).

In addition, Selby initiated a programme entitled Bilingual Future which implements author's method and materials as an approach to teaching English to children in numerous kindergartens and nurseries in the world. In Poland it is put into operation in more than two hundred communes (Dwujęzyczność w Krainie Marzeń, n.d.). This project is

supposed to promote teaching English in parallel with children's mother tongue both in nursery and at home (*Dwujęzyczne dzieci*, 2015).

Being bilingual possibly offers many cognitive advantages. Baker (2001), with some reservations, refers to Peal and Lambert's piece of research which proved that:

bilingualism provides: greater mental flexibility; the ability to think more abstractly [...]; a more enriched bilingual and bicultural environment benefits the development of IQ; and that there is a positive transfer a bilingual's two languages facilitating the development of verbal IQ (p. 141).

What is more, Cummins and Swain (1986) state that bilinguals possibly surpass monolinguals in many fields such as creative thinking, language skills, and abilities to analyse language. Bilingual children are arguably able to distinguish sound and meaning earlier than their unilingual peers, and thus they can focus on the structure of a language. According to Perry (2008), bilinguals who have a command of two languages from early childhood possess greater concentration ability. They can focus on activities and ignore occurring distractions. For this reason, bilinguals may be described as more field-independent.

Bilingualism offers not only intellectual advantage but also better future opportunities as in modern globalised world being fluent in languages, especially English, is crucial in order to obtain well-paid occupation.

1.5. Teaching a foreign language to pre-school learners - research review.

Biricik and Özkan (2012), workers of Çukurova University, carried out the study aimed at investigating how teacher's attitude influences pre-school children's language education. The research undertakes the issue of motivation among pre-school children which is crucial in language learning. In Selby's method, motivation is also a matter of a great significance. It can be observed when the teacher provides pupils with praise, reward, and encouragement in order to facilitate further work. In addition, according to Selby, children are motivated by the promise of good fun, and teacher's role is, inter alia, to fulfil it.

The study conducted by Biricik and Özkan is descriptive as it includes observation of learners' motivation which, according to researches, is influenced by three variables: teacher's attitude, types of exercises, and classroom ambience. It also focuses on reasons for learners discouragement and conditions of regaining the motivation.

The research was carried out on group of forty-five children aged from five to six who were at pre-school level of education. Learners were classified as members of middle-class families who lived in similar social background. The groups were not established for the purpose of the study; they had been existing before it was undertaken. Participants' first language was Turkish, and they were beginners in learning English.

The procedure of the study included taking notes by observers and recording lessons on videotapes. As videos were analysed and protocols for observers were made, they could conduct interviews with learners and ask them about particular situations which were important for evaluating their motivation. Children were also supposed to complete questionnaires assessing teacher's attitude which had been prepared in learners' first language. What is more, researchers had to explain the content of questions as children were not able to read and write.

The results of observations show that teacher's positive attitude towards students influences their motivation to a great extent. According to the study, learners were motivated when the teacher was cheerful and friendly, when it used mother tongue for clarifying complicated instructions, and when learners received permission to make simple decisions. In addition, teacher's participation in activities and effort to amuse pupils strongly motivated them. Praising, rewarding, and encouraging were also found significant in increasing students' motivation. Although the teacher should be funny and should smile a lot, it should also know how to keep discipline in the classroom as disturbing children may be demotivating for the rest of the class. Punishing disturbing child can maintain or increase classmates' motivation as long as the penalty proved adequate.

Biricik and Özkan's study also provide demotivating factors for learners which included: giving long, complicated, and incomprehensible instructions; using English even in very complex situations; and not choosing learners who are straining to participate in the exercise.

Questionnaire results seem to confirm observers' remarks. Vast majority of learners preferred when the teacher had been funny and cheerful. Moreover, almost every investigated pupil was fond of being praised and rewarded. They were also keen on the teacher who had participated in the exercise, had been in motion and had used gestures. The teacher, according to learners, should show them how to perform an activity instead of talking about it. Biricik and Özkan (2012) concluded that teacher's attitude towards learners has a great impact on their motivation.

Another research which concerns techniques of teaching English to very young learners was conducted by Ekşi (2009). It focuses on application of short story activities which were designed to suit children's types of intelligences. The study is based on Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, which is also important in Selby's method in terms of increasing effectiveness of teaching English to very young learners through preparing tasks which satisfy more types of intelligences. In addition, stories are also important as far as Selby's method is concerned because they may be the mainstay of the lesson on which other activities are built.

The participants of the research were nine boys and nine girls. They attended kindergarten and they were from five to six years of age. The researchers applied Teele Inventory for Multiple Intelligences (TIMI) in order to analyse which kinds of intelligences predominated in participants. Researchers established the lesson plan which contained tasks specially designed to facilitate each type of intelligence. The activities were based on the story which was familiar to the children. The lesson was also recorded on videotape by an observer who later interviewed learners and asked about their opinions on the lesson.

Results of the study show that types of intelligence which dominated in this group of learners were bodily-kinaesthetic, and spatial. Therefore, teachers should use activities which involve movement, realia, and pictures. The research also demonstrates that learners used other intelligences as well. Consequently, it is significant to provide children with activities and instructions which open many channels of pupils' perception and lead them to success in learning English. In addition, the observer suggests that very young learners were very enthusiastic about the way in which the lesson had been conducted. They were involved, could easily follow the story and perform more difficult activities than

usually. Ekşi (2009) alludes to the fact that the way of teaching which satisfies linguistic intelligence is not effective as learners within the group proved to have this type of intelligence to a lesser degree. The author adds that teachers should employ individual approach towards students in order to teach them more effectively. Ekşi (2009) concludes that stories are a good tool of teaching English to very young learners.

A similar conclusion was reached by Tavil and Söylemez (2008). The authors carried out research which focuses on the role of stories in teaching English vocabulary to very young learners. The objective of this study was to check if telling stories to children at this age facilitates learners' recognition of words included there.

The research was conducted on the group of twelve children who were five years old. They attended kindergarten in Ankara, and they were not familiar with learning English through stories as their teacher had not applied them during the regular classes. The study included three sessions with the group. On the first session, pre-test was taken in order to check learners' knowledge of the particular words. Then the students were supposed to colour the masks of the characters from the story. The teachers walked around the classroom and asked for names of the characters. Students put on their masks and listened to a story two times. They participated in the second reading through acting their roles. Then a song was introduced to preserve newly learned vocabulary.

Both second and third session began with art-craft exercises. On the second session, the teacher retold the story showing the illustrations from the book to children. Later they performed assigned roles. The last activity was motor as children were supposed to run to the objects from the story on teachers' command. On the third session students listened to the story once again focusing on different vocabulary and participated in it. The last activity was completing a post-test. The results show that all learners were able to point to appropriate objects and some students could even say the words. Tavil and Söylemez (2008) concludes that telling stories provides children with context and thus it helps in placing new items in the long term memory. What is more, stories arguably create positive atmosphere, they are very authentic, and students are offered opportunity to use language.

Tavil and İşısağ (2009) conducted research which concerns the effectiveness of using games and songs in teaching English vocabulary to very young learners. Selby

(2012) also puts emphasis on songs in her method, and she finds games useful during English lessons. In addition, sounds are the part of Selby's spiral language system.

The study was carried out on a group of forty-six learners who are six years old and are at pre-school level of education. They are not able to read and write yet. Pupils are divided equally into two groups; group A is taught English through games and group B through songs. Learners take pre-test to assess their level of English competence and post-test to evaluate their achievements. The form of the test is oral; children are supposed to point to particular items.

The children in both groups are supposed to learn colours and professions. The research includes two sessions with each group. In each session two activities are performed. The first session begins with the art-craft activity which is the same in both groups. The second activity concerns colours and is the game in group A and the song in group B. The second session also begins with art-craft activity which is followed by the game or the song about professions.

The results show that learning English through games is more effective as more learners from group A are successful in pointing to appropriate flashcards illustrating colours and professions than learners from group B. Tavil and Işisağ (2009) conclude that using both songs and games is significant in teaching English as very young children learn through play and movement. Songs help in understanding words whereas games are inspiring, attractive, and they provide practice through entertainment.

1.6. Conclusion

Very young learners arguably possess particular traits and are still in the process of cognitive development. For these reasons, specific approaches, which reflect children's needs, are possibly applicable to teaching English to this age group. Claire Selby's method, which share certain similarities with innatist view upon language development, seems to take into account children's characteristics as well as new scientific discoveries concerning human brain. What is more, this method, based on spiral language system, provides teachers of pre-schoolers with tools, including specially prepared materials, to promote bilingualism.

CHAPTER TWO

CLAIRE SELBY'S METHOD FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO VERY YOUNG LEARNERS – CASE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe conducted research which concerns the practical application of Claire Selby's method to teaching English to very young learners in nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. The study takes into account the effectiveness of teaching English to very young children using abovementioned method which is seen from the perspectives of the observer, parents whose children attend the nursery school, and the teacher. The research was conducted using the case study approach and is considered to be descriptive.

2.2. Case study

Bastit (2010) uses the term case study to refer to analysis and observation of one subject, which can be one person or one group of people treated as a whole, and subject's actions which can possibly represent particular tendency existing in subject's environment. Such an approach enables observers to examine the subject in subject's usual surroundings. This definition is close to that of Hartas (2010), who states that in case study approach, the subject and subject's interactions with environment are considered to be crucial. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) classify case study as a longitudinal approach which possesses some features representative for qualitative paradigm, while Nunan (2008) states that case study can imply using qualitative, statistical as well as quantitative methods.

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) situate case study in second language acquisition context and define it as "observing the development of linguistic performance, usually the spontaneous speech of one subject, when the speech data are collected at periodic intervals over a span of time" (p. 11). A similar definition was introduced by Brown

and Rodgers (2002) who claim that case study observes how the language knowledge is being extended in subjects of the study. The authors also stress the importance of social environment of the studied instance and relations established there.

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) provide traits characteristic for the longitudinal approach. According to the authors, case study is based on natural communication, it is a process of long duration, and it usually focuses on one subject. Nunan (2008) adds that case study is subjective and depends on the researcher's perception. Another feature of case study, indicated by Bastit (2010), is that it should be carried out in an appropriate setting, so that a thesis which underlies the research is supported. The author also finds it significant to use case study as an approach to research as it emphasises the importance of case's "uniqueness and complexity, and its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts" (p. 19).

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) underline the fact that research conducted using case study approach are possibly ungeneralizable. For this reason, one cannot derive general truths from results of case study and its conclusions can be restricted only to research subject. However, this research arguably provides the investigator with detailed and rich data to analyse. What is more, it offers an insight into the subject's environment and enables researcher to notice relations present there.

Case study can be arguably conducted using many tools. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1993) describe such instruments as introspection in which the subject analyses own performance; participant observation where the researcher both participates in activities together with the subject and takes notes; non-participant observation in which the observer is not involved in activities and takes notes; focused description in which the investigator studies one, chosen aspect of the lesson; pre-experiment; quasi-experiment; and experiment. Nunan (2008) adds such methods as a simulated recall in which the observer records the lesson and plays it to the teacher who is supposed to comment on it; and interaction analysis in which communication between the teacher and students or among students is emphasised. Investigators can possibly use other instruments within case study approach such as questionnaires, interviews, and tests.

2.3. The study

Scientists claim that young children possess extraordinary linguistic skills. As children get older, those skills are being irretrievably lost. For this reason, I am deeply interested in teaching English to pre-school learners using new methods which take into account young students' needs. Therefore, I conducted case study research in order to observe how Claire Selby's method is being implemented in one of the nursery schools in my region.

2.3.1. Participants

The study was carried out on the group of fifteen children who attend the nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. This educational institution implements Bilingual Future programme and works under the direct patronage of Claire Selby. The group was not created for the purpose of the study; it exists and functions as a regular nursery class and it is named after one of the "Baby Beetles" characters – Tick Tock. The group is differentiated and consists of children of different range of age. There are three learners who are three years old, six children who are four years old, and six children who are five. For this reason, activities provided by the teacher should be differentiated and adjusted to students' skills.

The class is co-educational; there are nine girls and six boys. The children are looked after by two child minders, and one of them, whose name is Kasia, is also an English teacher. She is Teaching Training College graduate and she completed Master's in primary education. The teacher has been working with very young learners for six years of which one year in "Kraina Marzeń".

Lessons take place every day and last circa twenty minutes. The class works mainly on resources offered by Yellow House English such as *Baby Beetles* and *Tom and Keri*. These materials are sometimes complemented by *Cookie and Friends*. Each student has its own set of DVDs which should be watched at home to foster the process of learning English as co-operation between school and parents is a matter of great importance in Selby's method.

The teacher provides English input not only during lessons but is also supposed to immerse children in this language by using it in everyday situations. Students are, therefore, exposed to English in various and real contexts. Such an approach creates bilingual environment which facilitates second language acquisition.

In spite of regular classes, students are also involved in preparing recordings for Polish Television which are later shown on ABC channel. The teacher writes scripts of performances which are approved by Claire Selby. Recording sessions take place once a month and last two days. Students usually sing four songs from *Baby Beetles* each day of recording session. The videos are supposed to promote bilingualism among young audience.

2.3.2. Statement of the problem

I was interested in finding out how a new method for teaching English to very young learners is practically applied to this selected group of very young learners in “Kraina Marzeń”. I was especially concerned with the response of the young learners to the method as well as with the teacher’s observations as for the practicality and usefulness of the applied materials.

For the purpose of this case study I formulated the following research questions:

1. What is the response of Polish very young learners of English to the Claire Selby’s method?
2. What is the opinion of the teacher of Polish very young learners of English on the methodology of Claire Selby’s approach?
3. What is the opinion of parents of very young learners on the Claire Selby’s method?

In order to assess method’s application in nursery school “Kraina Marzeń”, such case study instruments as non-participant observation, interview with the teacher, and questionnaires filled in by parents occurred to be most useful.

2.3.3. Procedure

Classroom observation lasted circa thirty minutes and were held by the researcher six times in week intervals. The observer was present inside the classroom and was taking detailed step-by-step notes on teacher's and students' actions during English lessons. What is more, for the purpose of the study, the checklist was created. It was aimed at establishing a framework for evaluation of Claire Selby's method implementation in "Kraina Marzeń". It checked the factors considered by Selby (2012) as crucial in effective language teaching such as: presenting material in various ways; taking into account Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences and students' motivation; considering if meaningful learning takes place. The researcher was also interested if lessons included elements of spiral language system such as sounds, pictures, movement and if they attracted students' interest. The ways of praising and encouraging children were also the subjects of researcher's observation.

After non-participant observation was completed, an interview with the teacher was carried out. It consisted of seven questions concerning teacher's point of view on using Claire Selby's method and materials during English lessons with very young learners in "Kraina Marzeń." Questions referred to the assessment of the effectiveness of above-described approach, evaluation of students' motivation as well as their participation in classes. Moreover, the teacher was asked what kind of materials she usually used during the classes, and what her opinion on Yellow House English resources was. The teacher was also asked, whether she followed any pattern of lesson organisation, and if she took into consideration different types of learners' intelligences. One additional question focused on parental role in teaching English to very young learners, attending "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole seen from the teacher's perspective. The teacher was given the enquiries in the written form, thus she can have a think about the method and its implementation and respond comprehensively. The information was collected within two weeks.

The next step taken by the researcher was to analyse questionnaires which were prepared by the nursery school director for the purpose of evaluating the bilingual programme implementation in "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. The survey was carried out in

2014 and filled in by former English teacher as well as parents. It included description of fifteen learners from teacher's and parental perspectives and teacher's recommendations on students' further work. The teacher focused on children's behaviours during English lessons whereas parents were supposed to describe students attitudes towards English at homes. The researcher analysed both former teacher's and parents' descriptions as they could be the sources of information on Polish students' attitudes towards Claire Selby's method.

2.4. Results and discussion.

The results of non-participant observation show that the material prepared by the teacher was presented in many different ways. Vocabulary was introduced and revised employing various techniques. Songs were the main tool used by the teacher, and they were always preceded by the act of providing the children with a context which is crucial for their understanding. For example, before playing the song about Tick Tock who goes for a walk, the teacher showed Tick Tock puppet and pretended that he was walking. Then she asked students: "What is Tick Tock doing?" Children replied in chorus: "He's walking." The next step was to play and act out the song. The teacher was also using flashcards and wordcards which were very helpful especially in performing games. For instance, one of the game which took place during the lesson involved rolling the dice and choosing flashcards numbered from one to six. Then the children named the picture. *Simon says* was another game which was quite frequently used in this classroom. The learners were supposed to obey teacher's imperatives if preceded with the phrase *Simon says*. In addition, the teacher was using animations from *Tom and Keri*, realia, and props.

In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences was extensively applied to teaching English to very young learners in "Kraina Marzeń." The teacher took into account different types of learners' intelligences; however, linguistic intelligence was a prevailing one. It could be noticed when the teacher was interacting with learners using English throughout the lesson. Instructions, content of the activities as well as students' responses were provided in the target language. Singing and listening to songs also referred to linguistic intelligence and offered comprehensive

input for auditory learners. What is more, songs opened children's musical channel of perception. This particular intelligence was also taken into consideration when students listened to rhythmical chants. Songs and chants were not ordinarily sang. They were always accompanied with movement and action which made use of various props; thus, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence was activated. For instance, when the children were singing: "Yummy, yum, I'm hungry," they sat on the floor in the circle with plastic food inside and acted as if they really wanted to eat it. Then every student took one portion of food and pretended its consumption. Some songs were acted out in pairs; therefore, students had to interact with each other and interpersonal intelligence was activated. One example of interaction between learners could be observed when they were imitating the activity of going for a walk. They were supposed to get in pairs and walk together around the classroom. The teacher also prepared an activity in which children rolled the ball to each other and asked: "What's your name?" Learners who caught the ball answered. This task was also designed for children's interpersonal channel of perception. In addition, visual-spatial intelligence was stimulated as the teacher often showed flashcards during the classes to introduce new and revise already learnt vocabulary. The teacher also prepared materials which were aimed at children's logical-mathematical intelligence. For instance, one learner was chosen, and his task was to count in English how many children were present in the classroom. Another activity involved rolling the dice, and thus counting to six. What is more, songs used by the teacher included counting, so they could be easily memorised by students having logical-mathematical intelligence dominant.

The outcome of the study indicates that students were usually motivated during the lessons. It could be observed when all of them wanted to participate in activities proposed by the teacher. For example, learners were involved in the song which included role-plays. The teacher chose five children to act as monkeys and one child to be a crocodile. Since everyone really wanted to be chosen, the teacher had to play the song twice to minimise learners' disappointment. What is more, when children listened to a new and unknown chant and were supposed to follow the instructions included in it like: go to the door or point to the window, they seemed very determined to do their best. Other signs of motivation could be noticed when learners were raising their hands and excitedly asking the teacher to choose them to perform a task. Apart from intrinsic motivation, it was

necessary to encourage students extrinsically. During one of the lessons, the teacher stated that if they behaved well and enthusiastically sang the song, they would go to the cinema on the first day of spring. Children were also motivated to work by the possibility of becoming teacher's assistant. Although all students were usually motivated, two boys refused to take part in certain activities. The first child did not want to participate in the lesson at the beginning but he joined later. The second boy resigned in the middle of the classes.

The research demonstrates that the material was provided in organised and structured way. Moreover, phases of meaningful learning could be observed. Hearing was present as learners listened to recordings and to the teacher who was speaking in English. Repetitions appeared when learners repeated words after the teacher and thus practiced pronunciation. Words were also repeated in different contexts. They were appearing in songs, chants, as well as in games. The children showed their understanding as they complied with teacher's instructions, answered her questions, and participated in various games. For instance, the teacher was asking learners what their names were, how old they were, and where they lived. Each children responded with accordance to their own personal data. Students were also recognising English words what could be observed when the teacher asked to point to different flashcards and objects present in the classroom. What is more, children were able to match particular wordcards with flashcards. Students were also using learnt expressions in appropriate context, and they were doing it very spontaneously. For example, one girl took a teddy bear, hugged it, and the whole group began to sing the song "My teddy bear" although the teacher did not instructed them to do it. Another girl saw Tick Tock puppet, and said: "Tick Tock hungry." Students also tried to use English in everyday situations. For instance, when the teacher was looking for a compact disc which she wanted to play during the lessons and asked particular student if he did not see it, the student answered: "I no."

The study finds that elements of spiral language system were present during observed lessons. The teacher was using sounds, pictures as well as songstories. Students seemed to be interested in topics as materials concerned the world seen through the eyes of the child. For instance, Baby beetles, who are energetic and lively, like playing games such as hide and seek; they love running, swimming, playing the ball, spending

time in the playground, going for a walk, playing with toys, and dancing. In addition, they are very emotional, and they know the feeling of sadness as well as happiness. Parents and family are as much important for beetles as they are for learners. Although animations offered interesting form and content for very young children, the observer noticed that when learners were watching the video from *Tom and Keri* about toy box for the second time, they started talking in their mother tongue about their toys and their concentration was disturbed. Students could not focus on the animation anymore. Other elements of spiral language system such as repetitions and actions, which have been already described in this subsection, were also observable in the group of very young learners in 'Kraina Marzeń.' However, links could not be studied as they are the last element of the spiral language system and such an examination requires the present research to be longer and go beyond the descriptive character.

Moreover, conducted research suggests that the teacher paid attention to praising, rewarding, and encouraging learners. It could be noticed when she was using words such as: well-done, that's right, great, ok, when a student provided a correct answer to her question. In addition, teacher's facial expression was amused, and it, therefore, encouraged learners to further work. The teacher also rewarded students for their exemplary behaviour by choosing them to participate in the next task, or to be her assistants.

The results of the interview with the teacher shows that she finds Claire Selby's method effective especially in the group of very young learners. The teacher emphasised the fact that prepared material and vocabulary had been carefully selected to meet the needs of that age group. What is more, the teacher appreciated the way in which spiral language system works. She indicated that vocabulary, rhythm, and melody were joined together and repeated in sessions, and it, therefore, enabled children to experience the language.

The teacher also believes that learners were motivated during the lessons, what can be observed when they enthusiastically sing songs or take part in the games without even realising that they were learning and acquiring language. Students were just enjoying their time. In addition, the teacher claimed that children asked a lot of questions concerning English equivalents for Polish words, and that curiosity could be regarded as

indication of students' motivation. Another fact which arguably illustrates students motivation is that most of them participated in every activity. However, the teacher stated that the Tick Tock group comprised of children at different age, thus, some of them were getting tired after ten or fifteen minutes of the lesson and needed to rest. For this reason, they sometimes decided to resign from participation.

As far as teaching resources are concerned, the teacher stated that she was using a variety of materials to make a lesson more involving and interesting for her students. She usually applied flashcards, songs, stories, animations, games, and chants. Majority of resources were of Claire Selby's authorship, however, the teacher admitted that she was using other materials as well because Selby's supplies are not enough to carry out the whole lesson. The teacher expressed the opinion on the quality of resources published by Yellow House English and applied to teaching English to very young learners in "Kraina Marzeń," stating that they were very interesting for her learners as they were closely related to children's world.

The teacher also claimed that she did not use any specific scheme for lesson organisation. She used to follow the pattern in which *Hello Song* was played at the beginning; then it was a time for revision and introduction of new elements, and finally students sang *Goodbye Song*. This structure was modified, and currently the teacher begins with game or song, so that students can pass fluently from previous activities to English classes. The next phase is to revise or learn new vocabulary through games, songs, etc. Watching animation from Tom and Keri is usually the last element of English lesson.

When asked, if she took into account multiple intelligences in the process of lesson planning, the teacher answered that she was trying to prepare tasks which were suitable for many intelligences but the focus was on kinaesthetic and visual channel of perception.

The last inquiry concerned parental role in teaching English to very young learners in this particular group. The teacher stated that children were given sets of CDs and DVDs to listen and watch at home in order to expose learners to English on the daily basis. However, she expressed an opinion that there were no mechanisms to control the frequency of such expositions. She also added that the nursery wished to introduce checklists for parents to complete for checking how many times animations and songs

were played to children at home. Such documents would be helpful as they offer feedback which could be compared with learner's performances during English lessons.

The results of questionnaires prepared by nursery school director and filled in by the former teacher and parents for the purpose of evaluation of bilingual programme in "Kraina Marzeń" are differentiated. Taking into consideration teacher's description, one can observe that every student was keen on Claire Selby's materials and willingly participated in English lessons. Students eagerly sang *Baby Beetles* songs, watched animations and took part in motor activities. In addition, the teacher observed that learners gladly responded to questions asked in English, acquired new vocabulary and songs' lyrics fast as well as used expressions learnt some time ago in different contexts. As far as parental perspective is concerned, only seven out of fifteen parents filled in the questionnaire. The parents of four learners noticed that children showed initiative to watch *Baby Beetles* animations, listen to and sing Claire Selby's songs at home. Moreover, one girl played with siblings and pretended that she was one of baby beetles characters. Another one wanted to have a t-shirt with baby beetles printed on it. However, the parents of two learners stated, that their children did not display interest in watching Claire Selby's animations at home. One of them was said to hum melodies from *Baby Beetles*, but at the same time, she stated that she sang enough in nursery school and was not interested in repeating it at home. Another learner's parent claimed that its child recognised Selby's songs and characters but he quickly got bored with watching these animations. One out of seven children watched *Baby Beetles* and willingly sang their songs, but the parent observed that she did not insist on playing the recordings at home.

It can be concluded that Claire Selby's method of teaching English to very young learners is being successfully and efficiently implemented in nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. Both the researcher and the teacher considered above-mentioned approach to be effective. The researcher observed that Polish very young learners reacted positively to method and materials provided by Yellow House English; they were motivated, and involved in activities provided by the teacher. In addition, the teacher was using different channels of students' perception, and thus, more information was arguably processed by children's brains. Selby also puts emphasis on meaningful learning whose elements, such as hearing, repeating, understanding, recognising, and using in

appropriate context, seemed to be present in Tick Tock's group in "Kraina Marzeń." Moreover, the spiral language system operated quite successfully in this particular classroom as the teacher applied many different types of resources which included sounds and pictures. Vocabulary was introduced and revised through tasks which involved action and movement. Words were repeated in various contexts; therefore, the learners could preserve their knowledge. The fact that students were praised encouraged them to work more intensively.

Similarly, the teacher found Claire Selby's method effective. She believed that students were involved in English lessons and motivated to work. The teacher positively evaluated Yellow House English resources which are thought to reflect learners' world. She also emphasised the fact that children were learning their target language through fun. In spiral language system, vocabulary was joint with music and repeated in sessions what facilitated language acquisition. The teacher did not use any specific lesson structure as she claimed that it was important to make the process of second language acquisition natural for students and enable them to switch to English not only during lessons, but also in everyday situations.

Claire Selby's method puts also emphasis on the importance of parental support given to a child in learning process mainly through playing songs and animations on DVDs. Parental assessment of the method's effectiveness can be based only on observations of their children attitudes towards Yellow House English materials which were used at learner's homes. The research shows that, although the children positively reacted to Claire Selby's method of teaching English to very young learners inside the classroom, students' attitudes towards this approach at home were differentiated. There were some students who did not seem interested in watching *Baby Beetles*; however, majority of participants, whose parents filled in the questionnaire, showed initiative to see animations and listen to the songs. Nevertheless, only half of questionnaires was filled in by learners' parents, and therefore, the data concerning parental assessment of Claire Selby's method seem to be incomplete and unreliable to draw general conclusions.

2.6. Conclusion

The results of the research, which was carried out on the group of fifteen children attending nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole using case study approach, demonstrates that Claire Selby's method of teaching English to very young learners is being effectively implemented in this institution. Central hypotheses of the present paper were supported by the outcome of researcher's and teacher's observation who took into consideration Claire Selby's theory and assumptions. In addition, parents assessed children's attitudes towards provided materials as positive in most cases; however, general and valid conclusion cannot be reached.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Very young learners possess some unique features which should be taken into account in the process of language teaching to this age group. These characteristics result mainly from children level of cognitive development and can be transferred into the classroom context. Moreover, there are many methods which can be arguably applied to teaching English to very young children, for instance, Total Physical Response, Helen Doron's method, and Claire Selby's approach, but the latter is considered to be the most up-to-date as it takes into account new discoveries in the field of brain's activity.

Claire Selby's method is based on the spiral language system which provides students with vocabulary repetitions and thus facilitates target language acquisition. In addition, Selby describes elements such as taking into consideration various types of learners' intelligences, children's motivation, and meaningful learning which constitute effective teaching process. Teacher is also supposed to praise and encourage children. What is more, Selby pays attention to children's environment which should support very young learners of English in second language acquisition.

The main aim of the present paper was to provide the description of Claire Selby's approach and to compare theoretical considerations with method's practical implementation in nursery school "Kaina Marzeń" in Opole. The researcher was especially interested in Polish very young learners' reaction to Claire Selby's materials and method; teacher's opinion on the approach, and parents observations carried out at students' homes.

The results of the non-participant observation and interview with the teacher show that Claire Selby's method is being successfully applied in nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole. Students reacted positively to materials offered by Yellow House English, were motivated and willingly participated in activities proposed by the teacher. It was also observed that the teacher conducted lessons in accordance with Claire Selby's guidelines, taking into account different types of learners' intelligences, and phases of meaningful learning which were observable during the classes. The teacher was also using various techniques of introducing and revising vocabulary such as songs, animations, games, flashcards, and props. Looking from the parents' perspective, more than half of studied

children found watching and listening to materials provided by Yellow House English at home very interesting and involving.

Conducted case study positively evaluated Claire Selby's method's application, however, parental role in the research could be expanded. Parents could obtain more detailed and obligatory questionnaires concerning their children's attitudes towards materials proposed by Claire Selby and various techniques used during the classes. Moreover, they could fill in the checklist concerning the frequency of children's exposure to Claire Selby's resources. The researcher could also measure children's types of intelligences and compare them with number of activities aimed at each intelligence. It would be helpful in assessing effectiveness of provided activities.

The research carries valuable implications for teaching English in nurseries and kindergartens. The model provided by "Kraina Marzeń," based on Claire Selby's method, materials, participation in bilingual programme, and learners' immersion in English, which was proved to be effective, can be applied in other public and private educational institutions offering daily care for very young children. It would result in successful second language acquisition from early years as an age possibly influences the way the language is being learnt. If Claire Selby's method is introduced in other kindergartens in region, children will learn English effortlessly, and thus, will create well-educated society with increased chances for successful job in globalised world.

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SUMMARY

In today globalised world, it is a matter of great significance to acquire English because it serves as means of communication in various fields. Recent research demonstrates that children should begin language learning around the age of three as they possess unique linguistic capabilities which are vanishing as they are getting older. For this reason, many various methods aimed at teaching English to very young learners appeared and were introduced in educational institutions which provide daily care for children being from three to six years of age.

The author of the present paper was especially interested in Claire Selby's method which was designed for this particular age group. This approach takes into account students' types of intelligences in accordance with Gardner's theory and students' motivation. Selby also established the spiral language system which provides elements according to which lessons should be conducted. These are use of sounds and pictures, vocabulary repetition, actions and movement. Moreover, a teacher should awaken students' interest in the topics and establish links between actions and sounds or pictures.

The method is being implemented in nursery school "Kraina Marzeń" in Opole, and the author decided to conduct case study in order to evaluate practical application of abovementioned approach in this kindergarten, looking from the observer's, the teacher's, and parental perspectives. The results show that Claire Selby's method is being successfully implemented in "Kraina Marzeń." The researcher and the teacher find method effective as it lessons included elements of spiral language system, learners were motivated, and meaningful learning took place. In addition, parental observations illustrate that more than half children shows initiative to listen to and watch Claire Selby's materials at home.

Effects brought by the study arguably carry implications for further research which can expand parental role in observation in order to study very young learners' attitudes towards Selby's method and materials outside the classroom. The method was proved to be successful, thus the model provided by "Kraina Marzeń" could be implemented in other educational institutions which provide daily care for very young children.

STRESZCZENIE

W dzisiejszym, zglobalizowanym świecie nauka języka angielskiego niewątpliwie stanowi inwestycję w przyszłość dziecka, gdyż jest on postrzegany jako język światowej komunikacji w różnych dziedzinach począwszy od polityki, gospodarki i biznesu, kończąc na nauce, kulturze i turystyce. Co więcej, naukowcy potwierdzili tezę, jakoby młodsze dzieci wykazywały szczególne zdolności językowe, które wraz z wiekiem zanikają. Z tych powodów, rzeczą niezwykle istotną jest, aby dziecko zaczynało naukę języka angielskiego jeszcze przed ukończeniem trzeciego roku życia.

Rodzice jak i placówki edukacyjne doskonale rozumieją tę potrzebę, dlatego lekcje angielskiego są organizowane dla coraz to młodszych dzieci. Nauczyciele bardzo małych uczniów wykorzystują różne metody, które powstały z myślą o tej grupie wiekowej i jej możliwościach takie jak Całkowite Reagowanie, metoda Helen Doron, czy też metoda Claire Selby.

Autor niniejszej pracy był szczególnie zainteresowany podejściem zaproponowanym przez Claire Selby, które opiera się w głównej mierze na Spiralnym Systemie Nauki Języka. Elementami składowymi tego systemu są dźwięki, obrazy oraz ruch. Uczniowie wytwarzają połączenia pomiędzy obrazami bądź dźwiękiem a ruchem i poprzez doświadczanie zmysłami utrwalają materiał. Zadaniem nauczyciela jest powtarzanie słownictwa w różnych kontekstach, tak aby uczniowie zachowali je w pamięci długotrwałej. Metoda Claire Selby kładzie również nacisk na wykorzystanie technik, które pomagają dzieciom się uczyć oraz na odpowiednie zmotywowanie uczniów.

Metoda nauczania języka angielskiego bardzo małych dzieci zaproponowana przez Claire Selby jest wdrażana w przedszkolu „Kraina Marzeń” w Opolu. Autor niniejszej pracy zdecydował się przeprowadzić opisowe badanie w formie studium przypadku, które oceniłoby praktyczną implementację owego podejścia w tej placówce. Badanie to zakładało opis efektywności powyżej opisanej metody z perspektywy badacza, nauczyciela prowadzącego grupę przedszkolną w „Krainie Marzeń” oraz z perspektywy rodziców dzieci uczęszczających do przedszkola. Wyniki pokazały, że dzieci chętnie korzystają z materiałów zaproponowanych przez Claire Selby w przedszkolu, są zmotywowane i uczestniczą z zapałem w zajęciach. Autor pracy zaobserwował także, że

nauczyciel z powodzeniem wdraża Spiralny System Nauki Języka, bierze pod uwagę różnorakie inteligencje uczniów oraz przeprowadza naukę słownictwa w taki sposób, aby dzieci je zapamiętały. Nauczyciel również uważa, iż metoda Claire Selby jest skuteczna w nauczaniu języka angielskiego bardzo małych uczniów, a materiały są dostosowane do potrzeb dziecka. Rodzice zaobserwowali, że więcej niż połowa zbadanych dzieci wykazuje inicjatywę, aby oglądać animacje czy też słuchać piosenek wydanych przez Claire Selby w domu.

Jako, że przeprowadzone badanie udowodniło skuteczność i efektywność praktycznego wdrażania metody Claire Selby w przedszkolu „Kraina Marzeń” w Opolu, model wypracowany w owej placówce może zostać z powodzeniem wprowadzony w innych instytucjach edukacyjnych zajmujących się bardzo młodymi uczniami. Dzieci uczyłyby się efektywnie języka od najmłodszych lat i zapewniłyby sobie lepszą przyszłość w dobie procesów globalizacji.