University of Sarajevo

Faculty of Philosophy

Department of English Language and Literature

ZAVRŠNI MAGISTARSKI RAD

TEACHER COMPETENCES FOR TEACHING EFL IN PRIMARY SCHOOL GRADES

(Kompetencije nastavnika engleskog jezika u osnovnim školama)

Mentor: **Student:**

Prof. dr. Larisa Kasumagić - Kafedžić   **Ivana Anić**

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ABSTRACT

In the context of increasingly complex requirements for the content of education and the ways of organizing the educational process, it is necessary to search for new approaches to improve the quality and effectiveness in teaching languages at the primary level. In solving this problem, the most important role is played by pedagogical universities, designed to provide professional training for future teachers for the educational system of the country, capable of effectively conducting educational work.

European Center for Modern Languages (ECML) is a unique institution whose mission is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to help Europeans learn languages more efficiently. PEPELINO plays a vital role in establishing a professional knowledge base and a professional identity for future teachers in early child education. In fact, everything teachers usually do reflects their prior experiences and knowledge in addition to their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. PEPELINO practice is a key element in developing teacher's professional identity. Teachers need to develop the practice of critically reflecting on their own beliefs, practices and attitudes, which all have important impact on their teaching and learning. Therefore, it is evident that to identify the needs in PEPELINO and to promote change, reflection by both student teachers and teacher educators is needed. The aim of this project is to study how PEPELINO can be used as a tool for personal reflection in professional teaching competencies in a monolingual and bilingual environment. The basic results of the research will contribute to teachers to adequately engage in initial professional work, and to improve their professional qualifications.

Keywords: ECML, PEPELINO, language, teaching, education

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching foreign languages to young learners has become a global phenomenon (Murphy, Evangelou (eds.) 2016; Enever 2018). Its origins can be traced back both to parental aspirations, as well as supportive language policy whose aim is to secure young children with best educational credentials through early and continuous exposure to foreign languages (Rokita-Jaskov, Krol-Gierat, 2021).

Naturally, this demand creates a need for highly educated teachers who should understand both the psycho-pedagogical underpinnings of teaching children, as well as didactics of early foreign language teaching.

Over the course of the last decade, the European language policy (henceforth: ELP) which acts as a model to many other countries and their educational policies (Enever 2018), has focused on lowering the age of starting instruction further to the pre-primary level by issuing the language policy guidebook titled Language learning at pre-primary level: making it efficient and sustainable (European Commission 2011b). The natural follow-up to issuing the document has been investments into pre-primary language teacher education. One such measure has been the project realised by the European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz which resulted in producing the European Portfolio for Pre-Primary Educators of Foreign Languages (PEPELINO) (Goullier et al. 2015). The document, similarly to previous types of portfolios (e.g., EPOSTL, European Portfolio for Student-Teachers of Languages) (Newby et al. 2007) is supposed to assist trainee teachers in developing reflective practice in the occupation while promoting European values of intercultural interest and mutual understanding.

If teachers are to be agents of the European language education policy, they need to be equipped with competences to do so. Such is the role of PEPELINO (Goullier et al. 2015), which was developed at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML). It is a tool which can support teachers throughout their initial and in-service professional learning. It is designed to help pre-primary educators in self-evaluation. The name PEPELINO was derived from the French acronym for the publication: P – Portfolio, E – Europeen, P – pre, E – elementaire, L – langues, IN – intercultural, O. PEPELINO breaks down the professional skills which teachers of young learners (YL) should perform when catering for children's linguistic and cultural development, into four domains and eight fields of competence, with each domain being divided into two fields of competence:

- ✓ Adopting appropriate behaviour.

- Analysing and adapting how to talk to children.
- Responding positively to linguistic and cultural diversity.
✓ Creating a favourable learning environment for children.
  - Taking account of the way in which young children acquire languages.
  - Organising activities on the theme of languages and diversity.
✓ Observing and supporting each child's development.
  - Taking children's individual needs into account.
  - Supporting the linguistic development of children with other first languages.
✓ Cooperation.
  - Cooperating with the children's families.
  - Working as a team (Goullier et al. 2015: 8).

Furthermore, each of these fields of competences accompanied by five descriptors (detailed statements), being a combination of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes. It must be highlighted that the portfolio has been prepared in line with the most up-to-date knowledge on the possible achievements of very young learners and early years pedagogy. Thus, it is not only a language policy implementation instrument but a training and self-reflection tool. The concept, which is stated, is of great importance for this project. We were partly guided by this concept in the empirical research of this work, where we observed the progress of each child, examined the need for cooperation with children's families, found ways in which young children acquire languages, and perhaps the most important segment of the research analyzed the way of talking with children. The result of this research should provide adequate and high-quality results, which in the future can be guidelines for new teachers to improve their professional competences. Exactly these professional competences of future foreign language teachers are exceptional and important topic within pedagogical science. A quality teacher must possess competences for work with children, adolescents and adults, and for teaching.

The work consists of nine chapters. The first chapter is the introductory part of the paper. In the second chapter, there is an explanation of the teacher's competence, their importance and the definition of the term itself. In the third chapter, the competences of foreign language teachers in primary schools were investigated, that is, the focus is on the specific, educational and ICT competences of teachers. The fourth chapter investigated in detail PEPELINO – the European portfolio for pre-school teachers, from its creation, application, advantages and disadvantages, and how PEPELINO can be adapted to a specific context. In the fifth chapter, the research

conducted at the primary school Dr. Boris Ćorić, Kreševo, is presented, which is related to the application of PEPELINO, and whether it is considered an effective tool for promoting reflection and recording the development of language teaching skills and competencies. The sixth chapter is the conclusion. In the seventh and eighth chapters, the literature and graphs used to present the empirical research are listed. In the last, the ninth chapter, there is a survey questionnaire, which was the guide of this research.

2. TEACHER COMPETENCES

According to OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), the roles of teachers and schools are changing, and so are expectations about them. Teachers are very often asked to teach in increasingly multicultural classrooms, integrate students with special needs, use ICT (Information Communication Technology) for teaching effectively, engage in evaluation and accountability process, and involve parents in schools. It is also noted that teachers need to help students acquire not only "the skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test" but more importantly – ways of thinking (creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning), ways of working (communication and collaboration), tools for working (including information and communications technologies) and skills around citizenship, life and career and personal responsibility for success in modern democracies (OECD, 2011).

2.1. Teacher Competences: Why are they important?

When many teachers were undertaking their initial education, knowledge about learning and teaching was not so developed, many teaching tools were not available and the role of education and training was more narrowly conceived. It is therefore easy to conclude that teaching nowadays needs the competence to constantly innovate and adapt. This includes having critical, evidence-based attitudes, enabling them to respond to students' outcomes, new evidence from inside and outside the classroom and professional dialogue, in order to adapt their own practices.

The ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education) describes quality teachers as equipped with the ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity, and adapt to the needs of individual learners as well as groups. Teacher competences are built on 'a concept of teaching as praxis in which theory, practice and the ability to reflect critically on one's own and others' practice illuminate each other, rather than on a concept of teaching as the acquisition of technical skills' (ETUCE, 2008).

Therefore, teaching competences are complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to effective action in situation. Since teaching is much more than a task and involves values or assumptions concerning education, learning and

society, the concept of teacher competences may resonate differently in different national contexts.

The range and complexity of competences required for teaching in the 21st century is so great that any one individual is unlikely to have them all. It is also difficult to have developed them all at the same high degree. As a result of that, special attention must be focused on the competences or attributes of an education system.

The question of teachers' competences should be set in the wider context of the European Union's work to ensure that all citizens have the competences (knowledge, skills and attitude) they require. In 2006, the European Parliament and the European Council adopted a Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning; among the eight key competences, the importance of transversal competences (digital, learning to learn, civic competences) stands out – in particular, the meta-competence of learning to learn (adjusting to change, managing and selecting from huge information flows) (European Union, 2006). It is therefore important that teachers model these Key Competences as well as help learners to acquire them.

Ministers of Education, meeting in the Education Council (European Union 2007, 2008, 2009) have committed themselves to improving the whole continuum of teacher education: the recruitment and selection of teachers, the quality of initial teacher education, the systematic support to beginning teachers, the relevance and quality of career-long opportunities for professional development.

Concerning the competences of teachers, Ministers have recognized that:

The knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers, as well as quality of school leadership, are the most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes… For this reason, it is essential to ensure that those recruited to teaching and school leadership posts are of the highest caliber and well-suited to the tasks they have to fulfill; great care and attention should be devoted to defining the required profile of prospective teachers and school leaders, to selecting them and preparing them to fulfill their tasks. (European Union, 2009).

Even though Ministers have not adopted a complete list of the competences that teachers require, they have agreed that teachers should have a specialist knowledge of the subject(s) they teach as well as the necessary pedagogical skills to teach them, including teaching to heterogeneous classes, making effective use of ICT, and helping students to acquire transversal competences. Ministers have also noted specifically the need to promote certain key professional values and attitudes among teachers: reflective practice, autonomous learning,

engagement in research and innovation, collaboration with colleagues and parents, and an involvement in the development of the whole school.

Moreover, the document Supporting the Teaching Professions for better learning outcomes (European Commission, 2012c) noted that teaching staff 'will increasingly need the competences to find, evaluate and deploy learning materials from a wider range of sources', as well as 'critical, evidence based attitudes, enabling them to respond to students' outcomes, new evidence from inside and outside the classroom, and professional dialogue, in order to adapt their own practices' (OECD, 2009).

There is a general agreement that, for teachers, the acquisition and development of competences needs to be viewed as a career-long endeavour. Ministers of Education have recognized that:

No course of initial teacher education, however excellent, can equip teachers with all the competences they will require during their careers. Demands on the teaching profession are evolving rapidly, imposing the need for new approaches.
To be fully effective in teaching, and capable of adjusting to the evolving needs of learners in a world of rapid social, cultural, economic and technological change, teachers themselves need to reflect on their own learning requirements in the context of their particular school environment, and to take greater responsibility for their own lifelong learning as a means of updating and developing their own knowledge and skills. (European Union, 2009)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, within preschool education, children begin to learn English in the form of an optional program through audio-visual stimulation, movement and play. Based on certain laws and regulations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, educational workers have the right and obligation to continuously improve their skills through programs which were approved by the competent Ministry and that the laws generally define the basics of professional training of teachers in order to: monitor development and progress of certain scientific achievements, improvement of pedagogical theory and practices, developing teacher competencies for better job performance and improving the level of student achievement. Some of the significant laws and regulations in our country are the Law on Basic Education and the Rulebook on Professional Development of Educators, Professors/Teachers and Professional Associates in preschool institutions, primary, secondary schools and students' homes.

Based on the research conducted by Dedić Bukvić (2020) in the research study "Guidelines for the Improvement of the Teaching Profession" it was determined that teachers in Southeast Europe are dissatisfied with professional development and training, as well as in our neighboring countries. Almost half (43.2%) of the participants stated that it is necessary to significantly expand the list of offered topics, and a quarter of them (23.7%) believe that an

effective system of continuous professional development of teachers does not exist. At the top of the list, with 37.8%, were teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such findings encouraged countries in region to amend and adapt their regulations on professional training of teachers to the needs of the modern educational process.

The curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina are aligned with the Common Core Curriculum document and programmed on learning outcomes in BiH, which was adopted by the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education in BiH. Curricular reform is one of the pillars of education, and for almost four years we have been working on the best solutions in this area. This means that teachers' continuous professional development is highly relevant both for improving educational performance and effectiveness, and for enhancing teachers' commitment, identity and job satisfaction. Even though they are interconnected with the features and constraints of specific school contexts and national education systems, teachers' competences have powerful effects on student achievement: up to three quarters of school effects on student outcomes can be explained by teacher effects (Ravkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005).

2.2. What is a competence?

The definition of competence, as it is repeatedly suggested in relevant literature, should be viewed as a holistic concept – the dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding and skills. According to Crick (2008), a competence is best described as 'a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes and desire which lead to effective, embodied human action in the world, in a particular domain'. *Competence* should therefore be distinguished from *skill*, which is defined as the ability to perform complex acts with ease, precision and adaptability.

The concept of competence in teaching encompasses the following features:

- it involves tacit and explicit knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, as well as dispositions (motivation, beliefs, value orientation and emotions) (Rychen&Salganik, 2003);
- competence can be seen as the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and personal characteristics, empowering the teacher to act professionally and appropriately in a situation (Koster&Dengerink, 2008);

-   something that can be demonstrated to a certain level of achievement along a continuum (Gonzáles&Wagenaar, 2005).

It might be useful to distinguish between *teaching competences* and *teacher competences*[1]. Teaching competences can be described as focused on the role of the teacher in action in the classroom, therefore directly linked with the 'craft' of teaching – with professional knowledge and skills mobilized for action (Hagger& McIntyre, 2006). Teacher competences imply a wider, systematic view of teacher professionalism, on multiple levels – the individual, the school, the local community, professional networks.

Even though dispositions seem to be fundamental for both competence sets, they play a decisive role for teacher competences, embracing attitudes to constant professional development, innovation and collaboration. Descriptions of the two sets of competences overlap and interweave, as they often do in theory and practice, since they are concerned with the professional lives and experiences of teachers.

The following aspects recur in the research, generally broken down as *knowledge*, *skills* and *attitudes*.

-   Teachers need a deep knowledge of how to teach their specific subject (Pedagogical Concept Knowledge/PCK)[2], for effective practice in diverse, multicultural, inclusive learning environment (Williamson McDiarmid& Clevenger-Bright, 2008).
-   Teaching needs to be both effective (successful in producing learning) and good (morally and rationally sound) (Fenstermacher& Richardson, 2005).
-   Because teaching is characterized by uncertainty, teachers require 'adaptive expertise': the ability to adapt their plans and practices to meet students' learning needs (Hatano&Oura, 2003).
-   Whatever their level of competences, teachers' actions and effectiveness are bounded by the social, cultural, institutional opportunities and constraints of their professional settings (Putnam &Borko, 2000).

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[1] The distinction is made in the TALIS survey (OECD TALIS, 2009).
[2] Shulman's definition of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) includes knowledge concerning curricular materials, reccurent difficulties of subject-specific learning, learning contexts and objectives. (Shulman, 1986).

- Teachers need to have critical, evidence-based attitudes to their own practices, grounded in input from different sources – students' outcomes, theory and professional dialogue – in order to engage in innovation (Wenger, 1998).

When it comes to competencies for teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, initial teacher education at different universities, and even within one university, it is not compatible because there is no uniform qualification framework for teacher competencies. The qualification standard for PPDM[3] (pedagogical-psychological-didactic-methodical) teacher education defines a partial qualification, i.e. teacher competencies that should be acquired by every student of teaching faculties during initial education in order to be able to perform the duties of a teacher. The standard should serve higher education institutions as a guideline in the process of designing teacher study plans and programs to ensure all the conditions so that graduates of teaching departments and faculties, after completing their initial education, could work dedicatedly and effectively, to continue their professional development and to be ready to cooperate with colleagues from the profession as well as with other interested parties. In the last point, the main goal of developing the Qualification Standard for PPDM education and its application is in raising the quality of teaching children in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (Save the Children International, 2018a).

In developing the Qualification Standard for PPDM teacher education[4] at universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the working group was guided by recommendations in the qualification framework for higher education and the Manual for the development and use of standards of qualifications and occupations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The recommendations given in the documents for defining qualification standards in the countries of the European Union, the region and of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Teacher Occupation Standard, which was created within the framework of the European Commission Qualification project framework for general education (2016) were also used. By harmonizing the content of this standard with other documents, the coordination of the acquired qualifications can be achieved in BiH and the countries of the region and the European Union, and continuity in lifelong professional development, employment and education (Save the Children International, 2018a).

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[3] Više na http://enablebih.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Standard-hrv.pdf
[4] Više na http://enablebih.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Smjernice-hrv.pdf

In the teacher studies the teaching is mainly based on acquisition of the academic knowledge in the subject areas, and very little on the development of teaching competencies. In most cases, the sections in undergraduate studies offer only one semester of general pedagogy and psychology, while methodologies are often studied afterward, only in master's studies. The qualification standard would simultaneously enable identification of the need for changes and modifications in accordance with the recommended learning and teaching outcomes (Save the Children International, 2018b).

2.3. Reflective teaching

When teachers engage in reflective teaching, they are dedicating time to evaluate their own teaching practice, examine their curricular choices, consider student feedback, and make revisions to improve student belonging and learning. This process requires information gathering, data interpretation, and planning for the future. Reflective teaching involves examining one's underlying beliefs about teaching and learning and one's alignment with actual classroom practice before, during and after a course is taught. When teaching reflectively, teachers think critically about their teaching and look for evidence of effective teaching. For example, reflective teaching may include self-assessment, classroom observations, consideration of student evaluations, or exploration of educational research. Because each semester's students and their needs are different, reflective teaching is a continual practice that supports effective and student-centered teaching. Although reflective teaching can take many forms, there are a few characteristics that appear throughout all types of reflective practices (Nilson, 2016):

- Reflective teaching notes what happens in the classroom, why it happens, and how it can be improved.
- If you are practicing reflective teaching, it is rare that you will teach the same lesson again in the exact same way because reflective teaching challenges you. You will need to critique yourself and your go-to lesson plans.
- Although many teachers write their reflections down, not all reflective teaching needs to be written. Many teachers, instead, choose to speak about their lessons with a colleague or mentor, or what Farrell calls a "Critical Friend."
- Reflective teaching is collaborative, often involving a head teacher or a colleague.
- Reflecting on and speaking about how your lessons go often leads to helpful insights.

The questions that are most often used for reflective teaching are presented in picture no. 1.

Picture 1.- Questions for reflective teaching
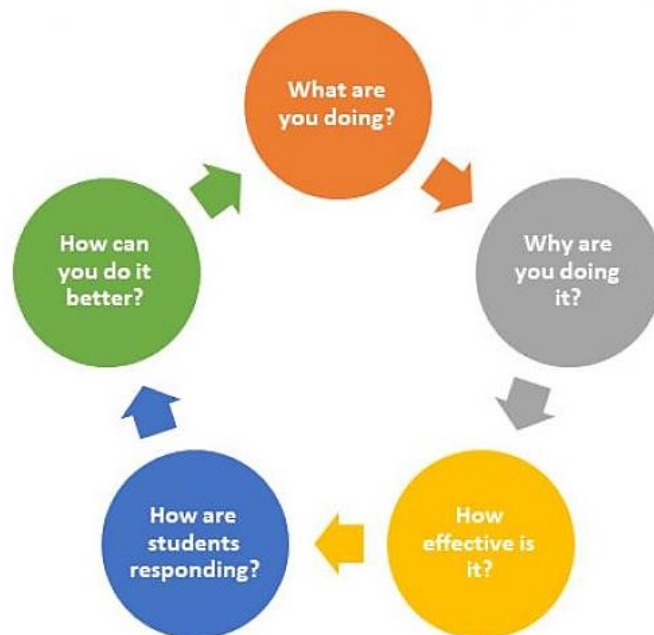
It is essential to mention that action research is a specific methodology for questioning one's own teaching practice, which is based on reflection and self-reflection. I start action research h by recording impressions of my teaching and end with practical measures to solve problematic situations. It turned out that the best way to record my impressions of my teaching practices was to keep a journal. And that included:

- ✓ A description of what happened in the classroom.
- ✓ My impression of what happened.
- ✓ If a problem was identified, what was the likely cause?
- ✓ What measures do I intend to take to solve the problem?

Before I try to solve the problem I discovered during the class, I try to gather information about the problem, either by reading about it, asking questions on forums and websites, or by sharing my problem with my colleagues.

3. COMPETENCES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The document *Competences of Primary School Foreign Language Teachers in the Republic of Croatia* published by University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer Osijek (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007) contains descriptions of competences, i.e. descriptions of knowledge, characteristics, skills and abilities that competent primary school foreign language teachers should acquire, maintain and develop in all areas of relevance. It is intended for prospective teachers, teachers on their probationary year and teachers that have already passed the state exam. In addition, it is for all the institutions involved in education at the post-secondary level, lifelong education and the inspection and evaluation of teachers.

The aim of this document is to systematically define the areas of competences within which foreign language teachers) should professionally evolve. Within each area of competence, the facts and philosophy are defined (what the teachers should have), as well as general knowledge (what they have to be acquainted with) and the skills and abilities (ways in which to do something).

3.1. Subject – specific competences

Subject-specific competences include two groups of competences. The first one consists of competences related to language and culture, and these are communicative language and intercultural teacher competences.

The second group in this area consists of subject-specific teacher competences related to the teaching of foreign languages. They are competences related to general theories of language acquisition, competences related to the application of knowledge of modern foreign language teaching theories and competences related to the evaluation and assessment of the pupils' communicative language competences.

3.1.1. Competences related to language and culture

If the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction. General knowledge of the literature and

other arts that are integral to the target culture should be part of language instruction as should basic knowledge of the history and geography associated with the target language community.

The social structure of the culture should also be covered (e.g. family, kinship relations, child-rearing, courtship and marriage, gender roles) especially if the target culture differs in important ways from the learner's culture. Political and educational systems should be introduced as should the major religion(s) and holidays, celebrations, and important customs.

These topics can all serve as content for language instruction – with special focus on areas of cultural and interactional difference. Brinton et al. (2003), among others, have shown that teaching language through content is one of the most effective means available for achieving communicative competence in a second or foreign language.

Example - using geography, students can mark where they come from on the world map with a pin, in order to create a visual representation of the composition of the class. After that, we have a discussion. In this way, the teacher and students in the classroom visualize the origins of their families and ancestors. The teacher engages the students and establishes the context of the lesson by reading aloud a text which is focused on family, origins, ancestry. Through the story read aloud and discussions, students will reflect on their individual and family identities. Afterwards, they will have the at-home task of talking with their families about their family lineage and where their parents, grandparents, (and possible great grandparents) came from. Lastly, each student and the teacher will present about their family history including specifically where they come from. A pin or some sort of mark should be placed on the map to identify the name of the person and origins. This visual representation allows the students to know more about each other, to deepen their classroom community, and to know about their family heritage. In addition to the above lesson, the teacher may do additional activities to build upon this mapping activity and connect to subject content in social studies, reading, math, etc.

3.1.1.1. Teacher's communicative language competences

Teacher's communicative competence, as a system of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivational disposition, attitudes and properties, is one of the essential competences of teachers and it has been one of the most important content of teacher training programmes in the last twenty years. Both in the traditional and modern-organized school, the quality of educational and teaching process is determined by the quality of communication as the most obvious part of the teacher-

student social interaction. Teacher communication skills are viewed as the necessary skills for improving student learning (Zlatić et al., 2013). It is important to mention that various components of communicative competences are interrelated and it is very important to properly describe the nature of these interrelationships in order to fully understand the construct of communicative competence.

In terms of linguistic competences (phonology, grammar, vocabulary and semantics), a good foreign language teacher should:

- have the necessary knowledge of the foreign language to teach in the foreign language, i.e. knowledge of pronunciation, stress, intonation and spelling;
- be acquainted with the knowledge of grammar items from the fields of morphology and syntax and the ability to use them in teaching foreign languages;
- have the knowledge of vocabulary of the foreign language (especially in the field of everyday conversation, the world of imagination, school life and curriculum), the knowledge of the metalinguistic vocabulary and of the language for specific purposes necessary for the use of the Internet and for his/her own professional improvement;
- have the knowledge of the meaning of words based on the relationship between words and general contexts on the reference and connotation level.

It has been said that it does not matter how well a person knows a language's grammar, if he or she does not know how it must be used for successful communication, or how people use it in their native environment. Disadvantages between language learners and native speakers become evident when learners have only been presented with artificial, outdated situations that offer limited or null information on how the language is used at the time it is being learned. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language that is appropriate to social contexts. Alptekin (2002) explains that social context refers to culture-specific contexts that include the norms, values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of a culture. For example, thanking a friend in a formal speech is different from how it is done over a meal.

Therefore, in terms of sociolinguistic competences, a foreign language teacher should possess skills that are necessary for the realization of the social dimension of language use including the knowledge of language varieties (dialects, sociolect, etc.) and language registers (formal, informal, confidential, etc.). He/she should be aware of the inseparable nature of language and culture and have sufficient knowledge of linguistic and paralinguistic elements (mimicry, gestures, rhythm, etc.) and be able to use them adequately in teaching.

Pragmatic competence is the competence of understanding and using language correctly and appropriately in a particular context to achieve successful communication (Shu, 2018). The purpose of learning a foreign language is to use it in communication, that is to say, learning English is to cultivate English learners' communicative competence. Since pragmatic competence is an essential element of communicative competence, it should be important in learning English.

When we talk about pragmatic competences, a foreign language teacher should have knowledge of the principles according to which messages are organized, structured and arranged and according to which they are used to fulfill certain communicative functions, as well as the schemata according to which messages are sequenced. He/she should be well prepared to avoid communicative problems caused by insufficient knowledge of the use of various strategies.

3.1.1.2.Teacher's intercultural competence

Language and culture are reflections of each other and the ability to speak and interact appropriately in a given culture is a vital part of communicative competence. Furthermore, the teaching of culture in foreign language courses can improve students' cultural competence and change their views on particular languages and cultures. Language and culture are deeply connected, and it is crucial that foreign language teachers place an emphasis on culture so that their students can effectively communicate in the target language.

Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves having an understanding of and respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing and expressing one's own ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts.

Language plays an important role in shaping our own cultures because different groups have different languages and they see the world differently. The language we speak unconsciously impacts the way we think and conceptualize the world. Consequently, it is important that foreign language teachers incorporate the target culture into their curriculum. Language teachers not only give their students access to another group of people who speak another language, but also to the cultural values, beliefs and attitudes that are encoded in the language. Language teachers must help their students become culturally capable and literate. Students

cannot master a language unless they also master the cultural contexts in which the language occurs, and without cultural insights, foreign language teaching is inaccurate and incomplete.

Despite the fact that the importance of culture in language education has been agreed upon, culture is still largely being taught as something on the periphery of language courses. There exist a variety of reasons for this disconnect between language teaching and culture. Four main reasons include lack of time, fear of making a mistake or teaching stereotypes, a lack of testing and assessment on culture, and the potential for controversy (Koning, 2012).

Regarding intercultural competences, a foreign language teacher should (Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersın, 2009):

- have knowledge about social and cultural similarities and differences between his/her own country and the country whose language he/she teaches and be willing to respect them;
- have knowledge about social and cultural particularities of linguistic and non-linguistic communication and be able to adapt them to cross-cultural communication;
- be able to choose and critically evaluate material with cultural contents, to use them in teaching and to point out to students the similarities and differences between the student's culture and the culture of the target language;
- be able to develop students' understanding, appreciation and critical judgment of the social and cultural similarities and differences between the student's own culture and the culture of the target language and to make the student aware of the danger of overhasty generalizations and stereotypes;
- be able to foster the student's ability to apply their knowledge from other subjects to develop their intercultural competence;
- be able to develop the student's ability to self-assessment and self-evaluation of his/her own cultural thoughts and experience.

3.1.2. Subject-specific teacher competences

Subject-specific teacher competences are related to the teaching of foreign languages. They are competences related to general theories of language acquisition, competences related to the application of knowledge of modern foreign language teaching theories and competences related to the evaluation and assessment of the pupils' communicative language competences. There will be more words about these competences on the following pages.

3.1.2.1.Competences related to general theories of language acquisition

Language acquisition is the process by which we are able to develop and learn a language. This generally includes speaking, listening, writing, and overall communication. The term *language acquisition* often refers to the *first-language acquisition*, which simply means that the first language is learned as an infant (unless the child learns two or more languages at the same time). However, there is also the term *second-language acquisition*, which refers to the process in both children and adults when they learn additional languages apart from their native one. Each of these terms has at least one language acquisition theory behind them which seeks to answer the big question of how we learn a language.

One of the most well-known and most scientifically accurate theories yet, the Nativist Theory suggests that we are born with genes that allow us to learn language. This language acquisition theory argues that there is a theoretical device known as *the language acquisition device* (LAD) that is somewhere in our brain. This "device" is in charge of our learning a language the same way the hypothalamus, for example, is in charge of regulating our body temperature. This theory also suggests that there is a universal grammar (a theory by Noam Chomsky) that is shared across every language in the world because universal grammar is part of our genetic makeup. Essentially, almost all languages around the world have nouns and verbs and similar ways to structure thoughts. All languages have a finite number of rules from which we can build an infinite number of phrases. The core concepts from these finite rules are built into our brains (according to Universal Grammar and the Nativist Theory).

The notion of universal grammar and the innateness of the language faculty are opposed to the behaviorist concept of language. It is American behaviorist and psychologist B.F. Skinner who developed the behaviorist theory of language acquisition. This theory suggests that learning a language is just like learning any new skill through observation, imitation, repetition, errors, rewards, and punishments. Behavior theorists state that language development is a learned behavior. When babies first speak, they are trying to imitate the behaviour of their parents and adults around them. A language would develop as responses to stimuli from the environment. Hugging the baby for his or her first word is a reward that pushes them further on the learning curve. Kids in school could get either rewarded or punished for their language learning acquisition process.

The social interactionist theory is based on the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The basic notion of this theory is that language has a social origin. This concept suggests that the

child, from birth, is continually engaging in social interactions, which allows him or her to develop higher cognitive functions, namely language, and thought. According to Vygotsky's social development model, socio-cultural interactions come first, then cognition and language development.

Piaget's constructivist theory argues that language is constructed by cognitive development. In other words, people develop their language skills and construct overall knowledge based on their own experience. Beyond just language development, Piaget's theory focuses on understanding the nature of intelligence itself. He defines four stages that cognitive development goes through:

- sensorimotor stage: birth to 2 years;
- preoperational stage: 2 to 7 years;
- concrete operational stage: 7 to 11 years;
- formal operational stage: 12 and up.

A foreign language teacher should therefore have (Harmer, 2007):

- knowledge of pioneer theories of child cognitive and psycholinguistic development and their methodical implications;
- knowledge of modern theories of first, second and third language acquisition;
- knowledge of the structure of the communicative competence;
- knowledge of traditional, modern and alternative theories of foreign language teaching and an ability to critically assess them;
- knowledge about modern principles of the organization of the process of foreign language learning and teaching, especially in context of teaching it to young learners.

3.1.2.2. Competences related to application of the knowledge of MFL (Modern Foreign Language) teaching theories

MFL teaching has been a traditional staple of secondary education for decades, with the most common languages taught in schools in England – French and Spanish – remaining consistently popular (Board and Tinsley 2014; DfE 2016).

Considering that we live in the modern knowledge society, we are bound as teachers to implement modern strategies that motivate students to acquire their knowledge and develop skills and competencies to confront an ever-changing, globalized world successfully. To do this, teachers require a new educational approach, more critical and ingenious, to develop creative projects, where they are the facilitators of learning. The new role of teachers demands us to keep updated about advances in the matters of education.

Likewise, we are interested in technological advances and, as far as possible, how to adapt new solutions for learning. Collaborating with other teachers and sharing ideas and experiences is essential to enrich our work and help our students to improve the development of their competencies. Teachers are required to impact the lives of students positively and train them so that they know how to act in different situations, value their development, and understand how to make decisions in different contexts.

Taking into account all that has been previously written, a foreign language teacher should be able to systematically foster students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through a wide variety of activities, teaching materials, tools, aids and technical equipment. She or he should organize lessons according to the age and the level of foreign language knowledge of the student.

While planning and organizing lessons, special attention should be paid to time organization, i.e. the number and duration of teaching activities, selection and appropriate use of activities with different content and different cognitive demands as well as the use of various teaching techniques (drama, literary, music, art, etc.) and teaching materials. The teacher should be able to adapt teaching methods and techniques to the individual student's differences.

When we talk about the class atmosphere, she/he should create a positive class atmosphere for foreign language teaching, to motivate students, to recognize and decrease the effect of foreign language anxiety.

In the course of researching this competence, I came across an interesting example in practice. Teachers can, with the help of new technology, connect their students through certain platforms, communicate with each other in English, play quizzes, and compete with each other. In this way, students are motivated to master the language as much as possible, due to mutual conversation, quizzes, etc. On the platform, the teachers would be the guides, and they would monitor the course of the lessons.

3.1.2.3. Competences related to evaluation and assessment of the student's communicative language competence

Testing language has traditionally taken the form of testing knowledge about language, usually the testing of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. However, there is much more to being able to use language than knowledge about it. Dell Hymes, who proposed the concept of *communicative competence* (1972), argued that a speaker can be able to produce grammatical sentences that are completely inappropriate. In communicative competence he included not only the ability to form correct sentences, but to use them at appropriate times. Thus, for Hymes the term *competence* covers more elements than Chomsky's narrow use of it (1965), ranging from grammatical competence to sociolinguistic competence. However, the basic idea of communicative competence remains the ability to use language appropriately, both receptively and productively, in real situations.

Communicative language tests are intended to be a measure of how the test takers are able to use language in real life situations. In testing productive skills, emphasis is placed on appropriateness rather than on ability to form grammatically correct sentences. In testing receptive skills, emphasis is placed on understanding the communicative intent of the speaker or writer rather than on picking out specific details. And, in fact, the two are often combined in communicative testing, so that the test takers must both comprehend and respond in real time (Enache, 2005).

While evaluating and assessing the student's communicative language competences, a foreign language teacher should have knowledge of the theoretical principles underlying evaluation, assessment and self-evaluation. She or he should know about the content, the aim and the manner of assessment and who is doing the assessment. They should be aware of the relationship between assessment and the context of assessment (linguistic vs. communicative context), of the age and the knowledge of language, of different types of errors (in language performance vs. language competence), the influence of evaluation on the teaching process, as well as of the interpretation and use of evaluation and assessment results. Teachers should further be aware of the differences between various evaluation and assessment techniques, of the characteristics of a good test, objectivity in assessment, continuity of the process of evaluation, assessment and self-evaluation and self-assessment.

Foreign language teachers should be able to apply the above-mentioned knowledge to create tests for various language skills, to assess students' assignments and to give feedback. They

should know how to apply various error-correction techniques and be aware of the effect that the error-correction process can have on the students. Teachers should be willing to encourage the development of self-correction of students and peer-correction. They should encourage students to listen to each other and to assess themselves as well as to accept personal responsibility for their knowledge. At the end, teachers are obliged to have a positive attitude towards errors and foster these positive attitudes in students as well.

3.2. Educational competences

The area of educational competences consists of competences related to educational science, which include general pedagogical-psychological competences, competences related to classroom and out-of-class instruction and personal characteristics and skills. Pedagogical-psychological competences comprise general and specific knowledge of pedagogy and psychology that teachers of foreign languages possess and know how to apply in foreign language teaching (both inside and outside of the classroom), as well as cognitive and emotional characteristics. They include intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary to perform qualitative teaching activities.

3.2.1. Pedagogical – psychological competences

Nowadays, there exist different factors in providing successful foreign language teaching. One of the most important among them belongs to psychology. Deep understanding of various psychological aspects may help teachers to solve many key moments in their work: to find a proper method of working in every students' group, to realize the right approach to students according to their skills and abilities taking into account complicated age peculiarities, to provide high motivation in foreign language mastering, and to overcome natural problems, so called *barriers* appearing in the process of language studying. According to the studied literature, many prominent scientists were interested in psychological side of pedagogy trying to make the process of education more effective (Chebotarova, 2014, p. 2).

All researchers who study foreign languages teaching are convinced that in this process the importance of a teacher's professional languagecompetence, factors of accounting of educational subject particularities and individual peculiarities of learners, especially motivation in learning foreign languages are equal. We can say that there are three equal components in

the process of teaching foreign languages: a teacher and his professional skills, a learner and his aspiration, and the subject which the learner must acquire (Hagger, Burn, Mutton, Brindley, 2008).

It is absolutely normal that in psychological and pedagogical analysis of education we must consider components mentioned above. From our point of view, the important factors and components of educational system are: psychological particularities of foreign language teachers, psychological peculiarities of learners of various age stages, psychological features of foreign language as an educational subject, psychological analysis of speech activity as an object of mastering, and student's educational activity in the process of learning foreign languages and the form of education (Bekbergenovna Palvanova at al, 2022)

In terms of pedagogical – psychological competences, a foreign language teacher should have knowledge of general pedagogy. This means that she or he should have knowledge of general pedagogical concepts and categories, forms of pedagogical activities, forms of knowledge, education concepts, types of educational institutions and systems of education etc. They should possess knowledge of general notions, concepts and categories, such as: general features of different stages of child development, physical and motor development, speech development, cognitive development, social, emotional and moral development, self-awareness and self-esteem, the influence of the family on development, play and creativity, the development and learning in early and middle childhood, and of motivation.

Special attention should be paid to children with difficulties and disorders because teachers should then adapt their teaching methods and materials to their capabilities.

An excellent example of this competence is a good teacher's approach. If the teacher has not made a final opinion and conclusion (after talking with the child) about his/her psychological state, the alternative way is for the children to "open up" through art. That is, the teacher can give the task to draw how they see their classroom and teaching, what they would like to have in class to learn the language more easily.

3.2.2. Competences related to classroom management

A classroom teacher has vital role in honing quality education of students. He or she must be equipped with classroom management skills in order to survive in the classroom. The ability to

control the student's behavior is in their hands. He or she has the power to make the classroom a better learning place or a hell for students.

A classroom teacher can make a difference on the lives of students for them to succeed by being a good example in everything he or she does. However, a classroom teacher can negatively affect students'performance when he or she mismanages the class or when he or she is not able to provide quality education. Thus, a successful classroom environment is only attained when the teacher knows how to manage misbehaviors of students in a calm and smooth way. A classroom teacher must be knowledgeable not only in the subject that he/she will be teaching but also about classroom management.

In order to successfully manage the classroom, a foreign language teacher should (C.Y. Ho, at al, 2023):

- be familiar with the appropriate procedures in mixed classes with students from different social, language, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds;
- be aware that the student's physical, intellectual, linguistic, social, cultural and emotional development can have an effect on his/her learning;
- be familiar with cognitive and socio-emotional characteristics of children with special needs (disabled children and specially gifted children) and be able to choose appropriate methods and procedures to teach foreign languages to those children as well as be familiar with the possibilities of the integration of such children;
- be able to plan and implement a special timetable for the work with those children and their parents as well as to collaborate with other teachers and experts while planning and implementing the timetable for work with them;
- be able to teach pupils of different age and abilities;
- be acquainted with the procedures to stimulate and maintain the motivation for foreign language teaching and to organize an optimal, purposeful and motivating teaching and learning environment;
- be able to develop pupil's life-long learning skills;
- be acquainted with the use of ICT in the teaching process and be able to implement it in an efficient way;
- be able to efficiently plan and organize, as well as use, the period of time allotted to teaching and learning;

- be able to efficiently organize and use the learning space, materials, texts and other teaching and learning resources;
- be able to recognize and solve conflicts and cases of violence in school.

An example from personal experience - I equipped the classroom with various props or realia (small musical devices, tools, geographical props, things that are specific to a certain climate and religion, etc.). Before I came to the class, I had to get ready, that is, I had to make a lesson plan. For that lesson, learning about states was planned. I singled out a couple of countries from our environment, but also from the world, which are very specific (e.g. India for costumes, Italy for pizza and pasta). A table was placed (next to the blackboard) where there were certain props that would make an association with certain countries. It was extremely interesting for the students, and what is much more significant, they very quickly accepted new words from the English language. For the next lesson, I left it to them to each go to the side of the table, pick up an item and briefly tell what it is andwhere it comes from.

3.2.3. Competences related to out-of-class activities

Even though teachers spend most of their time inside the classroom, not only foreign language teachers, but teachers in general should be acquainted with the purpose, structure and activities of their school. They should be familiar with the school and pedagogical documents, as well as various administrative procedures.

They should possess knowledge about the development of the curriculum as well as about lesson planning. They should plan with other teachers and offer the pupils the opportunity to learn in an out-of-class context, which includes visiting museums, theatres, companies, etc.

They should be aware of their role in the teaching process (improver of the teaching process, animator, lecturer, participant in the teaching process, advisor, support, source of knowledge, listener, observer) as well as their rights and obligations. They should respect the role of parents, colleagues and other participants in the teaching and learning processes, and be acquainted with their rights, responsibilities and interests. They should be prepared to ask for advice from experts and more experienced teachers with regard to special educational needs. They should be able to show compassion and effectively communicate with pupils, other teachers and parents (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007).

When it comes to extracurricular activities, I had the opportunity to take the children to the museum and the fire station. The museum had a cultural significance for the children's development, and the visit to the fire station left a special impression on them, because for the first time they had the opportunity to see live how one of their days works. Also, in their eyes, the simulation of putting out a fire was something they would not forget for a long time, so I talked to them about that topic in the next lesson in the classroom. The interaction with the students is certainly of the highest quality while they are impressed by past events.

3.2.4. Interpersonal characteristics and skills

Teachers are considered to be the best hope for reform. The quality of the teachers' performance is the most basic element in classroom life, the strength of education lies within the teacher.

Teachers are expected to manage a wide range of academic and social processes each day. Thus, it is important to assess their intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics and skills in relation to their teaching efficacy as manifested in the teaching-learning process.

The teacher's knowledge of themselves, how they understand personal feelings and moods, and how well they relate to others particularly with their students and their colleagues needs to be given emphasis in the educational process. As facilitators of teaching and learning in the classroom, a high level of intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and teaching efficacy need to be possessed by teachers in order to become effective classroom managers (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007).

Interpersonal skills involve the interpretation of social interactions with others. The combination of various skills such as listening, communicating, discerning, and interpreting, helps individuals to better relate and interact with other individuals. Those with intrapersonal skills learn to cope with the world around them. Knowledge of the self through reflection is especially important to help individuals to mature in social context.

Therefore, intrapersonal skills help develop interpersonal skills. Knowing and accepting one's self is the first step in understanding and accepting others (Tenedero, 2001).

A foreign language teacher should then understand pupils, parents and other participants of the teaching process and be able to effectively communicate and establish good relationships with them. They should harmoniously cooperate with others and be aware of their responsibilities

and be ready to accept responsibility for the teaching process and its results. English language teachers have to be aware of the cultural and linguistic aspects of their work environment, promote positive values and attitudes, but at the same time respect and have understanding for pupils' attitudes. They should be aware of their own abilities, skills and intelligence and know how to control their own impulsive reactions. They have to be aware of the need to continually re-evaluate the system of values and characteristics demonstrated in their work. They need to apply their goals, beliefs, interests, motivation, experience, skills and intelligence to the improvement of their work and pupils' progress and to deal with their feelings. In the end, they should also be dedicated to the development of the teaching/learning results and take care of the educational development of pupils.

In the course of this research, I can testify that only great dedication to innovation, good listening, reasoning and respect for children's opinions can produce excellent results in terms of quality teaching, good student behavior, their commitment and interest, and finally good grades.

3.3. ICT (Integration of Information Communication and Technology)competences of teachers

Nowadays, computerization is one of the dominant trends in the development of the modern society. The informatization of education has become one of the priorities of modernization of educational systems. New technologies play an important role in everyday life of most people in developed world so it is natural that school systems also had to react to this situation and have implemented ICT into the educational process.

As defined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking) (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007).

Sysoyev and Evstigneev (2012) suggest that the foreign language teacher's ICT competence means the ability to use Web-based educational resources, Web 2.0 social networks and other information and communication technologies in order to create the language skills and to develop students' verbal abilities in learning foreign language and culture (Sysoyev, Evstigneev, 2012).

Zhang and colleagues (2023) made an interesting research study, which is very useful for ICT competencies of teachers. This study explored how preservice teachers' (PSTs) perceived self-efficacy beliefs for integrating information and communication technology (ICT) relate to their actual acquisition of ICT competencies directly and indirectly through their perceived use of online self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies. Overall, this study indicated that PSTs' beliefs in their capabilities of technology integration may not directly influence their technology use skills, but rather through their self-regulated learning strategies such as goal-setting strategies. Instructors and program coordinators may use instructional strategies or interventions to enhance PSTs' skills in setting their own learning goals, which may positively influence transferring PSTs' ICT self-efficacy into actual technology use skills.

Foreign language is one of the required subjects in all curricula. One of the main goals of foreign language teaching in schools is to develop students' foreign language communicative competence in all its manifold components needed for students to communicate in social and professional areas. That is why the use of ICT in foreign language learning should be focused on the development of verbal skills (reading, speaking, writing, listening), language skills (vocabulary, phonetics, grammar) and the formation of socio-cultural and intercultural competences, and ICT competence of foreign language teachers is the ability to use the entire arsenal of ICT in learning a foreign language aspects and kinds of verbal activity (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007).

The most important thing about ICT in education are teachers themselves, their attitude towards ICT and its use at their lessons, their competencies to work with it and to involve it into teaching and learning, their willingness to further education in this field. To make the best use of ICT, teachers must be equipped with adequate ICT competencies. In the process of integrating ICT into education, both teachers ICT competencies and how they perceive the role of ICT in their teaching and learning process play key roles (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007).

Different attempts have been made to discuss the effect that ICT might have on education. Kuhnlenschmidt and Kacer (2010) highlighted three possible kinds of technology impact on teaching. They stated that:

- technology has had a positive influence on teaching because students receive faster feedback, students have better collaborative learning experiences and learning can take place anywhere at any time;
- technology has had a negative influence on teaching because computers may act as distractor in class, the use of computer-generated slides does not permit higher levels of learning, and teachers may use technology to distance themselves from students;
- technology has had no impact on learning – the brain is what controls learning, not technology.

The use of ICT opens up new opportunities in arranging educational environment. The new Web provides resources, tools and technologies that can make educational process social as they help create collaborative learning atmosphere. It should be noted that ICT competence is not static, but dynamic construct that is in constant progress under the influence of technical progress and the development of methods of foreign language teaching. Speaking about learning a foreign language, it is difficult to underestimate the role of ICT.

Teachers should understand how digital technologies can support communication, creativity and innovation, and be aware of their opportunities, limitations, effects and risks. They should understand the general principles, mechanisms and logic underlying evolving digital technologies and know the basic function and use of different devices, software and networks.

To sum up:

The competences of teachers, according to the document "Competences of foreign language teachers in primary schools" in the Republic of Croatia published by the University of Josip Juraj Strossmaier Osijek (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007), are made up of the following competences (picture 2).

Picture 2.- Competences of teachers

SUBJECT - SPECIFIC COMPETENCES	EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCES	ICT (Integration of Information Communication and Technology) COMPETENCES OF TEACHERS
Competences related to language and culture	Pedagocal-psyhological c.	
Subject-specific teacher comp.	Competences related to classroom management	
	Competences related to out-of-class activities	
	Interpersonal characteristics and skills	

Language teachers have always known that learning an additional language requires learning about another culture. This is, in fact, one of the primary reasons for learning languages-to experience a different culture from the inside, so as to empathize with a broader range of others and to enrich one's ability to appreciate varied human experiences.

I have faith that technology-enhanced language teaching and learning can provide opportunities for learners to experience cultural encounters and become effective intercultural communicators in ways that lead to greater understanding and engagement.

4. PEPELINO – EUROPEAN PORTFOLIO FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATORS

PEPELINO is a portfolio aimed at students embarking on initial training to become pre-primary educators and persons working with children under the age of 7 who wish to improve their training.

It is a tool for personal reflection on professional competences, focusing on the plurilingual and intercultural dimension of work with pre-primary children.

It was developed at the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe by a team of experts from Austria, the Czech Republic, France and Greece with the assistance of trainers from the 33 member states of the ECML and other countries which are involved in its work.

Based on language policy documents of the Language Policy Unit and the European Commission and on reference documents produced by the ECML, it seeks to encourage consideration of educational and policy issues related to the acquisition of languages of socialisation, the development of plurilingual competence, intercultural education and recognition of children's individual language repertoires when implementing curricula in different learning contexts (Villares, 2019).

4.1. Languages at the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages)

The ECML is a unique institution whose mission is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to help Europeans learn languages more efficiently (www.ecml.at). This centre is committed to linguistic and cultural diversity, where the key role of quality language education in achieving intercultural dialogue, democratic citizenship and social cohesion is recognised and supported.The ECML embraces and actively encourages plurilingualism whenever and wherever possible, both formally and informally.

ECML is relevant to this topic because it recognises the importance of pedagogical approaches which are differentiated according to learner needs and to specific language contexts (home/first, second, foreign, regional, of migration, in subjects etc.). It values all those working in the field from early years through to adult education and contributes to their professionalisation by providing access to innovative resources and to transformative development opportunities. Through its networks at national and international level and through

dialogue and exchange with relevant stakeholders, the ECML is ideally equipped to act as a pioneering institution in the teaching and learning of languages.

4.2. European language policy (ELP) in pre-primary education

The emphasis on early teaching of languages in the European policy goes back to the 1990s, where the need to speak many languages or individual plurilingualism (Byram 1997; Council of Europe 2001) was voiced as a prerequisite to achieving social cohesion and mutual understanding among citizens of the European Union (European Commission White Paper: Teaching and Learning-Towards the Learning Society 1995: 67). Plurilingualism is defined in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as 'the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures' (Council of Europe 2001). Therefore, it was recognised as an important asset of the human capital, which can be utilised in building 'the knowledge society' (European Council 2000). In 2011 the European Commission (2011a) published a report analyzing the current state of teaching foreign languages to the very young, which in response to parental demand, already took place in many countries, mainly on a fee-paying basis. The analysis was subsequently followed by the policy implementation guidebook titled 'Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable' (European Commission 2011b) and was directed at EU member state countries for consideration. The guidebook specifies the benefits of very early foreign language learning, which are limited to general cognitive and affective development, and not to achieving native-like mastery in a language. Openness to new languages and cultures was highlighted as the most prominent affective benefit of such an early exposure to languages. What is more, it is highlighted in the document that these goals can only be met if proactive policy supporting pre-primary foreign language teaching is implemented, characterized by equity in access to free education, quality in teaching instruction, consistency of curricula in various contexts and continuity from pre-primary level to the next.

In most countries, students begin to study the first foreign language as a compulsory subject at the age of 6 or 7, in the first years of elementary school of education. In very few countries they start with learning foreign languages at the age of 8 or 9. Only three education systems start in preschool age: Poland and Cyprus (recently implemented reform which lowers the starting age

by compulsory learning of foreign languages) and Belgium (community who speaks German). In Belgium (French Community), Germany, Spain and in Switzerland, the starting age varies slightly depending on the region or administrative area. Schools in Sweden, Estonia and Finland have specific degree of flexibility in deciding the introduction of learning foreign language as a compulsory language for all students. In the European Union in 2014, there was an increase of 16.5 percent compared to 2005. This confirms that students start learning foreign languages earlier than in previous years (picture 3) (Eurydice report, 2017).

Picture 3. - The age of starting to learn a foreign language as compulsory subject
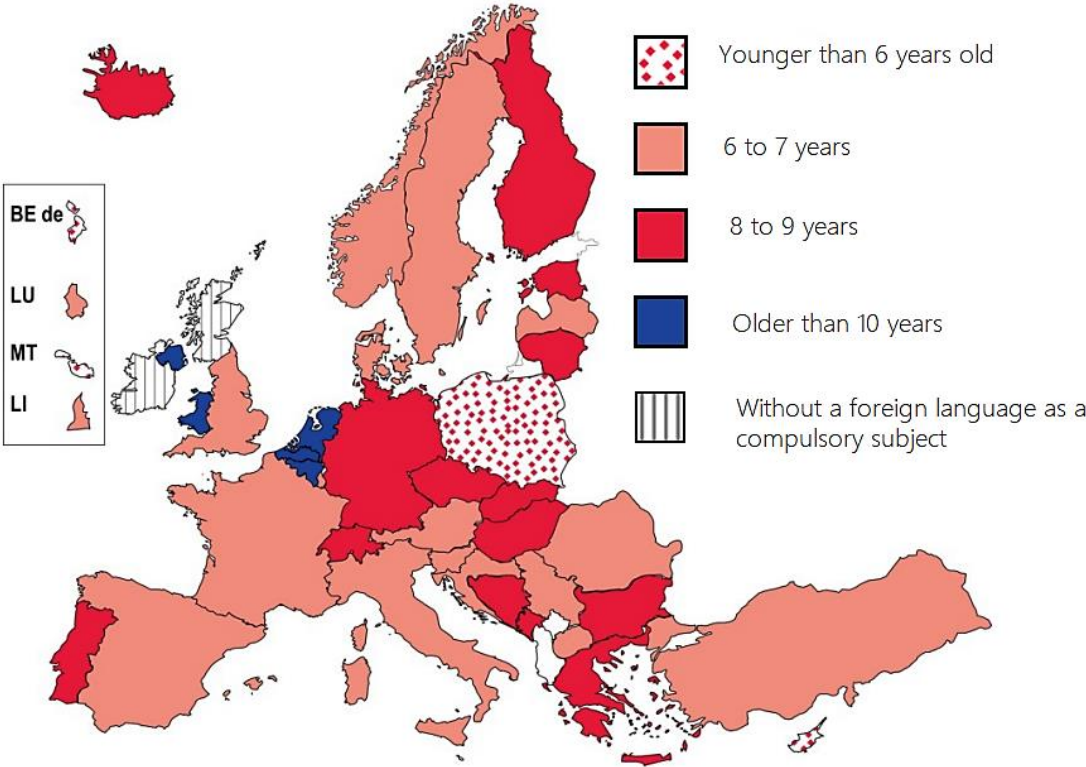
Source: Eurydice

Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina start learning English already in kindergarten. Teaching takes place spontaneously through dance, song, creative, sports, drama and other activities, according to a specially designed program. At the public debate on the topic "Language and literature teaching - a fundamental segment of education in primary school", which was held in 2011, it was proposed to learn the first foreign language from the first grade of primary school, in order to make a link with learning a foreign language in preschool age, and compulsory learning of two foreign languages in all four-year secondary schools, as well as at faculties. The

discussion bore fruit, and a foreign language is introduced as compulsory for children from the first grade of primary school.

4.3. Teachers of very young learners as agents of ELP (The European Language Portfolio) – research perspectives

The ELP is a document in which those who are learning or have learned one or more languages can record and reflect on their language learning and intercultural experiences (www.coe.int).

In ELP documents (e.g., European Commission 2011a) it is assumed that the very experience of language learning can lead to a change in attitude towards others and of general life orientations. It is thus the role of teachers to transfer these policy assumptions into practice. As Kirsch and colleagues (2020) write, teacher agency is crucial in implementing any language policy guidelines as "teachers and students, among others, appropriate, interpret and negotiate policies when they implement them in their local context".

Haukas additionally outlined criteria which teachers should fulfill if they wish to follow a multilingual pedagogical approach (Haukas, 2016). They are:

- They should be multilingual themselves and serve as models for their learners.
- They should have a highly developed cross-linguistic and metalinguistic awareness.
- They should be familiar with research on multilingualism.
- They should know how to foster learners' multilingualism.
- They should be sensitive to learners' individual cognitive and affective differences.
- They should be willing to collaborate with other (language) teachers to enhance learners'multilingualism (Haukas 2016: 3).

Different societies may have different historical pasts and thus different needs, goals or aspirations. These contextual determinants shape individual countries' language policies and in unison impact the language teachers' beliefs.

Most studies that have been conducted in the last two decades on the beliefs of language teachers and policy implementation were conducted in reference to multilingualism and in multilingual societies (De Angelis 2011; Haukas 2016; Kirsch 2018; Lundberg 2019). Only a handful looked at the link between teacher beliefs and early language learning in school settings (Jaskow 2016; Skubic 2017). In the case of the latter, they aimed to dispel the myths about the

goals of early foreign instruction held by many teachers (Jaskow 2016; Skubic 2017) while in the case of the former they sought the link between teacher beliefs and agency in implementing multilingual pedagogies. The study of Bustos Flores (2001) provides important evidence for the link between teacher beliefs and their practices, as the latter influence the former. In her study she found that in bilingual education programmes these were bilingual teachers who were better equipped to help their bilingual students than monolingual teachers, particularly if they had 'a conscious, shared ethnic identity', as 'they are likely to intuitively recognize the needs of their bilingual learners' (Flores 2001: 292). She additionally emphasised that teachers need to systematically re-evaluate their beliefs by critical self-reflection.

4.4. The European Portfolio for (Student) Teachers

The ECML publication European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL, www.ecml.at/) contains a list of key competences that language teachers need to acquire.

The action-oriented and competence-based view of teaching exemplified in the EPOSTL strongly reflects the view of language and language learning, which underlies both the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio. The central questions posed by taking a competence orientation is: what do language users/learners/teachers need to be able to do in order to optimise language use/learning/teaching (Schauber, 2015)? A competence orientation to teacher education has brought with it a variety of frameworks which may, on the one hand, provide taxonomies of teacher competences and, on the other, a means of evaluating the quality of language teaching in a systematic fashion (Eurydice report, 2017).

Whilst the competences required by teachers to develop their learners' foreign language skills remain a central issue, this perspective has been accompanied by a re-examination of the aims of language learning and, in consequence, the role of teachers, occasioned by questions such as: what does it mean to be a language teacher in today's Europe? What contribution can language teachers make to the development of intercultural dialogue? (Schauber, 2015) This has led to a broadening of the specification of language competences to include areas such as intercultural competences. At the same time, an increasing focus on how societal changes have impacted on contexts in which languages are taught and the linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms that are a feature of many schools has led researchers to locate foreign language teaching within the spectrum of other aspects of language learning and to embed it within the broader spectrum of language learning as a whole. Seeing language as transversal skills, key to

the learning of all subjects, there is a growing awareness of the need to develop competences in subject teachers so that they too are equipped to provide maximum support for the linguistic development of their learners. This will include Content and Language Integrated (CLIL) classes, teaching the majority language as a second language etc (Schauber, 2015).

4.4.1. Learner competences

Clearly, the question of teacher competences is closely connected with, and must be seen as complementary to, learner competences. This complementarity can be seen by comparing descriptors from the CEFR, relating to learner competences, with those from the EPOSTL, relating to teacher competences.

For example:

- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction and sustained relationships with native speakers quite possible without imposing strains on either party. (CEFR, p.74)
- I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful speaking and interactional activities to develop fluency (discussion, role play, problem solving etc.) (EPOSTL, p.21)

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the CEFR descriptor states what learners need to be able to do with language, whereas the EPOSTL descriptor states what teachers need to be able to do to support the development this language competence (Schauber, 2015).Learner competences relate to two general areas: a) what the learner is able to do with language, comprehensively described in the CEFR, which may be recorded by means of 'I can' descriptors, and b) how learners acquire these competences (Schauber, 2015)

In recent years teacher educators and researchers have increasingly taken a learner-centered perspective to language education and have focused their attention on the second area: how learning processes can be optimised both by learners themselves and by their teachers. While it remains a central task of teachers to foster foreign language skill development by means of appropriate methodology, they also need to play an active role in helping learners to make use of appropriate learning strategies and become more autonomous; that is to say, to support life-long learning (Kim, Raza, Seidman, 2019).

4.5. Who is PEPELINO aimed at?

The target audience for PEPELINO is everyone working, or preparing to work, with pre-school children (ISCED 0 in the international classification adopted by UNESCO in 1997). Given that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, children start school at the age of 6, so this also applies to our 1st and 2nd grades.

Their present or future work with these children – in relation to language or languages - may have very different forms and objectives: developing competences in the language of socialisation and the (future) language of schooling, supporting children with first languages other than the main language of the institution, introducing a new language (regional, minority or foreign), raising awareness of the diversity of languages and cultures, etc.

However, the various documents used for developing PEPELINO show a significant convergence between the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of teachers and educators for these various tasks, and hence between the professional learning goals associated with these different linguistic situations. In PEPELINO this is reflected in the identification of fields of competence and descriptors common to all forms of work with language or languages at pre-primary level (www.ecml.at).

By grouping the skills related to specific professional tasks within a more comprehensive pedagogical framework it is possible to give a better idea of the scope of the competences needed to perform these tasks, and of the actual implications of this for professional learning, and thus bring about changes in practice (Rokita-Jaskov, Krol-Gierat, 2021).

In my personal experience during this work, I was guided by the PEPELINO document, which I used as a tool for personal reflection on professional teaching competencies in a monolingual environment.

4.6. How were the fields of competence and the related descriptors identified?

The eight fields of competence and forty descriptors proposed in PEPELINO were identified by combining the contents of different policy documents and academic papers, from which they therefore indirectly derive their validity.[5] Aspects that recur in these various sources were

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[5] See bibliography on the website www.ecml.at/PEPELINO

brought together to form a structured, comprehensible whole through which the rich content of these documents is made available to users.

The descriptors illustrate what the tasks described for a given field of competence mean for educators in term of attitudes, knowledge and skills. They are given as examples and make no claim to exhaustiveness. The number of descriptors was limited to five for the sake of clarity.

The choice of descriptors proposed in PEPELINO is not the outcome of a process of scientific validation. Rather, each descriptor is an invitation to engage in personal reflection and dialogue and to explore avenues for implementing the professional competences (Rokita-Jaśkow, Król-Gierat, 2021).

4.7. What are the respective places of personal reflection and self-assessment in PEPELINO?

The work of developing PEPELINO benefited from the experience gained in use of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) developed by the European Centre for Modern Languages. Collective thinking and exchanges with participants at the two workshops and the network meeting held during the development of PEPELINO also led to significant developments, especially as regards the link between self-assessment and personal reflection.

Rokita-Jaśkow and Król-Gierat (2021) in their work, treated this part of the topic with quality, and came to the conclusion that the advantage of PEPELINO in a reflective approach. No self-assessment is possible without personal reflection on one's practices, achievements and needs, and on potential personal goals. But it would be wrong to give a central role to self-assessment only. PEPELINO gives priority to the reflective approach which is recognised as playing a leading role in the gradual development of professional competences. This reflective approach naturally includes self-assessment. Every future educator must ponder the importance of the different competences for carrying out the tasks assigned to him or her. Each must reflect on the manner of implementing these competences in a particular context. Each needs moments of retrospection on his or her own practices and those observed. Each benefits from articulating his or her own perceptions. As a result, there is a real progression in the independent mastery of professional competences. Reflection naturally goes hand in hand with dialogue, whether

with colleagues, other students or teacher educators. The starting point for this dialogue can be the answers to the questions asked in the different sections of PEPELINO.

It needs to be kept in mind, of course, that the portfolio is a personal document. Every user is free to include whatever he or she wishes, to update it as he or she wishes and to show others only what he or she decides to share or discuss (Liddicoat&Scarino, 2013).

One of the basic principles underlying PEPELINO is regular revisiting of the reflection tasks that are proposed. This also emerges clearly from the central section of the document, dedicated to professional competences. The descriptors do not require a yes/no answer to a question of the type: "do you master this descriptor?" On the one hand, the self-assessment proposed in this part of the portfolio incorporates the idea of a progression in mastery of a descriptor (four main stages are proposed). On the other, each descriptor is accompanied by examples of questions relating to the implementation of the competences concerned. The aim is to prompt users to ask themselves questions based on their knowledge at a given time and their personal experience and perceptions: how can the content of the descriptor be implemented? What questions does the descriptor raise? What lessons can be learnt from practice or observation? By definition, their thinking about these issues will change in the course of their professional learning or career. These changes will be reflected in frequent revisiting of the descriptors. It is even possible, if not probable, that it is precisely this regular revisiting which enables them to become aware of the development of their professional competences.

Picture 4. – Reflection on professional competences in document PEPELINO

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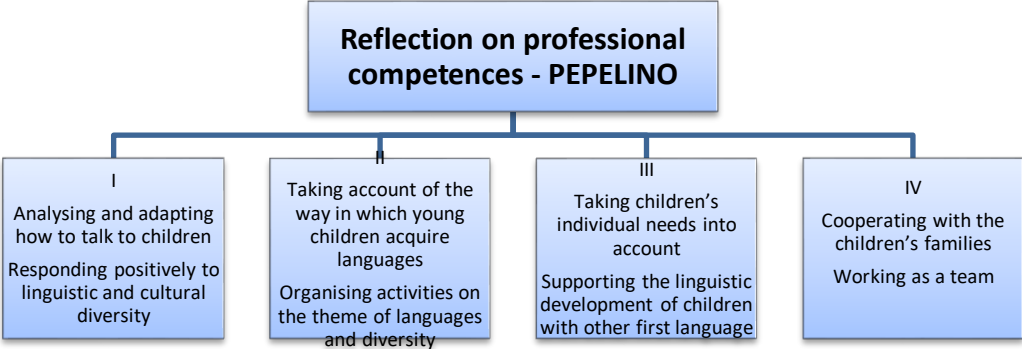
When we compare the competencies of teachers from chapter 3.3. with the competencies from the PEPELINO document, it can be concluded that the only difference is observed in the competency related to work with parents. PEPELINO paid much more attention to this item. By contrasting and comparing the document Competencies of foreign language teachers in primary schools in the Republic of Croatia published by the University of Josip Juraj Strossmaier Osijek (Erk, Pavičić Takač, Bagarić Medve, 2007) and PEPELINO, we conclude that the first document was created for the theoretical education of future teachers, and PEPELINO is focused on both theoretical and practical education, as it allows you to keep your own personal diary for self-reflection.

4.8. How can PEPELINO be adapted to a particular context?

The fields of professional competence covered by PEPELINO and the descriptors used for assessing their implementation were selected and formulated on the basis of a pooling of the professional needs of all those working with pre-school children. As mentioned in the answer to the question "Who is PEPELINO aimed at?", these people may be required to help children develop their linguistic abilities in the language of schooling, a second language or a new language or gradually acquire an education in the diversity of languages and cultures.

PEPELINO is a tool for personal reflection on professional competencies, which focuses on the multilingual and intercultural dimension of working with students. The challenge for PEPELINO is whether it will succeed in encouraging users to ask themselves questions based on their knowledge and their own personal experience and perceptions. Benefits of this document PEPELINO is intended for students in initial training to become preschool teachers who work with children under the age of 7. The benefit of PEPELINO for our project "lies" precisely in this challenge. If future or existing educators would take into account the recommendations offered by PEPELINO, they would upgrade their teaching competencies and their relationship with children to an unprecedented extent. So far, it has been shown, in Europe, that PEPELINO has left a positive mark on the self-evaluation of educators, which is reflected in the quality of teaching.

However, situations of professional practice can differ widely in terms both of working methods and what is expected of the children. Each of these situations can also take varied forms. To foster the development of professional competences, it is important, therefore, to have a proper understanding of the reasons for, and legitimacy of, the cross-cutting nature of the competences

and descriptors proposed. What is more, each individual should be in a position to think about the effects of his or her particular pedagogical situation on how these competences are implemented and their relative importance in his or her personal learning priorities (Johnstone, 2018).

4.9. The advantages of PEPELINO for teacher educators

The purpose of PEPELINO is to provide support for thinking about the development of professional competencies within the initial professional learning program for preschool teachers. It is important to understand the essence and content of PEPELINO, and to understand that it does not change the curriculum in any way, nor its planning. PEPELINO is, we can summarize the connection between the professional learning program itself and the learning paths of future teachers, based on the personal perceptions and experiences of the participants.[6]

However, teacher educators need to clearly explain this link between the initial professional learning programme and the content of PEPELINO. In fact, the perspective on PEPELINO and the interest taken in it by teacher educators are crucial factors if end-users are to work with it effectively and benefit from it.

PEPELINO's specific contribution to initial professional learning programmes is to contextualise these in terms of the progression of each individual participant whose professional learning is, by its very nature, career-long, personalised and highly individual (Rokita-Jaskov, Krol-Gierat, 2021).

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[6] More: www.ecml.at

5. THE PRESENT STUDY

The overall aim of the study was to obtain insight into perspectives on the use of PEPELINO. It was important to find out whether PEPELINO is considered to be an effective tool for promoting reflection and recording the development of language teaching skills and competences. The research lasted for one month, starting in March 2022.

5.1. Hypothesis

The main hypothesis:

PEPELINO encourages English language teachers to examine their language teaching skills, develop self-reflection and integrate self-assessment in their teaching practice in a positive and motivating way.

Auxiliary hypotheses:

1. PEPELINO has a large number of strengths when applied in language education.
2. There are many challenges for implementation of the PEPELINO considering: curriculum, classroom practice, teacher education, textbook development.

5.2. Action research methodology in language teaching

The whole process was in the form of action research that went through the phase of observing practice, where certain areas for action were identified through the use of specific methods. Then, the stages of applying self-reflection, analysis, and finally determining recommendations for teachers that will help individual progress in mastering professional competencies.

5.3. Research objectives

Some of the goals of the research are to show the potential of applying the Pepelino document as a tool for self-reflection in understanding the complexity of the role of a teacher of a younger age. Additionally, it gives preference to a reflective approach that is recognized to play a leading role in the gradual development of teacher competencies. Another important aspect is to better understand the different areas of work of language teachers who teach young children and to

identify areas where you need to do additional work or improve your competences. One of the aims is to answer the question: Does PEPELINO positively encourage English teachers to examine their language teaching skills?

In summary of the goals, it could be noticed that PEPELINO's section entitled "Tracing the reflection process" can serve as a "compass" guiding teachers as they progress. It provides an overview of the teacher's process of reflection in different fields of competence and in different areas relevant for teaching and approaching young learners.

5.4. Research methods

The work includes theoretical and empirical research based on current literature, publications, teacher reflections, language education reports, as well as Internet sources. The following methods were used:

- Inductive and deductive method, using a generalization, that is, the majority of fellow teachers confirmed that PEPELINO is extremely useful for self-reflection, but that it has not adequately "taken root" in our country.
- Method of analysis and synthesis- existing literature was analyzed, as well as personal observations in self-reflection. Synthesis is a unified research from assumptions to evidentiary materials.
- Comparative method, this method was used to determine the similarity between PEPELINO with domestic practice.
- Descriptive method, personal reflection and self-assessment described in detail, and PEPELINO as the fundamental document of this research.

The research was conducted on the examples from practice, in which primary and secondary data were taken from published reports. Based on the time spent at school, I was guided by a self-questionnaire, which helped me reach relevant conclusions. I was personally involved in the research, where I taught third-grade and fourth-grade students, and then a personal reflection and self-assessment was carried out.

5.5. Research participants

The research was conducted in the elementary school Dr Boris Ćorić, Kreševo, in the third grade, a total of 31 students, distributed in two classes, and in the fourth grade, 36 students in two classes. In total, I held 40 school lessons for this research. I kept records in the diary created in the PEPELINO document, and based on it I created a questionnaire. The topics I had the opportunity to discuss with them are related to family, costume parties, months and seasons, animals, countries and continets, cultural differences, supported by certain grammatical structures, for example plural of nouns, verb *to be*, Present Continuous Tense. During this process I did my best to teach them these grammar units indirectly.

I considered this to be the best method because no self-assessment is possible without personal reflection on one's own practice, achievements and needs, as well as potential personal goals. PEPELINO favors a reflective approach which is recognized to play a leading role in the gradual development of professional competences. This reflective approach naturally includes self-assessment, which was my goal. As a supervisor, I had to think about the importance of different competencies for carrying out the tasks assigned to me. I had to think about them in the segment of implementing these competencies in a certain context. Reflection naturally goes hand in hand with dialogue, whether with colleagues, other students or teachers.

For the most part, the questionnaire was modeled after the questions for self-reflection from the PEPELINO document. I made the questionnaire independently, and was guided by it.

5.6. Research results

Method of scoring: for example, if there are four answers in the offer, I score the answer that I think is the most credible with a score of 4 (because there are four questions), I score the answer that I think has the least importance with a score of 1. Each answer is represented by a graph, where the answers are expressed in percentages (using the Microsoft Excel program).

At the end of each lesson, I filled out a questionnaire, where personal impressions and experiences with children and teaching were collected.

Graph 1.- Professional competences that I developed during classes

Field of competence

Legend:
- Talking to children in L2
- Attitude to linguistic and cultural diversity
- Understanding how children learn
- Organising lessons on the theme languages and diversity
- Responding to chilren's individual possibilities and needs
- Supporting the linguistic development of children with other frst language
- Cooperation with collegaues
- Cooperation with parents

Pie chart values: 11%, 6%, 19%, 17%, 22%, 8%, 14%, 3%

The professional competence that I developed the most was respoding to children's individual possibilities and needs (8 points). This research really gave me a view of teaching and students, from a completely different perspective, which influenced my personal change as a teacher. I realized that until then I had been working according to a "template", which for most teachers causes monotony for preparing lessons, and for students, it creates a lack of interest, which leads to bad behavior or exclusion from the lesson, bad grades, etc. When I understood how to keep children's attention (using various instruments from geography, music, history...) then it is very easy to understand how children learn and what they are interested in. The most important thing is to observe and listen to them. I believe that understanding is the best start for quality learning and a positive end result. As for organizing classes on languages and diversity,

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I am convinced that this is an excellent method to give importance to each child, and to enrich other children's views on different languages and cultures.

Of great importance to me was the relationship with my colleagues, the sharing of experiences and advice. Ability to cooperate with colleagues (5 points) is a good predictor for the future since the effectiveness of teaching depends partly on how it links with the work of other professionals contributing to children's linguistic or cultural development. Observing other teachers at work, sharing with them opinions on teaching practice, and devising and implementing joint projects were common ways of professional training and development. Consequently, exchange of ideas and experiences, observation and joint ventures prompted beneficial personal reflection as regards this descriptor. About ten days after the research started, I complained to a colleague about a couple of students who were absent from class. What bothered me was their lack of interest. With her advice to make the classroom partially as a workshop and partially as a playroom I was able to solve the problem of a lack of interest, because through play and joint work, they certainly learned twice as fast and easier.

Talking with children in L2 (4 points) – I gained the ability to assess whether the language I use is well adapted to the abilities and needs of children of this age group. This aspect is extremely important since the linguistic input to which children are exposed to is the one from which they learn a foreign language at school. Therefore, speech aimed at young learners must be adapted to each child's ability to understand and effectively encourage each child's progress. During the research, this was really important to me. It happened that 25 students perfectly understood the lesson that was in the class, and the rest of the students did not do very well. Most of my colleagues, due to the lesson plan, continued the next lesson with something new, which is the required curiculum, but I returned to the previous lesson with new examples and stories that would attract the students and encourage their participation.

Supporting the linguistic development of children with their first language (3 points). Considering that I didn't have many students who have a second mother tongue, I can only cite as an example a boy whose first language is German (because he speaks it much better than Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian). I had excellent cooperation with him, if something was not clear to him in English and if he did not understand me in B/C/S, then I would decide with a more visual way of explaining, because it turned out that it was the easiest and most comprehensible way for him to understand English phrase or sentence. Cooperation with parents was scored the least, but still deserves great importance. The reason for this is the insufficient activity of the

parents, due to personal obligations and work. Although communication with parents was at a minimum, due to their obligations, I tried to ensure that during the research the parents showed up and attended one class, because every parent is a role model for their child. The class consisted of a joint presentation of the parents, what they do, and the children would simulate their parents' jobs in the following class. For example, one girl's mother works in a store, so she, following the example of her mother's work, served and sold to her classmates (in one part of the classroom we made a mini-store, where the students had previously made various figures and things from cardboard and paper). This "play" took place in English.

Graph 2. - If I take children's individual needs into account, what can I do?
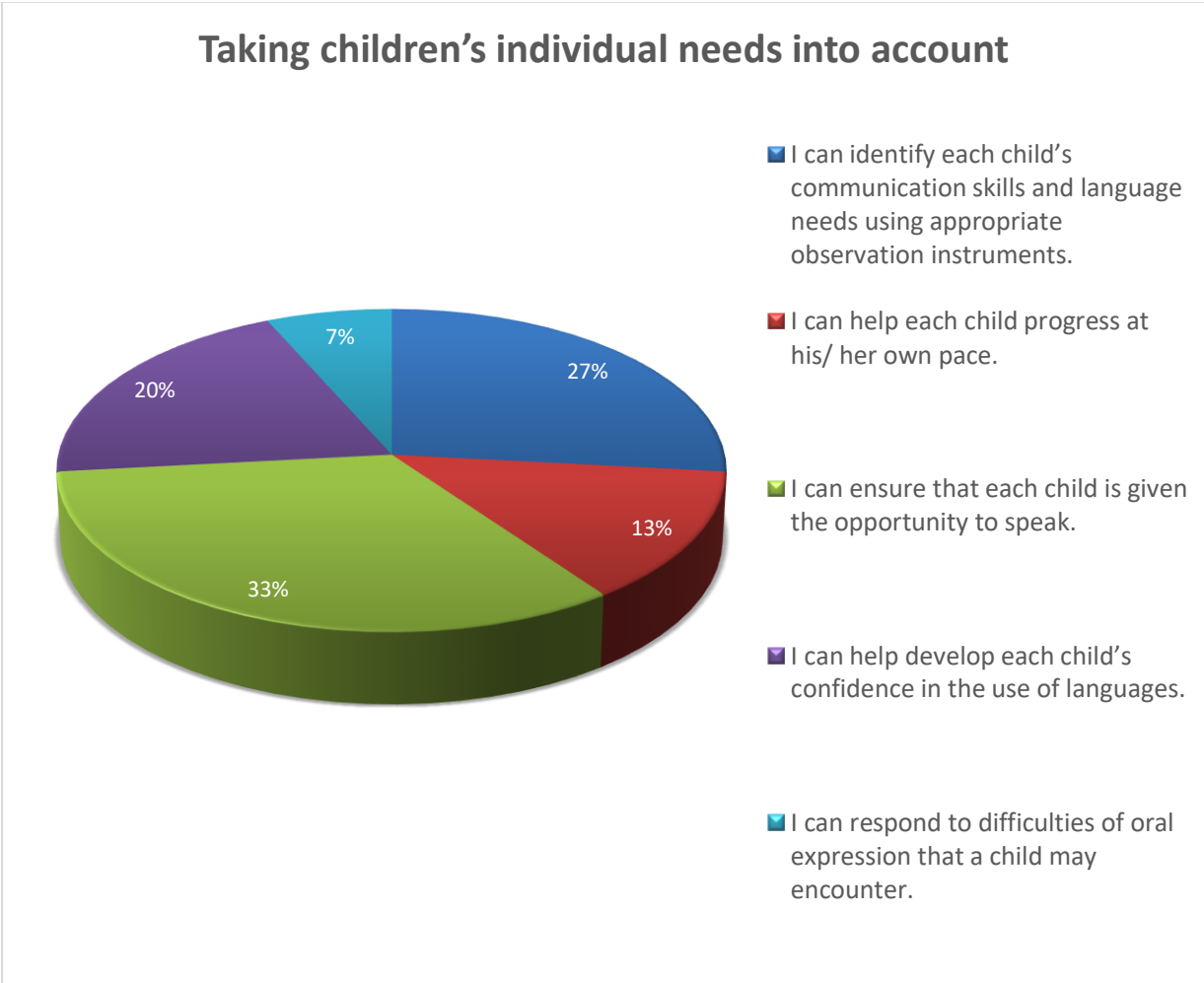
In order to adapt the rate of progress to children's needs, the first step is to determine their level of knowledge and competence. It is necessary for that purpose to observe the children's communication behaviour, drawing a distinction between reception and production.

In assessing children's progress and needs, it is important to keep in mind the normal stages in the acquisition of a language system. In building their language skills, children apply implicit strategies and adopt temporary rules based on their linguistic experience. The utterances produced by children provide clues about the learning levels between which they find themselves. The needs of children who speak a language at home other than the language of communication used by the group require specific analysis (Atay, Kurt, Çamlıbel, Ersın, 2009).

Individual forms of communicative behaviour may be the result of numerous factors. All children need to be able to express themselves at their own rhythm and to decide whether and when to contribute to a discussion and when to remain silent. Children need to feel secure, to be shown that their contributions to the discussion are valued and to be encouraged to take risks in the use of language. For this reason, I can ensure that every child gets a chance to speak (5 points) and also can identity each child's communication skills and language needs using appropriate observation instruments (4 points).

Children also have needs in terms of comprehension. The educator must make sure that everyone understood the vocabulary or structures used. If some children have not understood, statements can be rephrased, accompanied by gestures or facial expressions. Children can be invited to tell in their own words the parts of a story. For this reason, I can help each child progress at his/her own space, which I was convinced of during the lessons. (2 points).

I can respond to difficulties of oral expression that a child may encounter (1 points). A child's reluctance to participate in verbal activities or preference for modes of expression other than language is not necessarily a sign of language development difficulties. The educator's attitude to mistakesis crucially important. Children must not get the feeling that the repetition of something they said is due to its being incorrectly expressed.

The educator can draw the child's attention to a more appropriate form of expression, but must incorporate any improvements into the flow of the conversation without interrupting the exchanges. This does not mean that the educator cannot organise specific activities focusing on frequent mistakes that the children make in order to help them progress. They have to understand and to ask questions about anything that may remain unclear to them. It is important, generally speaking, to be attentive to any needs that are expressed or manifested (Bekbergenovna Palvanova et al., 2022).

Graph 3. - *In what ways can I adapt conversations with children?*

Analysing and adapting how to talk to children

- I can tell whether the language I am using is adapted to the abilities and needs of children in this age group
- I can react effectively when the children do not seem to understand everything I am saying to them.
- I can make each child feel involved in the discussions.
- I can encourage children to participate actively in discussions.
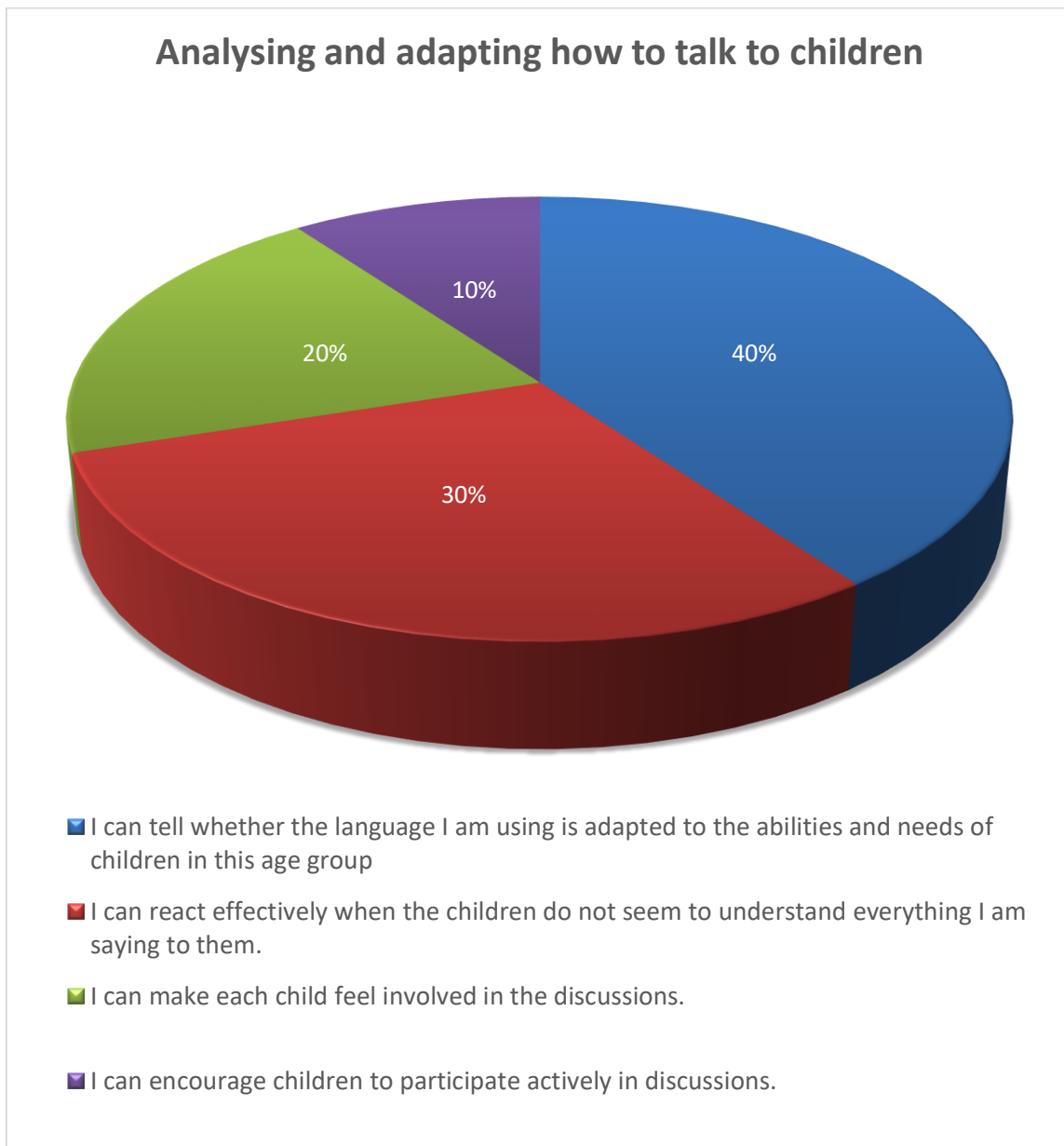
When it comes to ways of adjusting conversations with children the first suggestion „I can tell whether the language I am using is adapted to the abilities and needs of children in this age group" is the best way for conversation ", which is why I gave it the highest rating (4). The second answer is no less significant „I can react effectively when the children do not seem to understand everything I am saying to them" (score 3). When I notice that the children do not understand what I am telling them, I do not continue with the lecture, but look for a solution in the most efficient way, so that the child understands me. The solution depends on the requested situation.What is very important for children is involvement in teaching, conversation, as well as motivation for the same. That is why I gave (2 points) for answer „I can make each child feel

involved in the discussions" (point 1) for answer „I can encourage children to participate actively in discussions".

Graph 4. - *How can I respond positively to linguistic and cultural diversity?*
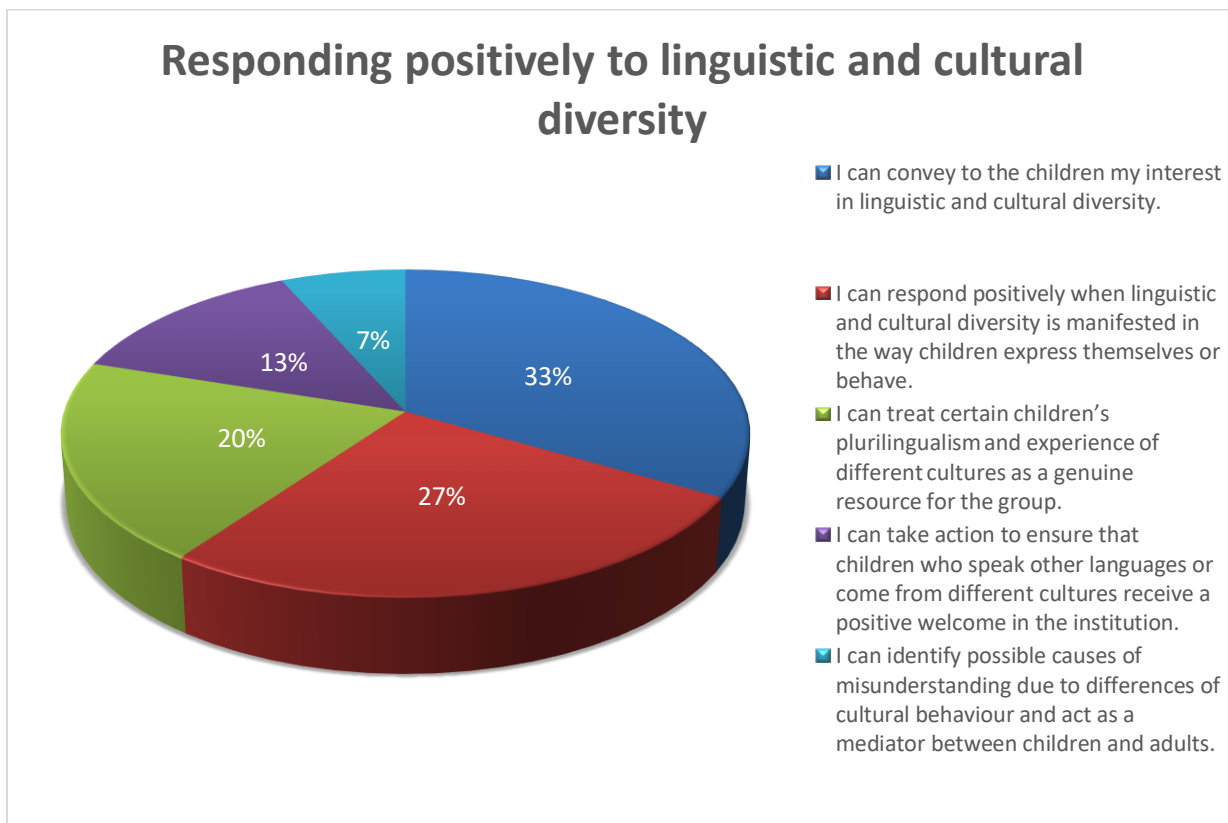
Linguistic and cultural diversity is present in most groups of children and in their immediate environment, in the form either of different languages and cultures or of internal variations within the institution's language of socialisation. That diversity should be recognised and welcomed as a vehicle for all children's development. As a result of that argument, I put the first answer "I can convey to the children my interest in linguistic and cultural diversity" as the first choice for the highest score (5).

The presence of linguistic and cultural diversity within the group constitutes a major resource for all the children in the group. This is the reason why I try to respond positively when linguistic and cultural diversity manifests themselves in the way children express themselves or behave. The second answer received a score of 4. Children who speak one or more languages can be helped to build upon their experience of language acquisition, however limited, in order to learn the second language or discover new languages. Through this encounter with children

and adults who speak other languages or have other cultural references, each child in the group develops an awareness of the workings of language, opens up to the world. For example, in one class I taught a boy who knew and spoke German well. When we interacted in English, he said he liked it a lot, because it has similar expressions to the German language. It was much easier to talk to him in English, so I often knew how to integrate that in our communication. Building on this statement, I rated the third answer with score of 3. The answer was "I can treat certain children's plurilingualism and experience of different cultures as a genuine resource for the group".

It is very important to take care of the welcoming classroom environment which can be found in the statement "I can take action to ensure that children who speak other languages or come from different cultures receive a positive welcome in the institution". For this answer I gave the score 2. As I mentioned above the boy who speaks German lived in Germany until the age of eight, and his Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language is not as good as other children's. Noticing this at the very beginning I warned other children not to make fun of his pronunciation or changed case, but to help him by correcting him during the conversation. This was a unique case, where the child had no problems with other students in the class, and for that reason I gave the statement a lower score.

The last answer is „I can identify possible causes of misunderstanding due to differences of cultural behaviour and act as a mediator between children and adults", and gave the score 1.

Graph 5. - *How can I help young children acquire languages?*

Taking account of the way in which young children acquire languages

- I can organise the classroom space in a way that encourages the children to join in with language-related activities and to interact with each other.
- I can encourage the children to use non-verbal communication to support oral expression.
- I can make use of each activity to foster the children's linguistic development.
- I can take account of the emotional dimension in linguistic exchanges with and between the children.
- I can use the resources offered by information and communication technologies to develop the children's language skills and cultural awareness.

I always try to explore the given topic on the Internet in order to bring it closer to the needs of my students and to make it more interesting so that they can easily adopt the target vocabulary.

When it comes to organizing the classroom space in a way that encourages children to join in with language-related activities, I find it hard sometimes because I do not have my "own English classroom". I am the one who goes from classroom to classroom and I am not always able to adapt to the environment to the needs of the topic and my students, which is why I assigned 1 to this score.

Graph 6. *- How I organize activities on the topic of language and diversity?*

Organising activities on the theme of languages and diversity

- Check the interest of the teaching material
- Organize a cultural fair in the classroom
- Use the library
- Let the children make a collage about their culture
- "Travel" around the world in class
- Do Global Art
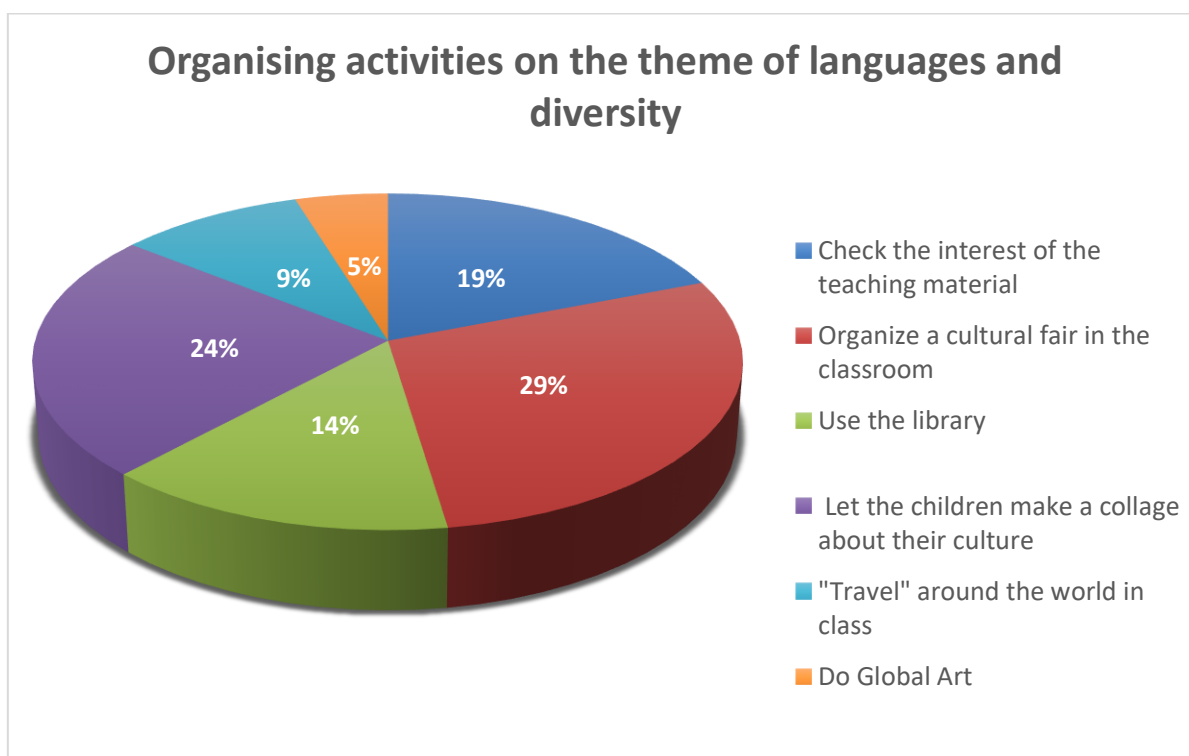
It is desirable to include books that depict different cultures and backgrounds. It is necessary to find ways to build a more diverse collection of books.

In exploring different parts of the world in the classroom you need to be intentional. When studying different countries, they will use appropriate greetings, learn to write a few words in that language, and even watch some videos of customs from the region. Exploring different parts of the world is important for children to learn about other cultures.

I believe it is necessary to connect an art project with the language curriculum.

Graph 7. - If I take into account the individual needs of the children, what can I offer them?

Taking children's individual needs into account

- ■ I can identify each child's communication skills and language needs using appropriate observation instruments
- ■ I can help each child progress at his/her own pace.
- ■ I can ensure that each child is given the opportunity to speak during lessons.
- ■ I can help develop each child's confidence in the use of the foreign language.
- ■ I can adjust my teaching to children's difficulties and possibilities.

As for responding to the individual abilities and needs of children I believe that it is best to teach them that every child has the opportunity to speak during the lesson. Children's oral output provides clues about their current language learning levels. At the same time young learners need to feel secure to express themselves at their own pace and be shown that they are listened to, that their contributions to the discussion are valued. Also, they should be encouraged to take risks in the use of language.

Graph 8. - *What is the result, if we work as a team?*

Working as a team

- I can contribute to an exchange of practices and ideas between team members.
- I can collaborate with other team members on joining projects relating to the children's linguistic development.
- I can accept remark queries and advice from colleagues and teacher educators and take them into account in my management of the group.
- I can provide colleagues and primary school teachers with useful information about the linguistic development of the children for whom I am responsible.
- I can make use of the resources offered by partnerships with other institutions or associations.

Effective teacher teamwork builds strong schools. Effective teams strengthen leadership, improve teaching and learning, nurture relationships, increase job satisfaction, and provide a means for mentoring and supporting new teachers. Quality teams of teachers working productively together have the highest probability of supporting significant and sustained student learning, but there is a difference between knowing and doing (Sparks, 2013).

***Graph 9.** - How to react when the children do not seem to understand some educational areas I am saying to them?*

My reaction when the children do not seem to understand some educational areas I am saying to them.

33%

17%

50%

■ Use various illustrations, which will show the unknown part in the best way.

■ Using appropriate video materials.

■ With the cooperation of children who understand the material.
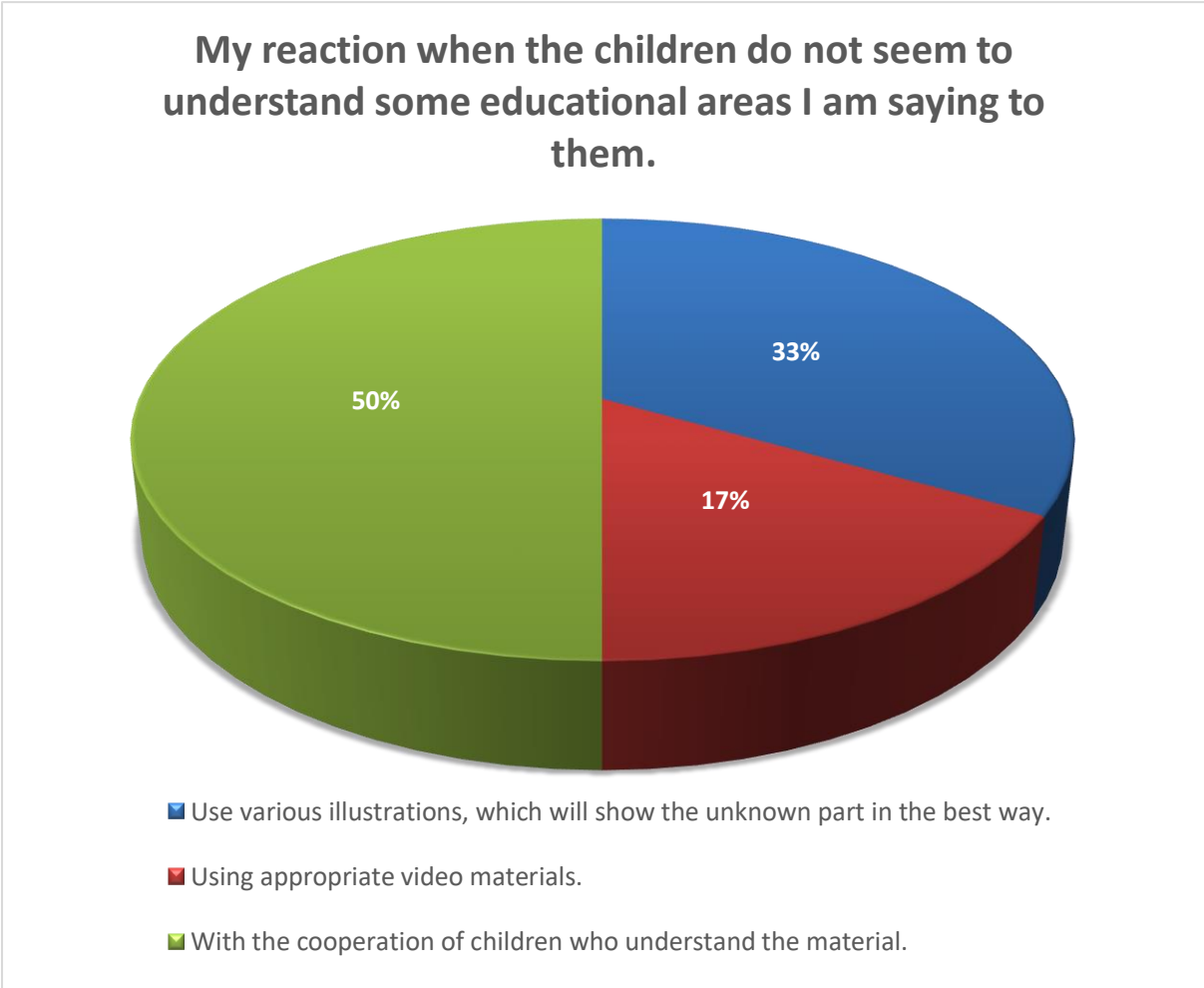
If the children do not understand something during the lesson or in practice, cooperation with children who understand the material has proven to be the best. What especially attracts children's attention are the various illustrations, which show and explain the little-known part very quickly. Also, appropriate video materials are an interesting and useful method. Children love visuals with sound, which keeps their attention and educates them at the same time.

Positive attitude towards diversity should be translated into concrete actions. Example...

- Seizing every opportunity that presents itself to refer to the languages and cultural backgrounds of certain children. — 17%
- Seizing every opportunity that presents itself to refer to the languages and cultural backgrounds of certain children. — 33%
- Acting as a mediator between people from different cultures (parents, other stakeholders, etc.) in order to explain reactions or behaviours that are unusual in the context of the institution: this means identifying and clearing up possible misunderstanding — 50%

Teachers have the closest relationship with the children and the best idea of their family situation and cultural or linguistic background. Children's experiences with their teachers and memories of their school can shape the way they see the world and how they function as members of society. That's why teacher's attitudes are such a widely researched topic: your attitudes and beliefs as a teacher (whether they concern politics, culture, conventions in social interaction or, say, multilingualism) can have an impact on what you expect from your pupils, on the way you interact with them and, indirectly, on their academic achievements.

Graph 11. - How can I support the language development of children with other first language?

Supporting the linguistic development of children with other first languages than Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

- ■ I can take account of the specific situation of children with other first languages than Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in order to identify their individual abilities and need.
- ■ I can take account in the support that I give these children of their particular linguistic or cultural competences and knowledge.
- ■ I can help children to draw on their first language in order to make progress in acquiring the language used for exchanges within the group.
- ■ I can encourage exchanges between children with different levels of proficiency in the language being used.
- ■ I can react appropriately to verbal or non-verbal behaviour that may stem from different cultural traditions.

Considering the least developed area of competences, by supporting the language development of children with other first languages than Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian - I believe that I encouraged the exchange between children with different levels of knowledge.

It can be argued that the pace of development in the L2 of children who use a language at home that is different from the L1 of other peers must be understood and respected.

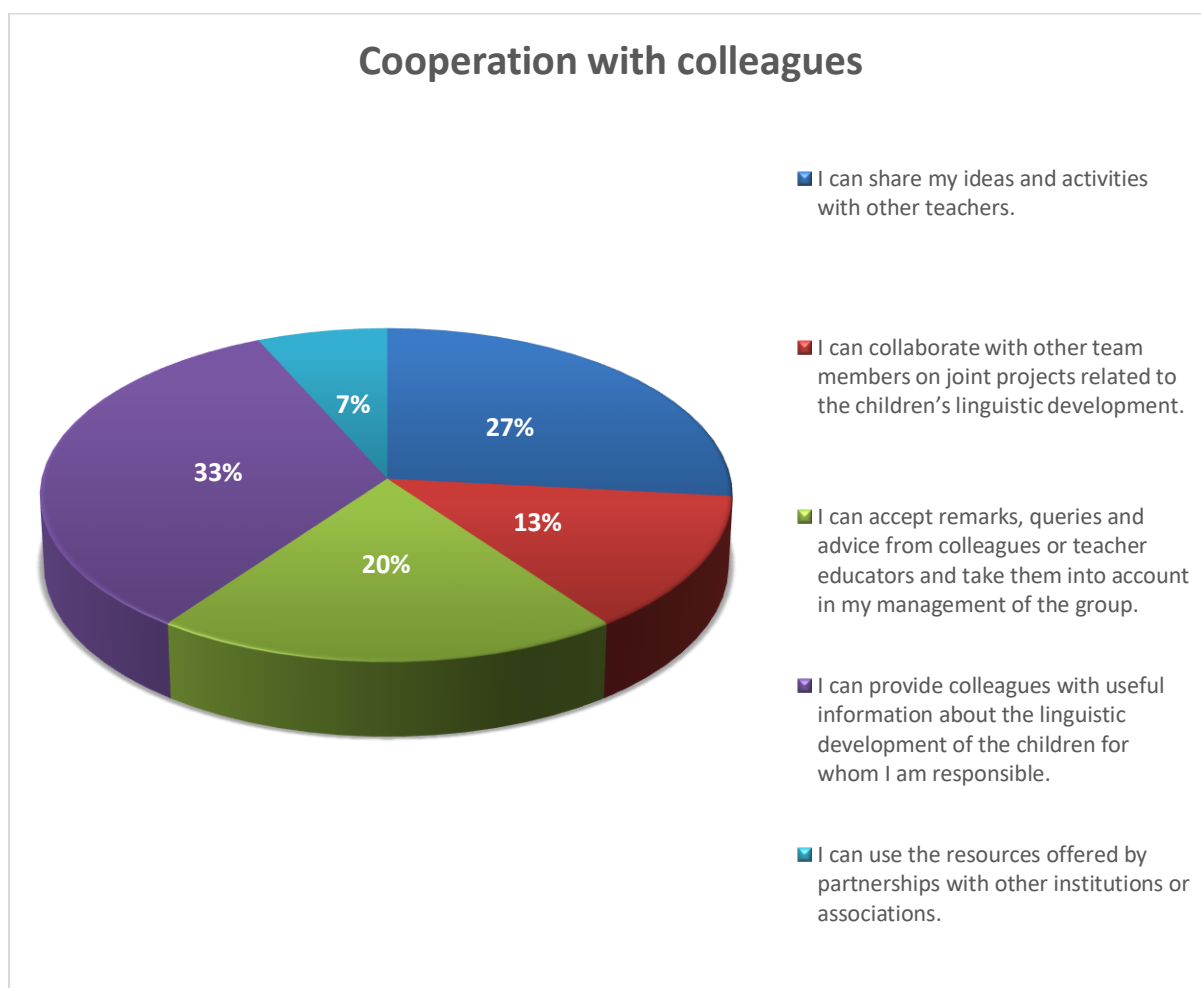*Graph 12.* - *Cooperating with the children's families*

Cooperating with the children's families

- ■ I can see to it that all the people with responsibility for the child feel welcome in the institution.

- ■ I can involve the parents in teaching projects that are directly related to the children's linguistic and cultural development.

- ■ I can exchange with the children's parents about the activities that are the most conducive to children's language acquisition.

- ■ I can exchange information with the children's parents about their progress.

- ■ I can encourage the incorporation of resources existing within the families into the organisation of activities with the children.

When it comes to cooperation with parents, I have learned how to exchange information with the children's parents about the progress of their child which is crucial at this educational level. Young learners are not yet independent and autonomous enough so as to take full responsibility for their learning. The family environment plays a vital role in children's linguistic and cultural development. Therefore, there should be as much complementarity as possible between the educator's work and the action of the parents.
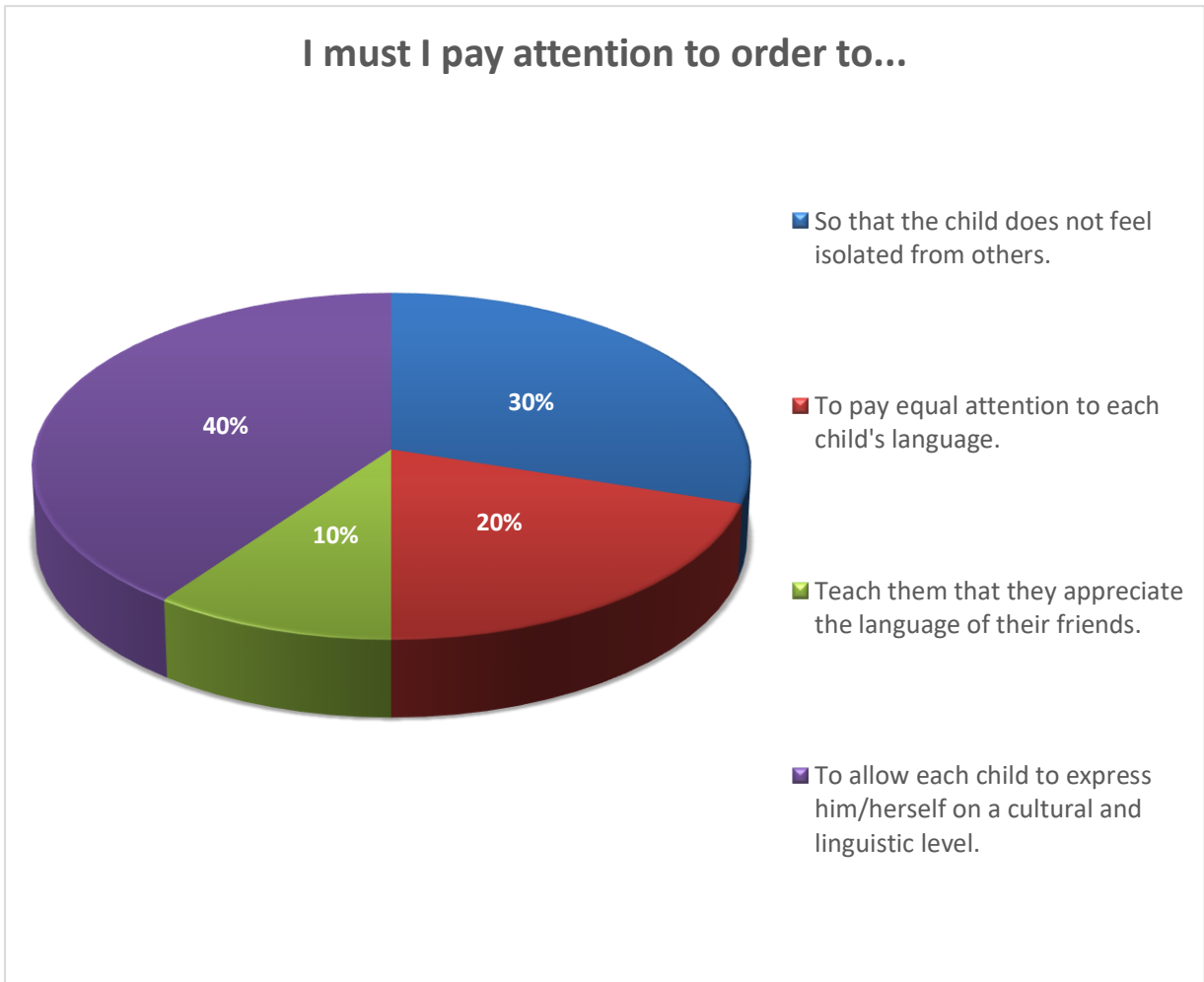
Any observations made by the teacher concerning very young learners' communication or behaviour should be shared and discussed. Meaningful exchanges with parents help to understand the aims and methods of the language work being undertaken at school. Such exchanges may enable to follow the work being done, to support their children's linguistic development and to avoid having unrealistic expectations of the children's achievement.

Graph 13. - Cooperation with colleagues

Cooperation with colleagues

- I can share my ideas and activities with other teachers.
- I can collaborate with other team members on joint projects related to the children's linguistic development.
- I can accept remarks, queries and advice from colleagues or teacher educators and take them into account in my management of the group.
- I can provide colleagues with useful information about the linguistic development of the children for whom I am responsible.
- I can use the resources offered by partnerships with other institutions or associations.

Finally, within the cooperation with colleagues – the pre-primary educators should be ready to accept remarks, queries and advice from other teachers. School teachers can cooperate in a variety of ways, for instance sharing information about children's linguistic abilities, observing each other's lessons, and providing useful feedback. A regular cooperation may turn out to be valuable, especially with regard to the way of handling language interactions in different everyday situations.

Graph 14. - *What must I pay attention to in order to ensure that all the children's language resources are recognised as equal in dignity?*

I must I pay attention to order to...

- So that the child does not feel isolated from others. — 30%
- To pay equal attention to each child's language. — 20%
- Teach them that they appreciate the language of their friends. — 10%
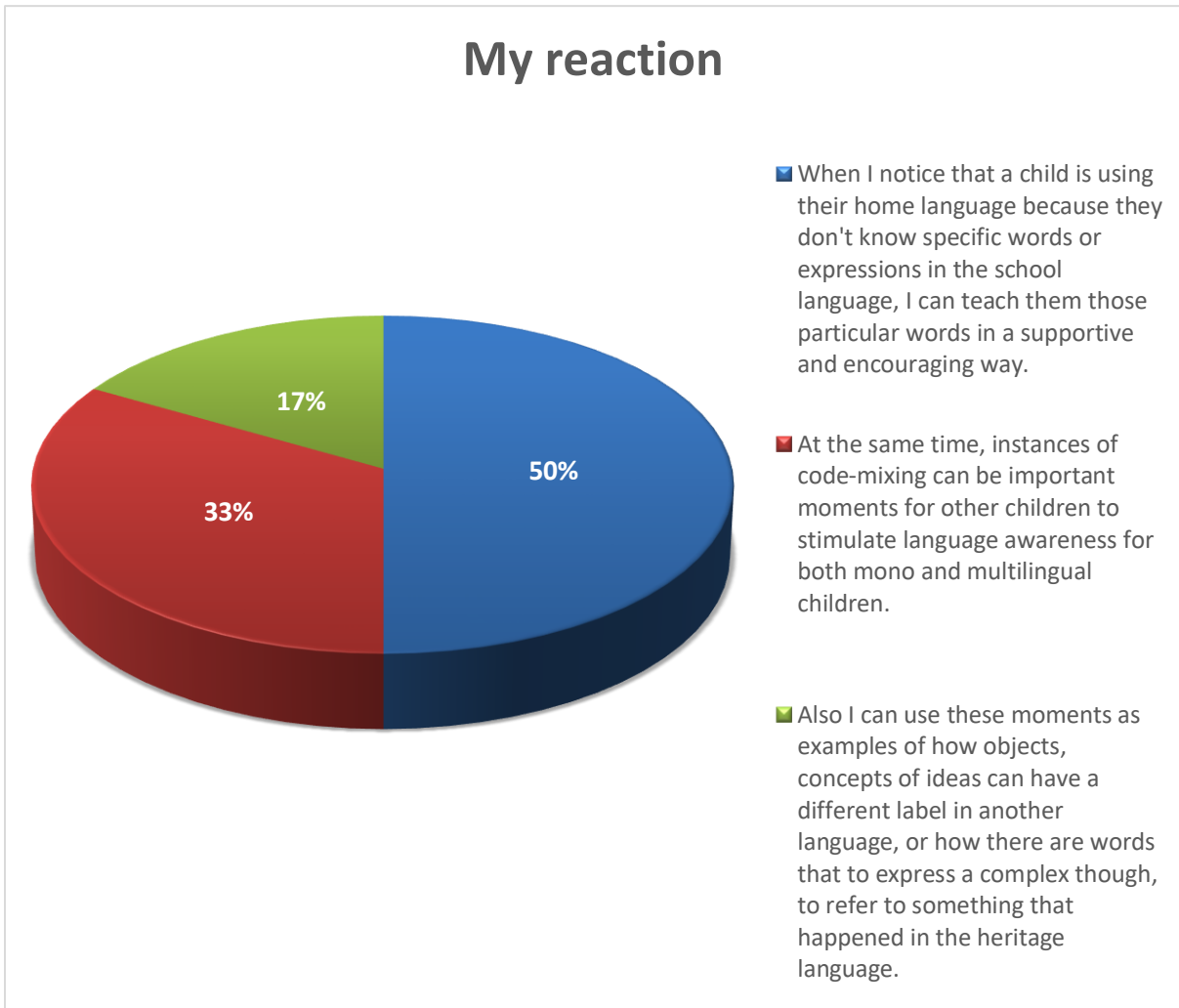- To allow each child to express him/herself on a cultural and linguistic level. — 40%

The languages we speak are a part of our identity. For the personal development of children who speak languages or language varieties other than the school language at home, it's important that these languages are treated in a positive way at school. Ignoring languages that children bring to school or talking about them in a disparaging way can have an adverse impact on their wellbeing, their identity development and their learning outcomes (Brinton, 2003).

The most important thing is to enable each child to express themselves in a cultural and linguistic level which defines their identity. For this reason I rated it with the most points.

The answer "Teach them to appreciate the language of their friends" received the least points, only because I believe that children learn that foundation at home, from their parents, and build on it at school.
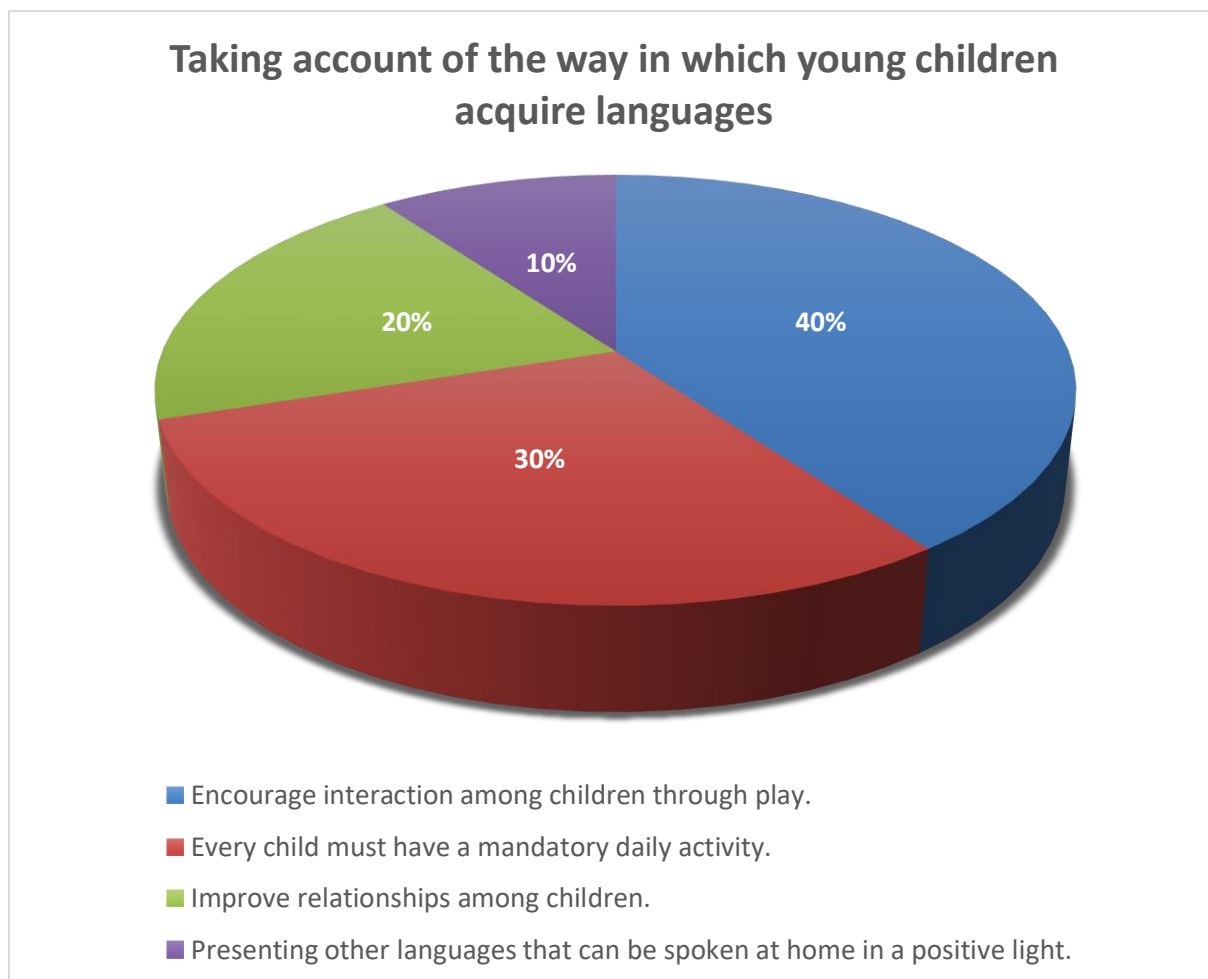
Graph 15. *- Should I correct a child who uses two languages in one utterance, or encourage them to find the right word in the target language? How should I react?*

My reaction

50% When I notice that a child is using their home language because they don't know specific words or expressions in the school language, I can teach them those particular words in a supportive and encouraging way.

33% At the same time, instances of code-mixing can be important moments for other children to stimulate language awareness for both mono and multilingual children.

17% Also I can use these moments as examples of how objects, concepts of ideas can have a different label in another language, or how there are words that to express a complex though, to refer to something that happened in the heritage language.

You should never correct a child for code-mixing. Bilingual children mix languages within the same utterance or conversation for a variety of reasons.When bilingual children use words, sounds or grammatical patterns from their heritage language to express themselves, they are showing how resourceful they can be by using both languages to communicate. There is no indication from research that there is anything wrong when children do this. In fact, extensive research on young bilingual children shows that most of the time when they code-mix, they do so in a way that avoids violating the grammar of each language. Code-mixing is perfectly normal. Bilingual adults code-mix as well, especially if they are with other bilinguals (Bekbergenovna Palvanova et al., 2022).

At the same time, instances of code-mixing can be important moments for child to stimulate language awareness for both mono- and multilingual children.

__Graph 16 .__ - What can I do when taking account of the way in which young children acquire languages?

Taking account of the way in which young children acquire languages

- 40% Encourage interaction among children through play.
- 30%
- 20%
- 10%

Legend:
- ■ Encourage interaction among children through play.
- ■ Every child must have a mandatory daily activity.
- ■ Improve relationships among children.
- ■ Presenting other languages that can be spoken at home in a positive light.

Children's language acquisition is based on the oral interaction in which they engage in the spoken language they hear. A language is the means a child uses to build relationships with others. Hence, the acquisition of that language depends on the child's need to establish relationships as well as on his or her natural curiosity and desire to discover and learn. This process involves the child as a whole, with his or her senses, motor skills, perceptions and emotions (Harmer, 2007).

Playing encourages interaction among children**.** It combines the learning of cognitive, motor and social skills and stimulates the child's creativity. The language itself or the sounds and music of different languages may also be the subject of play.

Information and communication technologies offer additional resources for exploiting the playful dimension of language use. For example, where I taught, it was shown that children acquire knowledge of the English language the fastest through play and music. Moreover, it
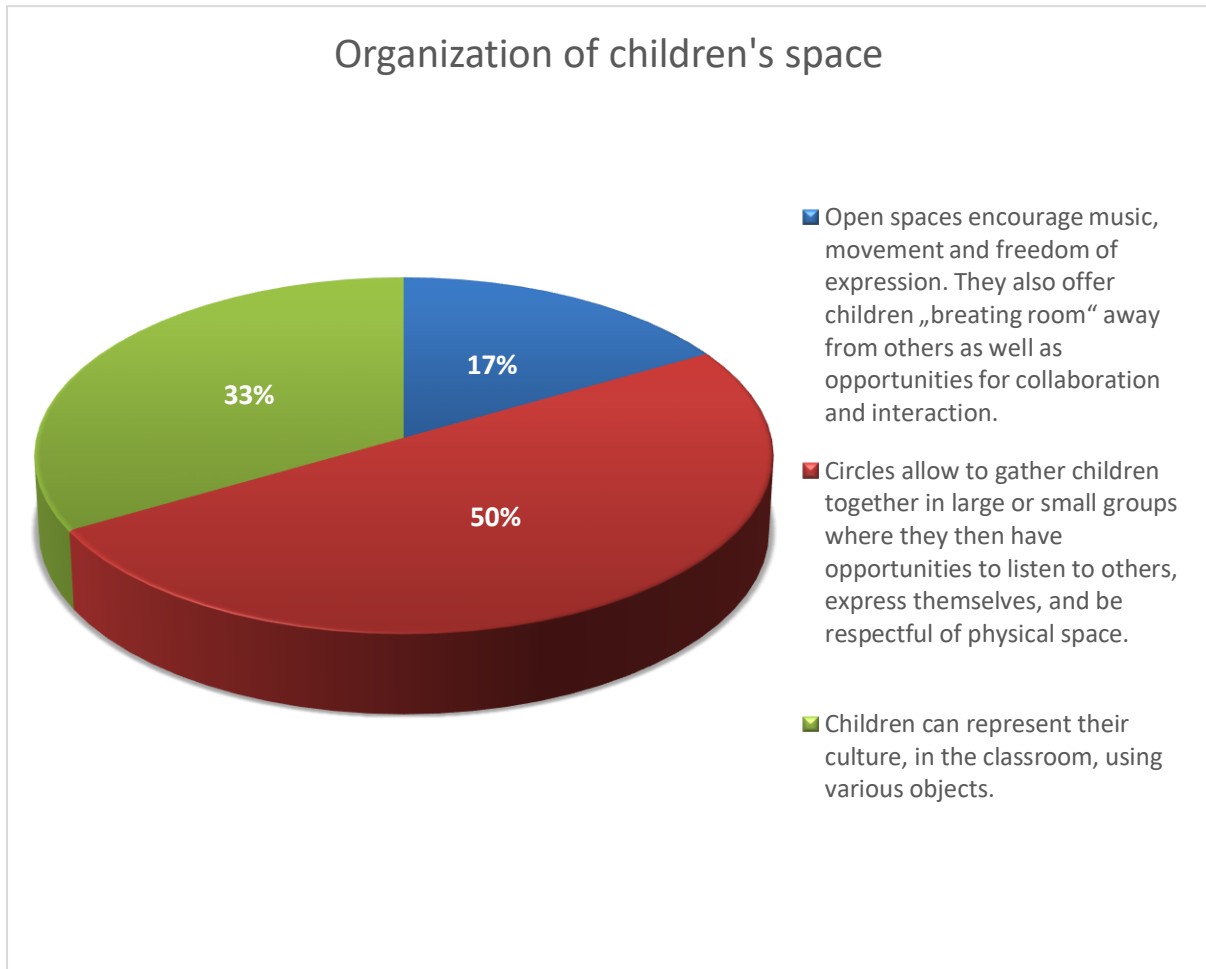
keeps their attention throughout the lesson. I often gave them as homework to prepare a song at home, and to sing it independently (or with a friend) in front of the class (Chebotarova, 2014).

Each of the child's daily activities is relevant for developing competences in the principal language of communication, whatever the child's first or possible second language may be. Language and knowledge building are linked, both in reception and production. Each of these moments in the life of the group provides an opportunity to pay particular attention to the language dimension. In the case of a foreign language, it is best to choose situations enabling a level of verbal interaction with and between the children that is within the scope of their possibilities.

Good quality relations between the children are essential for each of them to be able to engage in oral interaction. It is also important for the child to perceive the adult as a real partner in dialogue. The interaction should therefore focus on the communicative dimension rather than on correcting mistakes. Another way of strengthening children's personal commitment and promoting interaction between them is to give them responsibilities for finding and presenting information (Chebotarova, 2014).
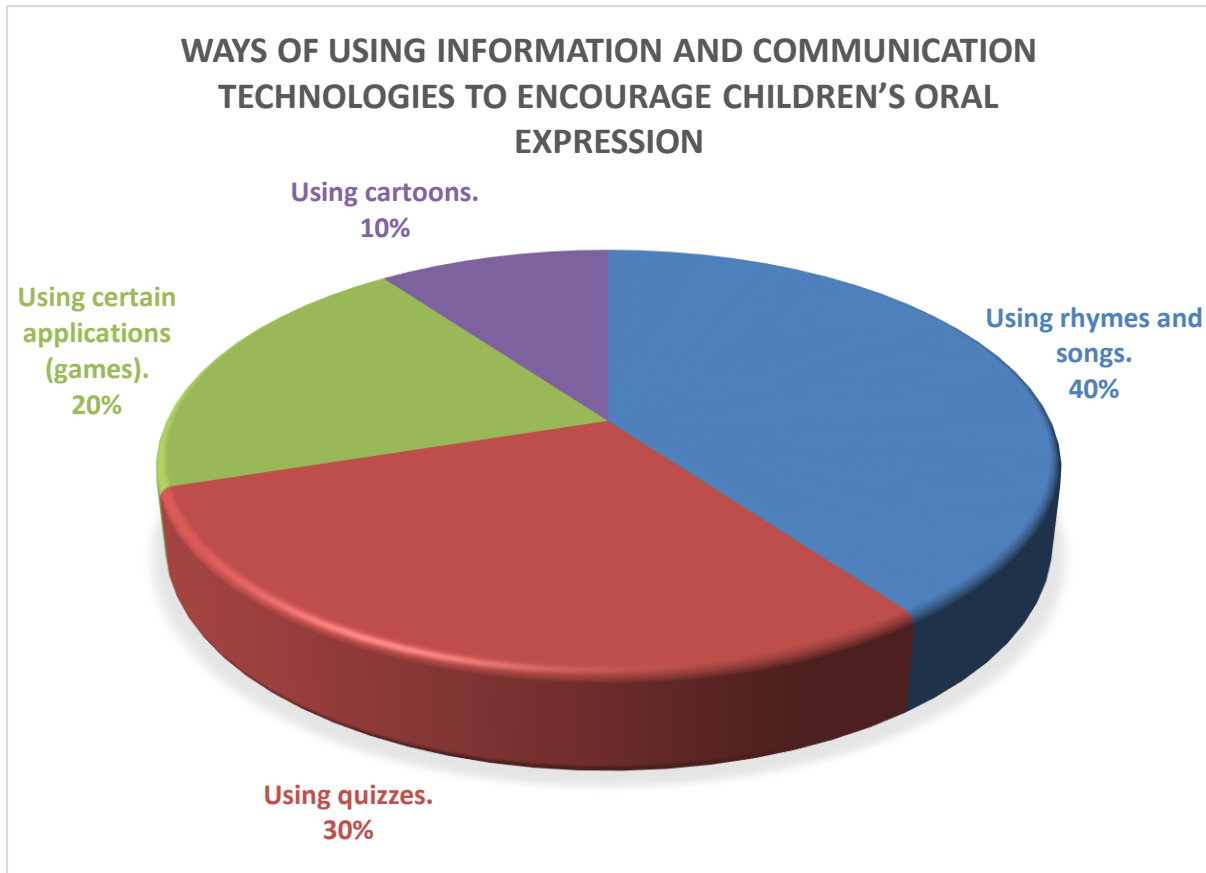
Presenting the other languages that may be spoken at home in a positive light helps boost children's confidence, as they realise that the work they do, to learn another language does not signify a rejection of their first language(s) or cultural origins.

Organization of children's space

- 17% — Open spaces encourage music, movement and freedom of expression. They also offer children „breating room" away from others as well as opportunities for collaboration and interaction.
- 50% — Circles allow to gather children together in large or small groups where they then have opportunities to listen to others, express themselves, and be respectful of physical space.
- 33% — Children can represent their culture, in the classroom, using various objects.

Young children need different types of spaces to promote physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development. Every area should be designed to offer activities and materials that prompt children to explore, experiment, and interact in different ways.

Graph 18. *- How can I use information and communication technologies to encourage children's oral expression?*

WAYS OF USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN'S ORAL EXPRESSION

- Using cartoons. 10%
- Using certain applications (games). 20%
- Using rhymes and songs. 40%
- Using quizzes. 30%

ICT has the potential to not only enhance learning but also to promote engagement in new ways. We are increasingly seeing children's early literacy and play experiences being shaped by digital technologies and electronic media.

And while there is still discussion about how computer games can help in the development of children, I also support the view that they do support learning and development. Technology in early childhood education and the activities that children engage with have the potential to extend learning in new and exciting ways.

But, on the other hand, technology can also be very bad for children. Excessive use of it can lead to the loss of imagination, creativity and desire for independent work in children. Over-reliance on technological support has a negative impact on student performance and engagement.

Organising activities on the theme of languages and diversity

10%

40%

30%

20%

■ I can draw on the presence of different languages and cultures in the immediate environment.

■ I can guide children in their encounters with different linguistic or cultural behaviour and encourage them to talk about this subject.

■ I can draw maximum benefit from the moments when the children start becoming aware of the workings of the language.

■ I can give a communicative dimension to moments of reflection about language.

An awareness of the workings of language and of the value of diversity can support and foster children's linguistic development. Being made gradually aware of the phonological, syntactical and morphological aspects of languages is conducive to the development of language and to the acquisition of other languages (Brinton, 2003).

Children can learn a lot about appreciating the differences that make us all unique. This is the reason why I believe in creating a classroom environment to emphasize and celebrate diversity, offering a safe space where all students can express themselves. Fostering an inclusive classroom environment will foster new connections between classmates (and between me and my students) and help engage students of all backgrounds in learning.

Using written texts with children who cannot yet read

- ■ Support can come in the form of purposely chosen reading materials which make understanding a text easier. For example, graded readers are books with a lower range of vocabulary and glossed word-bank that provide definitions.
- ■ A child may need an alternative approach to learning to read – some children benefit from phonics drive exercises which strengthen their knowledge of sound-letter correspondence in English.
- ■ I will choose books with engaging pictures and print, to allow for multiple opportunities to engage nonverbally.
- ■ Speech sounds – encourage children to say sounds from the book along with me. Emphasize the sounds of animals, vehicles, or nature from the books, and encourage children to imitate these sounds.

30%

20%

10%

40%

The answers to this question would certainly take more time to come up with the children. However, the answers listed in the graph are the closest to the research I have gone through. For children who cannot read, the best solution is speech sounds. I personally had the opportunity to test this thesis. In addition to the help of classmates, who can read, and visual representations, which are very understandable for certain terms, but not for making sentences, speech sounds were the most complete for their communication.

6. CONCLUSION

Recognition of teacher education (in contrast to teacher training) as a longitudinal process and the awareness of teaching as a deep cognitive, social and emotional process led to a surge of interest in reflective teaching.

To facilitate the teacher´s role in this early language learning, the Council of Europe has developed a tool for reflective practice in initial teacher training "The European Portfolio for Pre-Primary education", which focuses on developing a variety of language skills of children, valuing diversity and familiarizing with the plurilingual and intercultural dimension.

Some studies, for example "Teachers' Characteristics and Attitudinal Beliefs About Linguistic and Cultural Diversity" from Bustos Flores (2011) and "The Role of Psychology in Teaching Foreign Languages" from Chebotarova (2014) have pointed out that teachers' conceptions - or their beliefs, knowledge, preferences, mental images and other similar aspects of their mental structures - decide to a great extent how their behavior in class affects the decisions they make daily. Document Pepelino organizes professional skills related to the linguistic and cultural development of children in four domains and eight areas, where each domain is divided into two areas of competencies. Each of these competencies includes a combination of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes. This is exactly the importance of PEPELINO for this thesis. Its essence and focus on self-reflection contributes greatly to my own professional development and can also be relevant for future teachers.

The main hypothesis: PEPELINO encourages English language teachers to examine their language teaching skills, develop self-reflection and integrate self-assessment in their teaching practice in a positive and motivating way.

In this paper, the competences of foreign language teachers in elementary school and the reflection on professional competences in the PEPELINO document are listed. When the analysis and comparison of these competencies is made, it can be seen that their main focus is on analyzing and adapting how to talk to children and another aspect of relevance is on pedagogy, that is, competencies related to classroom management. The advantage of PEPELINO is that it has a broader picture related to teacher competencies. In addition to all common competencies, it is also focused on cooperation with parents, which is strongly emphasized in the document. Supporting the linguistic development of children with other first language is also emphasized. This segment is also better processed and presented to teachers. Additionally, based on personal self-reflection (using PEPELINO), I can testify that it is a better

tool for self-reflection and improving the teaching process. PEPELINO should really take root in schools because it can be used for several years in a row and serve as a review and comparison of the work of previous and current generations for teachers.

All of the above is promoted through PEPELINO, as an incentive for self-reflection and self-assessment in a positive and motivating way.

Both through the theoretical part and through the research, the conclusion is that the main hypothesis has been confirmed.

Additional element to the first hypothesis: PEPELINO has more strengths when applied in language education.

Understanding both strength-related and weakness-related aspects is important for changing beliefs about and finding solutions leading to new plurilingual practices. As a strength, it is essential to mention the fact that there are so many cultural diversity elements in our society. What needs to be emphasized here is that it should be presented as something positive - in the sense that you do not perceive it as boring, but as a challenge, and a big plus for both teachers and children.

Teachers perceive linguistic and cultural diversity as an opportunity and something that should be positively nurtured. Moreover, in today's world, knowing languages opens doors to communicating with other people internationally, to get a job, and to move and cooperate with people around.

We can confidently confirm the additional element to the hypothesis.

Auxiliary second hypothesis: There are many challenges for implementation of the PEPELINO considering: curriculum, classroom practice, teacher education, textbook development.

The use of Pepelino clearly points to different areas that are fundamental in teaching language to young children.

The particular challenges of implementing this program are in our country Bosnia and Herzegovina, which lags behind many neighboring countries. PEPELINO in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not at the level it should be. It still needs a lot of work to "live" in our schools.

It is very important to mention that PEPELINO is not a tool recommended for use by the Ministry of Education of any canton in B&H and English teachers in my environment do not use it for self-reflection and self-assessment. Many of them have never been in a position to learn about it. In order to find out whether PEPELINO is an ideal tool for self-assessment and self-reflection, further research needs to be carried out in different contexts and for a longer period of time.

There are also too many descriptors and this seems to be a large set of questions to answer them on a daily basis. Some of them may be challenging to answer because teachers may not have enough experience in the given field (e.g. relationship with parents).

The third hypothesis was also confirmed.

For greater insights into the research, a longer period of time would be needed. However, one month was enough to prove/disprove the claims.

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8. LIST OF CHARTS

GRAPHS

PICTURES

9. ATTACHMENT

9.1. Survey questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of 20 questions/theses that I successfully analyzed while working with children, colleagues and parents.

The questionnaire was created based on the recommendations of the PEPELINO document, chapter "Reflection on professional competencies", where there are guidelines and questions for personal reflection and self-assessment. The document PEPLINO is composed of four domains and eight areas of competence. In those four domains, there are competencies for self-reflection. Based on them, the theses that were the guiding principles in this questionnaire were formed. Each area (competency for self-reflection) was dealt with through the aforementioned theses to which I assigned a certain number of points. I assigned the highest number of points to the thesis which, based on my research, was the most significant in that area for self-evaluation.

I scored each offered answer according to my personal observation from the research. For example, if there are four answers in the offer, I score the answer that I think is the most credible with a score of 4 (because there are four theses, if there are seven theses, then the maximum number of points is 7), I score the answer that I think has the least importance with a score of 1. Each answer is represented by a graph, where the answers are expressed in percentage (by using a Microsoft Excel).

1. **Professional competences that I have developed in research.**
    1) Talking to children in L2.
    2) Attitude to linguistic and cultural diversity.
    3) Understanding how children learn.
    4) Organising lessons on the theme languages and diversity.
    5) Responding to children's individual possibilities and needs.
    6) Supporting the linguistic development of children with other first language.
    7) Cooperation with colleagues.
    8) Cooperation with parents.

2. If I take children's individual needs into account, what can I do?

1) I can identify each child's communication skills and language needs using appropriate observation instruments.

2) I can help each child progress at his/her own place.

3) I can ensure that each child is given the opportunity to speak.

4) I can help develop each child's confidence in the use of languages.

5) I can respond to difficulties of oral expression that a child may encounter.

3. In what ways can I adapt conversations with children?

1) I can tell whether the language I am using is adapted to the abilities and needs of children in this age group.

2) I can react effectively when the children do not seem to understand everything I am saying to them.

3) I can make each child feel involved in the discussions.

4) I can encourage children to participate actively in discussions.

4. How can I respond positively to linguistic and cultural diversity?

1) I can convey to the children my interest in linguistic and cultural diversity.

2) I can respond positively when linguistic and cultural diversity is manifested in the way children express themselves or behave.

3) I can treat certain children's plurilingualism and experience of different cultures as a genuine resource for the group.

4) I can take action to ensure that children who speak other languages or come from different cultures receive a positive welcome in the institution.

5) I can identify possible causes of misunderstanding due to differences of cultural behaviour and act as a mediator between children and adults.

5. How can I help young children acquire languages?

1) I can organise the classroom space in a way that encourages the children to join in with language-related activities and to interact with each other.

2) I can encourage the children to use non-verbal communication to support oral expression.

3) I can make use of each activity to foster the children's linguistic development.

4) I can take account of the emotional dimension in linguistic exchanges with and between the children.

5) I can use the resources offered by information and communication technologies to develop the children's language skills and cultural awareness.

6. **How can I organize activities on the topic of language and diversity?**
   1) Check the interest of the teaching material
   2) Organize a cultural fair in the classroom
   3) Use the library
   4) Let the children make a collage about their culture
   5) "Travel" around the world in class
   6) Do global art

7. **If I take into account the individual needs of the children, what can I offer them?**
   1) I can identify each child's communication skills and language needs using appropriate observation instruments.
   2) I can help each child progress at his/her own pace.
   3) I can ensure that each child is given the opportunity to speak during lessons.
   4) I can help develop each child's confidence in the use of the foreign language.
   5) I can adjust my teaching to children's difficulties and possibilities.

8. **What is the result, if we work as a team?**
   1) I can contribute to an exchange of practices and ideas between team members.
   2) I can collaborate with other team members on joining projects relating to the children's linguistic development.
   3) I can accept remark queries and advice from colleagues and teacher educators and take them into account in my management of the group.

4) I can provide colleagues and primary school teachers with useful information about the linguistic development of the children for whom I am responsible.

5) I can make use of the resources offered by partnerships with other institutions or associations.

9. How do I react when the children do not seem to understand some educational areas I am referring to?

1) Use various illustrations, which will show the unknown part in the best way.

2) Using appropriate video materials.

3) With the cooperation of children who understand the material.

10. Positive attitude towards diversity should be translated into concrete actions. What are some specific example?

1) Seizing every opportunity that presents itself to refer to the languages and cultural backgrounds of certain children.

2) Accepting and welcoming spontaneous utterances by children in a language other than the one, that is expected in a given situation.

3) Acting as a mediator between people from different cultures (parents, other stakeholders, etc.) in order to explain reactions or behaviours that are unusual in the context of the institution: this means identifying and clearing up possible misunderstandings.

11. How can I support the language development of children with their motherlanguage or some other language they speak?

1) I can take account of the specific situation of children with other first languages than Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in order to identify their individual abilities and need.

2) I can take account of the support that I give these children of their particular linguistic or cultural competences and knowledge.

3) I can help children to draw on their first language in order to make progress in acquiring the language used for exchanges within the group.

4) I can encourage exchanges between children with different levels of proficiency in the language being used.

5) I can react appropriately to verbal or non-verbal behaviour that may stem from different cultural traditions.

12. Cooperating with the children's families.

1) I can see to it that all the people with responsibility for the child feel welcome in the institution.

2) I can involve the parents in teaching projects that are directly related to the children's linguistic and cultural development.

3) I can exchange with the children's parents about the activities that are the most conducive to children's language acquisition.

4) I can exchange information with the children's parents about their progress.

5) I can encourage the incorporation of resources existing within the families into the organisation of activities with the children.

13. Cooperation with colleagues.

1) I can share my ideas and activities with other teachers.

2) I can collaborate with other team members on joint projects related to the children's linguistic development.

3) I can accept remarks, queries and advice from colleagues or teacher educators and take them into account in my management of the group.

4) I can provide colleagues with useful information about the linguistic development of the children for whom I am responsible.

5) I can use the resources offered by partnerships with other institutions or associations.

14. What must I pay attention to in order to ensure that all the children's language resources are recognised as equal in dignity?

1) So that the child does not feel isolated from others.

2) To pay equal attention to each child's language.

3) Teach them that they appreciate the language of their friends.

4) To allow each child to express him/herself on a cultural and linguistic level.

15. Should I correct a child who uses two languages in one utterance, or encourage them to find the right word in the target language? How should I react?

1) When I notice that a child is using their home language because they don't know specific words or expressions in the school language, I can teach them those particular words in a supportive and encouraging way.

2) At the same time, instances of code-mixing can be important moments for other children to stimulate language awareness for both mono and multilingual children.

3) Also, I can use these moments as examples of how objects, concepts of ideas can have a different label in another language, or how there are words that to express a complex though, to refer to something that happened in the heritage language.

16. What I can do taking account of the way in which young children acquire languages?

1) Encourage interaction among children through play.

2) Every child must have a mandatory daily activity.

3) Improve relationships among children.

4) Presenting other languages that can be spoken at home in a positive light.

17. How can the children's space be organised in a way that encourages them to participate in discussions and activities?

1) Open spaces encourage music, movement and freedom of expression. They also offer children „breatingroom", away from others as well as opportunities for collaboration and interaction.

2) Circles allow to gather children together in large or small groups where they then have opportunities to listen to others, express themselves, and be respectful of physical space.

3) Children can represent their culture, in the classroom, using various objects.

18. How can I use information and communication technologies to encourage children's oral expression?

1) Using rhymes and songs.
2) Using quizzes.
3) Using certain applications (games).
4) Using cartoons.

19. Organising activities on the theme of languages and diversity.

1) I can draw on the presence of different languages and cultures in the immediate environment.
2) I can guide children in their encounters with different linguistic or cultural behaviour and encourage them to talk about this subject.
3) I can draw maximum benefit from the moments when the children start becoming aware of the workings of the language.
4) I can give a communicative dimension to moments of reflection about language.

20. How can I use written texts with children who cannot yet read?

1) Support can come in the form of purposely chosen reading materials which make understanding a text easier. For example, graded readers are books with a lower range of vocabulary and glossed word-bank that provide definitions.
2) A child may need an alternative approach to learning to read – some children benefit from phonics drive exercises which strengthen their knowledge of sound-letter correspondence in English.
3) I will choose books with engaging pictures and print, to allow for multiple opportunities to engage nonverbally.
4) Speech sounds – encourage children to say sounds from the book along with me. Emphasize the sounds of animals, vehicles, or nature from the books, and encourage children to imitate these sounds.