

O1: State of the Art Report about Bi- and Multilingual Education in Kindergartens (Pre-school)

O1-A1: State of the Art Report

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Executive Summary

Multiculturalism that characterizes the contemporary European societies has favored the conditions for the development of multilingualism. Multilingualism has been a field of research for many years and many researchers have underlined the benefits of a multilingual person. Also, there is evidence that language learning can have better outcomes when the second or the foreign language is introduced in the early years.

Although multilingualism exists in the social sphere, this is not the case for education. More specifically, in many countries students receive education that does not take into account their multilingual needs; rather, it mostly tends towards a monolingual perspective, and thus limits the possibility of enriching their linguistic and cultural repertoire.

The scope of this report is to provide an overview of the state-of-the-art in terms of the educational value of multilingualism. In this regard the report focuses on the different approaches that have been developed in teaching a second / foreign language. Firstly, it introduces the basic diverse theories and hypotheses concerning Second Language Acquisition that have been developed since the beginning of the 20th century. Secondly, it presents some pedagogical practices about language teaching, which can result in better outcomes. Thirdly, it presents the situation that exists in each partner country of the POLYGLOT project (namely Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Cyprus) regarding bilingual/multilingual education and foreign language learning/teaching. Lastly, it demonstrates some case studies of multilingual practices that have been implemented worldwide and have resulted in effective language learning outcomes.

As can be observed in the report, the situation regarding bilingual/multilingual education in each of the project partner countries, and more specifically at the pre-school level, varies significantly. Despite whether there are governmental initiatives or a National Curriculum to support bilingual education in pre-schools, what prevails is the fact that there is a need for structured, organized, and well-designed instructional material for pre-school teachers and parents, so as to support bilingualism and multilingualism at school and at home. As this is the core objective of the POLYGLOT project as well, as a practical output of this report, recommendations are provided based

on successful initiatives observed in other countries. There are therefore some of the basic points to be taken into consideration when designing material promoting bilingual/multilingual education for Early Language Learning (pre-school):

- The instructional material needs to be designed and delivered based on validated Second Language Acquisition guidelines and Early Language Learning practices.
- Research has shown that integrating the children's and parents' mother tongue (L1) in early language learning material has positive impact and benefits on the learning process.
- It is also crucial to incorporate aspects of the children's traditions and culture in the instructional material, so as to promote awareness and multiculturalism in the classroom; this benefits other children as well, and also makes all the children feel included.
- It is advisable for the topics of the units designed to be related to the children's needs and interests, as this will also keep them more engaged with the material.
- Various studies and successful initiatives have highlighted types of activities that are more appropriate and more relevant to pre-school aged children and thus, the language learning material should be designed based on these types of activities for positive outcomes to result. These types of activities are: game-based, role-play, mimes, songs, story-telling, hands-on activities, activities focusing on audio-visual, interactivity, and communication.

Introduction

The discussion about the concept of cultural diversity has received much attention across the centuries throughout the world's history. However, multiculturalism as an idea was formed in the early 1970s first in Canada and Australia and then in the U.S.A. and in other countries in Europe. Although there were many interpretations for the term "multiculturalism" it is difficult to discern certain philosophical aspects. Parekh (2002) states that "multiculturalism is best seen neither as a political doctrine with a programmatic content nor as a philosophical theory of man and the world but as a perspective on human life" (p. 336).

In multicultural contexts people hold different perspectives about the world and therefore the co-existence between people from different cultural backgrounds poses many challenges. This is because every individual has different language, life perspectives, values, beliefs and opinions and thus a mutual understanding is difficult to occur among people with such differences. European Union drawing from the ongoing citizen's mobility across the European countries and in order to raise awareness about the cultural capital of each individual decided to declare the year 2008 as the "*European Year for Intercultural Dialogue*". The main aim was to raise the profile of intercultural dialogue, which is essential for creating respect for cultural diversity, improving coexistence in today's diverse societies and encouraging active European citizenship.

The idea of multiculturalism is not associated with the simple co-existence of many cultures on the same area but goes beyond that by offering an idea of different world views across these cultures. Moreover, the understanding of the cooperation between different cultures must not be disconnected with the cultural symbols that are embedded in them. Language can be considered as a cultural symbol and as such it plays an important role when it comes to cultural co-existence and interaction. The importance of language learning lies in the fact that language is often a barrier in situations where intercultural conversations occur. That is because "language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge but also a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Respect for

the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities therefore is essential to peaceful cohabitation” (Ball, 2010, p.9).

In the Report of the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research under the title “*Sharing Diversity National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe*” on March 2008 it is stated that across Europe, one of the main objectives of educational policy is to promote dialogue by providing resources for language learning. When it comes to interactions that are taking place between members that speak both majority and minority languages the intercultural approach “recognizes the value of the languages used by members of minority communities, but sees it as essential that minority members acquire the language which predominates in the state, so that they can act as full citizens” (p.8). Language learning takes many forms such as language training:

- aimed at minorities and migrants to learn and practice the official language of the country where they live in order to e.g. facilitate integration and provide them with better opportunities to participate in the marketplace, or, less frequently,
- available to all students to learn e.g. the language of a neighboring country or the mother tongue of pupils with a foreign background; (p. 8-9).

The Council of Europe continued the actions after stressing the importance of language learning and in 2014 formed the “*Common European Framework of reference for languages*”. In this framework takes place the analysis of two basic concepts: *plurilingualism* and *multilingualism*. The term *plurilingualism* is used to define “the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society” while the term *multilingualism* may be promoted by “simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication” (p.4). Thus the plurilingual approach highlights the development of the individual’s communicative competence that is seen as the ability to interact and interrelate with other languages by building on the experience and the knowledge gained by cultural interactions. The more plural people become the more they need to learn in order to communicate with each other. Pluralism shifts responsibility from people to the community. It

emphasizes the importance of belonging to multiple communities with multiple discourses and multiple identities. The plurilingual approach stresses the importance of the individuals' experiences on different language and cultural environments where language becomes a medium for communication apart from home and family to that of society at large. The communication between people from other cultures that presupposes that the individual will use different languages apart from his mother tongue (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), forces the individual to share these languages together with the embedded cultural values. Therefore the individual becomes more open and interactive through a process of language exchanging. This process broadens the individuals' learning horizons and prevents them from keeping the language to "strictly separated mental compartments" (p.4).

Due to the fact that in most European countries a variety of spoken languages exists, it is very important for individuals to manage their language capabilities and therefore be able to share experiences through mutual understanding when it comes to dialogue across people from different cultures. In the third edition of the joint Eurydice/Eurostat publication "*Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*" (2012) it is stated that across Europe "languages may be spoken across entire states or they may have a regional basis within countries; it is also common for states to share languages with their neighbours around their border areas, thus reflecting their shared history" (p.17). The multilingualism that appears to reflect the diversity in the European countries can be viewed and therefore approached from different perspectives. One of the most common perspective is the official recognition of languages by European, national or regional authorities (Baidak, Borodankova, Kocanova & Motiejunaite, 2012, p. 17-8).

The need for the implementation of policies that would provide a protection to the other languages apart from the commonly spoken ones, led the European Union in January 2011, to recognize 23 official languages. These languages shared the same status with the state languages in one of its member countries. The language status that is applied in most countries in Europe is the recognition of one language as a state language. In four countries (Ireland, Cyprus, Malta and Finland) the status extended from one state language to two languages spoken within the countries' borders. In Luxembourg exists a

different case where, there are three state languages. This case is also valid for Belgium where three official languages exist although these languages are not recognized as administrative languages across the whole country area, but are used in specific linguistic areas. It is interesting to note that in more than half of all European countries officially there is a recognition of the regional or minority languages within their borders for legal or administrative purposes. It is also a fact that “these countries grant official recognition to languages within the geographical area – often a region or autonomous unit – in which they are normally spoken” (Baidak et al, 2012, p. 17-8).

In the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992, it is stated that it is essential for lesser-spoken languages to be protected from eventual extinction “as they contribute to the cultural wealth of Europe, and that use of such languages is an inalienable right”. Also, multiculturalism is viewed as a value and therefore the respect and the protection of the minority languages must not at any way be seen as factors at the expense of official languages but as a mean for learning and enrichment. In the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008) it is stated that the engagement to the learning of different languages “helps learners to avoid stereotyping individuals, to develop curiosity and openness to otherness and to discover other cultures” (p.29). Additionally, it is clarified that the engagement in processes of language learning offers learners multiple benefits and the interaction within individuals with different cultural identities can be seen as an enriching experience (p. 29).

Around the world numerous initiatives from different governments and teachers reveal that there is a strong political for educational contents to be adapted in order to respond to the above-mentioned challenges. UNESCO in the 46th International Conference on Education that was held in Geneva in 2001 after stressing “the growing importance of communication, expression and the capacity to listen and dialogue amongst a number of proposals, presented the need for language initiatives to be included “first of all in the mother tongue, then in the official language in the country as well as in one or more foreign languages” (p. 17). Bi/multilingual initiatives based on mother tongue depend on a number of factors and in order to be held in a successful way it is important to be taken into account in the design of language-based programs. These factors include:

- children's health status and nutritional sufficiency;
- family socio-economic status;
- parents' and communities' attitudes and behaviours
- competing demands for children's participation (e.g., agriculture, paid or domestic work, child care);
- individual and social factors affecting proficiency in the language of instruction;
- access to school;
- inclusion in education;
- the status of the mother tongue (e.g., high or low status; a majority or minority language);
- quality of instruction;
- the political and economic environment (e.g., presence/absence of conflict, crises, stability); and
- social adjustment and peer relations (Ball, 2010, p. 6).

Although the educational value of bilingualism or multilingualism is unquestionable it is important for policy makers to be informed after a careful review on the relevant research in order to avoid ineffective superficial approaches to bilingual learning. Concerning the language practices taken in the form of instruction in educational settings, many researches have supported the implementation of effective language policies already at the early childhood education level. In the years of preschool education the child is more receptive to social, linguistic, and cognitive development (Lee, 1996, p. 514). As Garcia (1988) argued, language and social repertoires begin to form in early childhood and "basic linguistic skills (phonology, morphology, syntax) of adult language as well as important personal and social attributes (self-concept, social identity, social interaction styles) are significantly influenced during these years" (p. 387).

The early language intervention can be supported also by the fact that by the time children begin school, they have already acquired most of the morphological and syntactic rules of their language. This acquisition allows them to use language in a variety of ways, and the way they express themselves through simple sentences -positive or negative-, questions,

subjunctives and imperatives is similar to the way adult users express themselves. Although during the school years children begin to use and understand more complex grammatical constructions, the acquisition of these constructions is complete after some years (Gleason, 2005, p. 174-5).

There are some researchers that suggest that literacy development starts from birth and by the time children reach preschool age the complexity of the literacy tasks that can accomplish gradually increases. Snow et al. (1998) have listed a number of accomplishments that successful learners are able to fulfill at the preschool years. Some of them are the following: “recognize and can name all uppercase and lowercase letters, understand that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (alphabetic principle), learns many, though not all, one-to-one letter sound correspondences, recognize some words by sight, including a few very common ones (a, the, I, my, you, is, are), track print when listening to a familiar text being read or when rereading their own writing, use the new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in their own speech, appropriate switch from oral to written language situations, correct answers to questions about stories read aloud, retell, reenact, or dramatize stories or parts of stories, writes (unconventionally) to express their own meaning etc.” (p.95). The development of these skills would be challenging in bilingual settings and in order for potential barriers to be removed bilingual instruction must be offered in early educational interventions (Lee, 1996, p. 514).

To conclude, the cultural diversity that is connected with the multicultural environments poses challenges in the educational policies. Children grow and develop cognitively and socially in different environments where multiple and multiethnic perspectives dominate. There is a need for educators to deliver curriculum structures for young children that will promote equality, respect and empathy for different cultures and therefore be open to the learning of other languages. Towards this direction multilingualism offers a great opportunity for the development of a culture where communication will be a value for understanding and equality. Second language acquisition practices can provide a link that connects multilingualism and education.

1. Second Language Acquisition Theories

The interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds is mostly held through the process of communication. This communication presupposes that individuals speak different languages or share a common language knowledge. The ways in which languages are learned is the main focus point of the research that is conducted in the field of second language acquisition. Some basic concepts concerning this topic are the terms “first language” and “second language” although these terms may oversimplify language processes. In particular, in countries where children are socialized through an extensive use of the standard language it seems clear what their first language is. However, the majority of the world population is living in multilingual settings and therefore for many people that are socialized in such contexts it is not really clear what constitutes their first, second or third language. Also, in the educational settings children may learn one or two languages during the school years and later in life they might even learn and use again another language to such an extent that the first foreign language is no longer used and fades away. In these cases it is unclear how the terms “second” and “third” language can be distinguished.

There is a different perspective across linguists in the way that they define language acquisition. Some categorize languages in terms of level proficiency, others in the order of the time of acquisition. Still neither of these distinctions can offer a concrete explanation concerning language acquisition to children who speak two or more languages from birth. In such cases first, second or third language can be defined through the settings in which these languages are used (De Bot, Lowie & Verpoor, 2007, p. 6-7).

The difficulty for researchers to define first, second and third language in a way that can be generalized and applicable to many cases also exists in the definitions of the terms “second” and “foreign” language learning. The traditional definition of the second language acquisition refers to the language that occurs in settings where the language to be learned is the language that the local community uses for purposes of communication within its members. From this point of view an Italian who is learning English in England is generally considered as a second language learner. For some researchers the second language acquisition needs to take place also in a non-instructed setting. On

the contrary, foreign language acquisition is a process that takes place in settings where the local community does not speak the language that the individual is learning. In this case, an individual who is learning Italian by a Spanish adult in Spain would be considered a foreign language learner and thus the education that would be receiving would consist of an example of foreign language acquisition. In most cases, foreign language acquisition takes place in a setting with formal language instruction (De Bot et al., 2007, p. 6-7).

Mitchell and Myles (1998) are offering a broader definition of the term “second language learning”. They define it as “the learning of any language to any level, provided only that the learning of the “second” language takes place sometime later than the acquisition of the first language”. This results in the differentiation of the second language from the “native language” or the “mother tongue”. They include the term “foreign language” under the more general term “second language” because they argue that “the underlying learning processes are essentially the same for more local and from more remote target languages, despite differing learning purposes and circumstances” (p. 1-2).

The ways in which children acquire a second language have been the subject of many researches across the linguistic field and several theoretical approaches have been presented trying to show how language develops. However, the examination of the cognitive processes that adults or children are following when they speak and understand it is considered a difficult task. This difficulty of observation and understanding of the language mechanisms that people use in order to acquire language skills led linguist researchers to mostly try and understand the observable “language” behavior.

These researches led to theories about language development and have tried to determine the factors that can contribute to the effectiveness in second language acquisition. An explanation about the second language acquisition is strongly related to the acquisition of the first language however the degree in which the two languages are interrelated is different depending on the language theory and hypothesis. Since the beginning of the 20th century many diverse theories and hypotheses about second language learning have been developed. These theories will be discussed further below.

1.1. Behavioral approaches

In the mid-century behaviorism was one of the main theories that had an impact in almost all areas of scientific investigation. The behavioristic theory focused on the observable human behavior and suggested that any human behavior could be learned through a process of a stimulus-response and positive or negative reinforcement (Malone, 2012, p. 1).

Behaviorists considered that language learning is like any other kind of learning and thus is acquired from the formation of habits. They tried to examine language acquisition by observing and measuring language behavior. In their research procedures they avoided “mentalistic explanations” of language behavior and were focused on accessible measurements that could more easily be defined. The observable environmental conditions (stimuli) that co-occurred, offered behaviorists the opportunity to examine and further try to predict specific verbal behaviors (responses). From the behavioristic view, the explanation of the certain responses of the organism through the connection or association of stimuli in the environment can become effective predictors of language success. The process that is related to these connections is called “classical conditioning” (Gleason, 2005, p. 234). From this point of view, learning process can be seen as a matter of habit formation because the acquisition of language depends on the acquisition of automatic linguistic habits. Learning is an observable behavior that can be acquired by a certain response to a stimuli in the form of mechanical repetition (Menezes, 2013, p. 404).

An example of how learning processes work can be found in the formation of word meanings. Specifically, word meanings can occur when an arbitrary verbal stimuli and internal responses are often cited. For instance, if a child sees his mother crying out the word “Hot” after touching a hotplace then the child will associate this word with the stimulus of heat and will gradually acquire the power to elicit this specific response himself in similar situations. Also, the associations formed between several stimuli and a single response lead to the formation of associations between stimuli themselves. In this way “classical conditioning” is used as an explanation for the interrelationship of words and meaning” (Gleason, 2005, p. 234).

The application of this process in the acquisition of the first language is simple; individuals have to learn a set of habits in order to respond to the stimuli in their environment. However, second language learning is a more complicated process as there is already a body of well-established responses in the mother tongue. This set of responses in the mother tongue must be replaced by a set of new habits which the individual will acquire through the process of the second language learning (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 24).

This view of second language learning led to the formulation of hypotheses in order to examine the interference between the first and the second language. In particular, the behavioristic “contractive hypotheses” assumes that the structures that have been created in the learning of the first language are employed in the second language acquisition (Beller, 2008, p. 2). Therefore the learner needs to reflect in the interference of the old first language habits with the new second language habits and realize the similarities and the differences between them. Both the similarity and the difference of these structures affect the acquisition of the second language. This means that similar structures in both the first and the second language will facilitate the acquisition of the second language. However, different structures in the first and second language will display more difficulties in the acquisition of the second language.

By analyzing further this hypothesis one can understand that mistakes and difficulties that arise in the learning of a second language can be in part predicted by the similarities and differences between the first and the second language. Being influenced by this hypothesis researchers were engaged on the extensive task of comparing pairs of languages in order to define areas of difference and therefore of difficulty. This is known as the “Contrastive Analysis”(Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 24-5).

From the perspective of teaching in educational settings, an effective approach would be the teachers’ concentration on areas of difference between the languages that children are learning. In this approach the best pedagogical tool for foreign language teachers would therefore be an excellent knowledge of those areas. The second language learning can be acquired through a strong repetition of the second language grammatical forms by emphasizing to these forms that are different from the first language. When children produce correctly the expected response then teachers provide positive reinforcement but when

the response is wrong then a negative reinforcement is offered. As the main misunderstandings and errors on the second language learning are a consequence of the interference between the first and the second language. Therefore first language is not used in the process of the acquisition of the second language but is avoided as much as possible (Malone, 2012, p.5).

Although this linguistic approach remains an interesting method for the analysis of mistakes in second language acquisition, the research hasn't yet proven empirically that children who learn a second language that is different from the first would experience more difficulties in comparison to the learning of an easier language (Beller, 2008, p. 3).

1.2. Universal Grammar

The theoretical background that formed the basis of the Universal Grammar theory is the belief that language is innate in humans. Chomsky argues that humans have a genetically determined language capacity. He formed this position by the fact that children in every cultural community learn different languages at a remarkably early age and therefore children must have an innate knowledge to speak that is consisted by aspects of knowledge that are universal to the grammars of all languages. According to Chomsky the initial state of the language faculty, which is a component of the brain that is responsible for language, is called "Universal Grammar". This innate language component is labeled "Language Acquisition Device" or "LAD". The LAD is considered as a physiological part of the brain which acts as a specialized language processor" and "provides the child a host of information about grammatical classes and possible transformations" (Gleason, 2005, p. 241-3).

From the above mentioned it is clear that according to Chomsky, in order for children to be able to learn a language they must be "biologically programmed" through the LAD. The LAD contains the principles of the possible structures of language. A principle of that kind might be that all languages have verbs and therefore can be viewed in terms of the Universal Grammar. However, between different languages there is also different language structuring such as the language structure that is responsible for the order of a

determiner in a sentence before or after a noun. A learner can discover which of the two choices the language that he uses permits by the language input that he has been receiving (Gleason, 2005, p. 252). The process of language acquisition for the child becomes natural despite of the fact that imperfections may occur. The samples of natural language that the child is receiving can act as a trigger in order to activate the LAD (De Bot et al., 2007, p. 29).

Linguistic approaches that are based on Chomsky's ideas suggest that the language use is different and independent from the language structure of grammar. Grammar rules are forming an independent system which determines both the "grammatical" or the permissible sentences in any particular language. There is a distinction between the formal organization of grammar and the use of language and this distinction is known as the distinction between "competence" and "performance". Linguistic approaches favor competence over performance (Gleason, 2005, p. 244).

By drawing upon Chomsky's universal grammar theory many linguistics tried to generate a hypothesis that would explain the relationship between the first and the second language. The hypothesis that is related to the linguistic theory is the "identity hypothesis" which suggests that there is no relationship between the first and the second language acquisition. This hypothesis sees grammar as an independent facet of language learning and assumes that first and second language acquisition processes are isomorphic. This hypothesis proposes the existence of universal cognitive mechanisms that are responsible for the processing of each language independently (Beller, 2008, p. 3).

In educational settings this theory proposes that students don't have to learn the grammar of a particular language because the grammar rules are universal and students are already familiar with this body of knowledge. The teacher's focus should be on the different features between the first language and the other languages and the evidence to support these differences will be found through linguistic sources provided by the surrounding environment. No special effort is needed either from the teacher or from students because the knowledge that is needed is part of the student's innate biological mechanism. Therefore neither instruction nor corrective feedback is necessary in the teaching process. The acquisition of language is a relatively rapid process and uniform in development (Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p.60).

Although Universal Grammar theory generated under the concern of the processes that are involved in the learning of the first language it doesn't make claims for a theory of the second language acquisition. It is a language theory with a main goal to offer a description and an explanation of the human language. Generally, Universal Grammar is a theory both influential and controversial. The controversy is mostly due to the fact that language is viewed as "being governed by an underlying framework or blueprint which allows for all human languages" (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p. 69). However, this view of language focuses only on some language aspects without taking into account other important factors that also contribute to language learning. What is more, the research that was conducted in order to examine the "identity hypothesis" has been receiving criticism for the methodological weakness and the validity of the research findings (Beller, 2008, p. 3).

1.3. Interactionist approaches

The interactionist point of view about the language acquisition has elaborated upon the idea that through the process of interaction learners can receive comprehensible input and produce linguistic output. This interaction can occur through exchanges of input and output that reinforce the learning of grammar rules, vocabulary items and correct rules of pronunciation in the context of conversation.

1.3.1. Krashen's Input Hypothesis

In the 1980s language research that previously focused on the influence of the first language on the second or the opposite shifted to a new era taking into account the acquisition process of a second language. From Krashen's view the process of second language acquisition was similar with the process of the first language acquisition and therefore he argued that "people do not learn a language by talking "about it" (for example studying the rules of grammar) but by experiencing enough meaningful input and communication within that language" (De Bot et al., 2007, p.35).

Based on Chomsky's work which suggests that language is an innate faculty in the brain which is responsible for language development, Krashen evolved his theory in the late 1970s but thereafter redefined and expanded his ideas in the early 1980s. He took into account five basic hypotheses in order to support his general theory. These hypotheses will be examined further below and are the following:

1. the Acquisition- Learning Hypothesis
2. the Monitor Hypothesis
3. the Natural Order Hypothesis
4. the Input Hypothesis
5. the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 35)

Concerning the first hypothesis, Krashen proposed a distinction between language acquisition and language learning. In the process of acquisition which takes place through a natural interaction with the language, the learner acquires meaningful speech and applies it through a subconscious process. However in the learning process the learner acquires a knowledge about the language that he is learning in a conscious way (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 36). Learning on the one hand and acquisition on the other hand are used in very specific ways in second language performance.

Through the monitor hypothesis Krashen suggested that "learning has only one function and that is as a Monitor or editor and that learning come into play to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been produced by the acquired system" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 36). This Monitor doesn't work all the time but it mostly focuses on situations when the learning is important for the learner and when the learner is aware of the grammatical rule needed and from this view he might use the Monitor in order to modify in a conscious way the output produced by the acquired system (Malone, 2012, p. 5).

Krashen suggested that the access to Universal Grammar is not open to all human individuals regardless their age but he argued that there is a natural order for learning the structure of a second language. He also suggested that there this natural order in the process of language acquisition implies that the rules of language are being acquired in a predictable order and some rules use to come early while others come later. He also added that "the order doesn't

appear to be determined solely by formal simplicity and there is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language classes” (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p. 37).

From the above mentioned the conclusion that can be drawn is that in second language learning meaningful input is all that is needed. If someone is constantly receiving *comprehensible input*, according to Krashen, he will learn to understand and speak the second language. Comprehensible input is defined as “the second language input just beyond the learner’s current second language competence in terms of its syntactic complexity” (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p. 38). The input that is offered to the learner when it is a little bit higher than the language level that the learner is currently possesses and is available to sufficient amounts, the result for the learner will be to acquire the language that is offered from the input automatically. This concept was formed through the well-known expression $i + 1$. The “i” symbolizes the learner’s current level of comprehension and the number 1 with the + symbol represent the newly comprehended and acquired input. Krashen argues that grammar will naturally be acquired from the learner because of his access to Universal Grammar. The understanding of target language will have as a result a growth in competence and confidence and thus speaking will also be acquired in the process of a natural growth (Apple, 2006, p. 283).

Although comprehensible input is needed for the learner in order to acquire a second language this input is not sufficient. Learners also need to allow this input to reach that part of the brain that is responsible for language acquisition or else the Language Acquisition Device. In order for this to be achieved a so-called Affective Filter determines “how receptive to comprehensible input a learner is going to be”. The learners’ affective filters determine the amount of the comprehensible input that will reach the brain. The more conducive a learner to second language learning acquisition the more input he will receive (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p. 38-9). Krashen also referred to the “silent phase” of an individual when the language learner is receiving comprehensible input and beginning to understand the language but is not yet confident to speak. This phase might be shorter or longer depending on the individual learner (Malone, 2012, p. 5).

Krashen suggested that language acquisition is based upon the amount of reception of messages that learners can understand. In order to make this input comprehensible, teachers must use strategies like linguistic simplification together with the use of visuals, pictures, brochures, maps, games, graphic organizers, and other supporting materials. Also, in the second language acquisition process the first language is considered a very important factor that affects the development of the second language. This means that a high level of communicative skills in all of the language domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the first language can become a well-built basis for the transformation of these skills to the second language (Malone, 2012, p.6). This can be achievable through the use of materials in the classroom activities that provide meaningful representations and give “the extra-linguistic context that helps the acquirer to understand and thereby to acquire” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 55).

The input hypothesis is based on the fact that language practice will result a productive and fluent use of language. This fact, however, cannot ensure that a person that is repeatedly listening or reading a second language will develop a higher level of these skills in the second language. What is more, Krashen didn't explain how the linguistic input becomes comprehensible to learners and how this level of comprehension differs between individuals with different language levels. Therefore, Krashen didn't explain how “i+1” works. He also refused to accept the fact that the linguistic output too can become a fundamental factor in second language learning. To conclude, the above mentioned theory concerning the language acquisition emphasizes to the language input which can be seen as the only factor that stimulates the process of language acquisition. However, there are theories that are focusing on both the receivable linguistic input and the output that learners produce in the process of second language acquisition (Beller, 2008, p.10).

1.3.2. Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Some researchers tried to extend Krashen's Input Hypothesis by placing a significant role to both the comprehensible input and the output that a learner is receiving in order to describe the language acquisition as a two-way

communication. In this regard Long proposed the Interaction Hypothesis in order to put an emphasis to the collaborative efforts between more or less fluent speakers in discussions to understand language structures and meaning. These collaborative individuals are putting effort to maximize comprehension and negotiate their way through difficulties. This collaboration is adjusting the second language input, so as to make it more relevant to the current state of learner development. In Krashen's terms this means that they are collaborating to ensure that the learner is receiving $i+1$. The interactive structure of conversation plays an important role in negotiation for meaning and serves to make input comprehensible while still containing unknown linguistic elements (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 128).

This theory places language learning in certain contexts and environments and suggests that language learning occurs as a result of the interaction of the learner's mental ability with the verbal environment. Long and Porter (1985) stated that verbal interactions in a communicative setting are "especially beneficial to learners in terms of the amount of talk produced, the amount of negotiation work produced and the amount of comprehensible input obtained" (p. 224). In a communicative setting where both verbal input is available and verbal production (output) is fostered, a solid basis can be built for language learning together with opportunities for meaning negotiations and feedback about the verbal outcome.

By viewing the acquisition of a second language from a social perspective this interactionist point of view propose that learners can acquire the grammar rules of a second language "incidentally and implicitly even while focusing on meaning and communication in personal interactions" (Beller, 2008, p. 4). In addition, through the interactive process of verbal meaning negotiation in the second language, learners can take advantage of the feedback and the language outcome that is offered from a more advanced speaker in order to monitor their output and compare it with the advanced speaker's output.

From this view the language teaching will focus on how teachers can draw students' attention to certain linguistic forms through processes of interaction. Long stated that teaching needs to be *focused on form* which means that the teacher should create meaning-focused language activities into which it is embedded an attention to form. This focus on form leads students to notice

linguistic elements “as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 320-1). The instruction can be through teacher- student interaction in which teachers react to students’ errors by using a range of questioning strategies and feedback actions that contradict or directly correct the error. However, sometimes they can prompt students to correct themselves. Although these strategies are corrective in their nature they can be useful when teachers want to draw the students’ attention in certain linguistic forms, for example past tense suffixes. There are several types of this corrective feedback that students can get. The *explicit correction* allows teachers to point out the learner linguistic errors and provide correct forms. The *recast* helps teachers to correct without directly indicating the student is incorrect by providing either the implicitly reformulation of the student’s error or the correction. The *clarification request* is useful when the teacher asks for clarification in order to be aware of the student’s understanding. The *metalinguistic clues* help teachers to lead students in a conversation in order to use metalinguistic cues for the analysis of the discourse. Teachers can raise questions and comment on the error by eliciting information provided from the students instead of offering the obvious correct forms. It is mostly a process of clarification. Another feedback strategy is *elicitation*. Through elicitation, teachers ask questions that prompt in a direct way students to modify responses in order to say the correct form. In this way teachers can pause students at a certain time before they answer and help them complete the sentence by adjusting the language tone. Lastly, through *repetition* teachers can repeat the incorrect parts to attract student’s attention (Tedick & de Gortari, 1998, p. 2).

The view of language as an acquisition process that appears from and becomes advanced within social interaction demands social factors to be explored as causal in language development. These approaches accept the powerful arguments from both behavioristic and linguistic approaches. Also, interactionists suggest that many factors not only biological but also social have an effect on language development. These factors are interrelated and therefore interact and modify one another. Particularly, on the one hand cognitive and social factors modify language acquisition. On the other hand language acquisition modify the development of cognitive and social skills. As

a result, it is not only that these variables play an important role but also the relationship between them (Gleason, 2005, p. 251).

However, this theory has limitations. These limitations are related to the differential effectiveness of negotiation for acquisition as it depends on key factors that are different to learners. These are the different components of the target language system and the developmental stage of the learner. There are some suggestions in the literature, for example that negotiation may be more effective for aspects of phonology and lexis and less effective for aspects of core syntax but researchers cannot really know. Pica stated that “if learners are not ready for a new word, form or rule, they cannot acquire it, and thus negotiation will not help towards its internalization” (as cited in Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 142). Therefore it is difficult for researchers to identify which questions are beneficial in the process of interaction which aims to learning.

1.3.3. Swain’s Output Hypothesis

Some researchers extended the interactionist theory that considers the linguistic input to be important by acknowledging also the importance of the linguistic output. Specifically, Swain argued that when it comes to second language learning we need to go beyond the comprehension of the input and consider other aspects of interaction that may be involved in the process of second language learning. When learners interact with each other through dialogues and conversation they have the opportunities to practice in the target language, by using the linguistic “output”. This output indicates the learning results or reveals the ways in which individuals demonstrate the linguistic skills that they have acquired. The output that learners produce can initiate deeper their intellectual abilities as in order to use language more intellectual effort is needed unlike the input. As Swain stated “the output hypothesis claims that the act of producing language (speaking or writing) constitutes under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning” (Swain, 2007).

Swain in her “comprehensible output hypothesis” argues that output plays a central role in the learning of the second language. There are four possible ways that this output can provide learners with a framework of important language-learning functions. These ways the following: a) testing hypotheses

about the structures and meanings of the target language, b) receiving crucial feedback for the verification of these hypotheses, c) developing automaticity in the IL production and d) forcing a shift from more meaning-based processing of the second language to a more syntactic mode (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 278).

The process of linguistic output presupposes that the learner controls the language. Through speaking or writing the learners can develop their interlanguage to achieve communicative goals so they need to determine the linguistic forms that they are going to use. This process lead learners to discover the meaning and the specific language form and thus to know what can or cannot do in the second language. The output that is produced by the learners can stimulate them to move from “semantic, open-ended, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production” (Swain, 2000, p.99). From this point of view the production of the linguistic output seems to have a significant role in the development of language.

In the classroom it is important for teachers to create a supportive collaborative learning environment which will provide a safe setting for the production and exploration of the second language. Through conversation activities students can work together on tasks by trying to notice a language form. This language form for example can be salient or frequently used. They can also notice that this form is different from the language that they are speaking. By working together they can observe the linguistic gaps and try to fulfill them by turning to a dictionary or a grammar book, by asking peers or the teacher (Swain, 2000, p.100). Also, through the testing of hypotheses, students can gain feedback by engaging themselves in processes of interaction and meaning negotiation. The use of language can provide a “degree of analyticity” which helps students to make speculations about the language (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 279). Another way can be though collaborative conversations. In these conversations students work together in order to discuss and solve problems. Opportunities for students to produce linguistic output can be provided by conversations with communicative goals. Also, open questions can encourage students to give longer and more complex answers. Teachers can encourage the process of learning by creating “classroom

conditions that enable English learners to cross over the instructional divide from confusion into meaningful learning” (Anthony, 2008, p. 477). Examples of such conditions can be the following. In the process of vocabulary learning, students can associate new words and phrases and deal with meanings of new vocabulary through opportunities to active conversation that are connected to their personal experiences. When new words are introduced and students explore them they can provide a description of their experiences about the process of the examination of the settings in which the word is applicable (Anthony, 2008).

The output that learners produce is a great opportunity to practice language and gain feedback. This process can create focus points that can attract their attention on “certain local aspects of their speech which may lead them to notice either a) a mismatch between their speech and that of an interlocutor (particularly if as part of the feedback a linguistic model is provided) or b) a deficiency in their output” (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 290). When they notice either of these situations then a process of reassessment occurs which can take place through short or long term complex thinking about the output. This complex thinking can be supported by collecting additional information from a variety of sources (input, direct questioning, looking for grammar books, and dictionaries etc.) (Gass & Selinker, 2001). However, students cannot always provide output. There are cases where students must be given time in order to feel comfortable to express themselves. This is the criticism that Swain’s theory receives. Especially when students are learning a foreign language they find it difficult to speak as they feel concerned if they will be able to correctly express themselves. Also, even in cases where students may be prompted to express themselves and they feel nervous, the language that they are using may not come out right. Thus they restrict their ability to learn from the produced output according to the output hypothesis.

1.4. Cognitive Approaches

Some of the above mentioned approaches to language somehow separate the use of language as a specific module in the mind of the learner. However,

cognitive approaches view language from a different perspective. Additionally, cognitive approaches view learning as an aspect of cognition because “the human mind is gearing to the processing of all kinds of information and linguistic is just one type, albeit highly complex” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 73). Two cognitive approaches to language learning will be discussed. First, the connectionism theory which views language acquisition from a cognitive point of view and has a great significance for the development of language. Second, the information processing theory for second language acquisition which is influenced from the knowledge of human cognition (perception, problem solving, memory) and has been adapted to the analysis of language processing both the first and the second language.

1.4.1. Connectionism

Connectionism is a recent proposed approach to second language learning. Generally, in connectionist approach learning is based only in the receivable input of information. The knowledge that is acquired as a result of this input cannot be seen as abstract rules but is rather a network of interconnected exemplars and patterns. For connectionism, learning comes through a process of association. Associations come through exposure to patterns. This means that the learner receives information that can be associated with previous patterns that are stored in the learner’s network. The more association is made the stronger that association becomes (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 216-7).

Through the framework of connectionism there are a number of network approaches. The most well-known is the “parallel distributed processing” (PDP). The basis of the PDP is a neural network that is generally biological and consists of complex clusters of links between information nodes. These links or connections are strengthened or weakened through activation or non-activation respectively. When the network is able to make connections and associations by acknowledging repeated patterns then learning takes place. As long as the associations keep reappearing then stronger associations are developed. New associations are formed through new connective processes and as they become larger units complex networks are formed. One example of how this

theory works is the order of acquisition of a language structure which happens as a result of its frequency of occurrence. Learners are able to extract regular patterns from the input to create and strengthen associations (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 216-7).

Concerning the second language, learning occurs when the individual receives language input through regular forms and then extracts patterns that are probable on the basis of these regularities. If these patterns are repeated it is most likely for the learner to acquire knowledge. These interconnections between the creation and then their strengthening became the starting point of researches that were designed using computer models which are programmed to build this kind of neural networks. These networks are established within the human mind in the process of learning and the creation of networks is based on the input individuals receive. In order to understand the concept of networks connectionists use models of input and output that are simulated in the computer and are compared to the natural output (Mitchel & Myles, 1998, p. 79, 81). From their point of view, learning can be seen as a process of strengthening the interconnections. These interconnections increase as the associative patterns are taking place through an iterative process. However, this type of interactions doesn't have the purpose of extracting rules and then apply them but simply to register associative patterns that are strengthen with use (Mitchel & Myles, 1998, p. 82).

Connectionism relies on pattern associations and not on systems with certain rules. In order for a model that is based on connectionism to be effective strong associations need to be developed. Concerning the second language acquisition, a strength of connectivity can be established through the knowledge of the first language which can allow a set of associations to be fixed for the second language. These associations can promote a fruitful interference for the establishment of a second language network. Teachers can use the first language as a basis in order for students to be able to connect the information that they are receiving with the second language. The degree of transfer from the first language to the second language depends on the relevance between the two languages. One useful strategy for teachers can be the presentation of word orders in different languages by using words that they are related in these languages (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 217). For language beginners, it is useful

to start the learning with the phonological forms and the analysis of phonological sequences, the categorical perception of speech units and their particular sequences in particular words, the general probabilities of the sequences of the words in the language and the particular sequences of words in stock phrases and collocations. The grammatical structures of particular words and the grammatical rules more generally can be acquired by an automatic implicit analysis of the word's "sequential position" which is related to other similar words in the student's network of established phrases (Ellis, 1998, p. 648, 650).

The language theory of connectionism views language from a different aspect. Learning is not a set of rules that the learner must recognize in order to extract concrete linguistic output but is rather a simple instance learning which is based on the input alone. The knowledge is built through a process of associating the existing language patterns with new. However, connectionists have tended to concentrate on simple, discrete language phenomena and because the study of language takes place in terms of laboratory experiments it is difficult to draw safe conclusions for the nature of learning and thus for the aspects of the language learning process. Also, it is not easy to apply these experiments in language learning in real life situations (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 217, Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 86).

1.4.2. Information processing approach

This work was initiated from information processing models that were developed by cognitive psychologists and have been adapted to the treatment of language processing both in the first and the second language (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 85). This theory builds upon experiments that were conducted on information processing domains as the human memory, the perception and problem solving. The human information processing system "is a mechanism that encodes stimuli from the environment, interprets those stimuli, stores in memory stimulus representations and results of operations on them, and allows information retrieval" (Gleason, 2005, p. 257).

This processing system also refers to language and memory processing and examines language acquisition by viewing children as processors of

information that change from novice to skilled language users. The McLaughlin's information processing model suggests that simple processes can work as a basis for building complex behavior and that these processes are modular and therefore can be explored independently. The main characteristics of this approach are the following:

1. Humans are viewed as autonomous and active.
2. The mind is a general-purpose, symbol-processing system.
3. Complex behaviour is composed of simpler processes. These processes are modular.
4. Component processes can be isolated and studied independently of other processes.
5. Processes take time; therefore, predictions about reaction time can be made.
6. The mind is a limited-capacity processor.

When this framework is applied to second language, the language acquisition is considered as a complex cognitive skill. Therefore to learn a language means that you have to learn a skill which requires the practice of tasks and their integration into fluent performance. Also, the cognitive nature of learning is related to internal representations that are responsible for the regulation and the guidance of the performance. For the performance to be improved a restructuring of the processes of "simplification, unification and gaining of increasing control over their internal representations" must be held (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 85). The notions of automatization and restructuring play a central role in the cognitive theory.

Automatization is a concept that is based on research in the field of psychology. Psychologists as Shriffrin and Schneider argued that the way that individuals process information can be either controlled or automatic. From this point of view learning occurs when the individual shifts from the controlled towards the automatic information processing. This view of learning when applied to the learning of a second language can work as follows.

The learning of a second language leads learners to first turn to controlled processing in the second language. This controlled process involves “the temporary activation of a selection of information nodes in the memory in a new configuration” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 85). However, such processing requires a lot of focused attention on the part of the subject and also is restricted because of the limitations of the Short-Term Memory (STM).

The processing of information shifts from controlled to automatic after a repetitive sequence of actions. The sequences that become automatic are saved as units in the Long-Term Memory (LTM). Since the sequences are stored, they are available very rapidly, and when every situation requires them without having to pay attention and control that part of the subject. Therefore, automatic processes can occur simultaneously through the activation of clusters that are related to complex cognitive skills. As soon as these automatic processes are activated and acquired these automatized skills are difficult to delete or modify.

The repeated activation of the movement from controlled to automatic processing which is taking place through practice can be viewed as learning. This shift from controlled to automatic processing is related to higher levels of processing and therefore it explains the additive nature of learning as a sequence step by step. This means that simple subskills and routines must become automatic before more complex ones have to be addressed.

This ongoing movement from controlled to automatic processing in a constant way is responsible for the restructure of the linguistic system of the second language learner. At this point the perceived differences between the language learners and their differentiated characteristics can be a result of this movement. Through the restructuring process a destabilization of some structures in the interlanguage that were previously acquired take place and thus it may result the repetition of second language errors (Mitchell and Myles, 1998, p. 85-6).

In the classroom teachers can use this model to more task-specific ways through a direct control of the learning material. Teachers can ask students to use cognitive strategies that may help to store information that they cannot easily remember through note-taking or by using mnemonic devices. They can also rely on repetition or on guessing meaning from context. This framework

also offers teachers knowledge about the issue of *fossilization*. Fossilization refers to the fact that sometimes second language learners cannot be able to attach the native like accent that characterizes the use of the first language in the second language speech even though they may have receiving linguistic input for many years. From the information-processing point of view fossilization would be the result of a controlled process becoming automatic before it is native-like. Automatic processes are difficult to modify as they are outside the attentional control of the subject. Thus they are likely to remain in the learner's interlanguage, giving rise to a stable but incorrect construction (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 86).

The information processing theory is based on experimental evidence that is difficult to interpret as it is challenging for researchers to determine the exact nature of the information processing skills. Also, in the experimental procedures it is not easy to conclude if the predicted results didn't appear because the predictable control and analysis or the methods of measurement weren't appropriate for some tasks. More evidence is needed in different forms of learning productions that learners create by taking into account the ways in which these forms are created if the objectives of the research initiatives into this area would be to determine the nature of the "storage of all kinds of information in declarative and procedural forms" (Towell & Hawkins, 1994, p.264).

In conclusion, the cognitive approaches do not separate language learning from other forms of knowledge but they rather perceive it as a process of the human brain when acquires new information. Researchers that support cognitive approaches to second language learning suggest that in order to understand the second language acquisition processes we must first understand the cognitive processes that take place when learning occurs. The research data are gathered from the field of cognitive psychology and from what it is known about the learning of complex skills generally (Mitchel & Myles, 1998, p. 72).

1.5. Social Interactionist Approaches

Social interactionists believe that the structure of human language may have been generated from social functions of the language as a communicative mean in human relations. They argue that children must acquire grammatical skills like other approaches. They also search for common forms across children, cultures and languages. However, they support the fact that these skills may have developed from much simpler rote associations and imitations learned within the social context. Although this approach tries to explain language structure it is simply less committed to the form of the structure and to the time of its development (Gleason, 2005, p. 263-4).

Social interactionist theorists view language learning as a process that presupposes a social context and therefore learning takes place in social terms. The basis of these approaches is Vygotsky's theory of the *Zone of Proximal Development* which is defined as "the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1980, p. 86). According to his belief this zone refers to the social interaction between a child and other more skilled individuals. In this interaction where language is typically used to the process of regulation by the other towards the child, a set of tasks and activities are accomplished by the child under the guidance of the more skilled individual. An example of a more skilled individual can be a parent who is helping his child or a teacher who is helping his student.

Through a process of collaboration the language has the form of collaborative talk in which the child is encouraged into a *shared consciousness* until he acquires new or appropriate knowledge or skills transferred into his own consciousness. In terms of knowledge exchange successful learning occurs when it involves "a shift from inter-mental activity to intra-mental activity" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145).

The process of the dialogue that supports the learner in order to attract his attention to essential features of the environment and which guides him to step by step problem solving activities is known as "scaffolding" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145-6). The term *scaffolding* is used to depict the process when a

learner is provided with helpful information which is increasing in relevance with the difficulty of the learning task at the right time. The information that is given allows the learner to solve a problem by following the right steps in a process of interaction with a person who possesses more knowledge on the subject that is studied. In the context of second language acquisition, Lantolf (2005) describes the Zone of Proximal Development as “the site where future development is negotiated by the expert and the novice and where assistance is offered, appropriated, refused and withheld” (p.105).

In the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the learning process may lead to fruitful learning outcomes. For example, a learner may learn to become independent and function in the same way after he had received the appropriate help from a scaffolded instruction (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145-6). This approach views learning as a moderate process in contrast to other approaches. For Vygotsky language is used from a young child at first only as a tool for social interaction. Progressively, the child begins to use language on his interactions with the environment for example by talking aloud in playful activities or by expressing through words his actions. Child’s verbal expressions gradually become the source for the structure of the child’s actions governing or directing thought. Thus, “the role of language changes over the course of development from social tool to a private tool, as the child internalizes linguistic forms” (Gleason, 2005, p. 265).

The social interactionists argue that innate linguistic mechanisms alone cannot explain the children’s mastery of language and moreover that linguistic competence goes beyond conditioning and imitation to include nonlinguistic aspects of interaction. The innate linguistic predispositions must interact with the environment in order to mature (Gleason, 2005, p. 265). However, the process through which the new language knowledge arises in the course of social interaction and is internalized by the learner is not clear. Vygotskian researchers who have addressed the issue of second language development most directly have typically done so in classroom rather than naturalistic settings as done by many researchers working outside Vygotskian tradition. From this point of view the ability to produce complex forms without help can be done through successive individual contributions of a group working together

which make the form collectively rather than individually reshaped (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p.156-7).

The acknowledgement of grammatical structure is the first step for interactionists in order to continue with the search of explanations about the language competence that the child has acquired. This competence however can only be measured from children's understanding which can be accessible through their speech in social contexts where social conversations occur. Generally, it can be said that from the interactionist's point of view children provide information about their level of learning from their performance and thus the emphasis is placed there (Gleason, 2005, p. 264).

Finally, as research shows, motivation is a key factor in successful learning and high exposure to foreign languages facilitates the acquisition of language skills. In this regard, teachers should create opportunities to improve student motivation and facilitate introduction to target languages. This can be challenging for some schools in some countries, but associations that promote projects between countries as well as pupil and teacher exchanges are certainly helpful practices that could be further developed across Europe (Baidak et al., 2012, p. 9).

Social interactionist approaches emphasize to the role of the modification that takes place in social interactions through conversations. They provide evidence for the ways in which knowledge is accessible when the learner is supported by an individual with a higher level of understanding. However, these approaches have been receiving criticism mostly because of the fact that they only examine what learners need to know by interacting with others without taking into account the innate processes that learners follow in order to acquire language and which are not available in the input (Lightbrown & Spada, 2003, p.45).

To conclude, the research on second language acquisition offers a variety of concepts and detailed procedures of the language acquisition which can become a useful tool for teachers in order to make better sense of their own classroom experiences. They can also provide them with a range of pedagogic choices that are open to them. It is common that the more early a child will be engaged in the process of language learning the more beneficial this learning will be. As a conclusion, the preschool years are an ideal time for second

language learning. Pedagogical practices that can foster second language acquisition in the early childhood will be discussed in the following chapter.

2. Pedagogical Approaches to Early Language Learning

Multiculturalism that exists in the contemporary societies provides pluralistic environments in the educational systems where children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have to collaborate daily and learn together. From this point of view multiculturalism can become a useful experience for a cultural and linguistic expansion. Dealing with two or more languages across an educational setting presupposes the development of important metacognitive and metalinguistic processes.

The multidimensional perspectives as a consequence of the structure of new realities that are generated by social, cultural and economic factors can reduce the boundaries within societies and praise the linguistic and cultural diversity within them. The socialization in an environment where multiple languages offer different meanings entails multiple possibilities of thinking and therefore offers chances to expand the cultural limitations. In an educational system where children learn from an early age to appreciate diversity and share

their viewpoints it is more possible that from this sharing they will display a positive attitude toward the value of other languages. This attitude “may enhance intercultural exchange and positive intercultural regard and appreciation in multicultural schools” (Roux, 2001, p. 275).

The notion of multiperspectivity must become part of the curriculum in the context of obligatory education through different ways which can be embodied in the languages of education. The variety of aspects that can be offered concerning the teaching of languages can be found in their consistency: regional, minority and migration languages, languages of schooling and foreign languages. This variety can promote the expression of multiple perspectives and language practices need to consider various ways for comparing and contrasting perspectives on “the same” phenomena.

The language teaching in the context of second or foreign language curricula, considering the different uses of language across different communities (local, regional, minority or national) should focus on the perspectives that vary from one social group to another from society to society. In this direction, methods of teaching towards the attitudes that raise awareness and are based upon the experience of otherness can be associated with different languages and continue to develop as part of many educational policies.

In this regard, teachers in multicultural classrooms should be aware of their student’s cultural diversity and informed for patterns of different cultures that are not familiar to them. This is essential because students’ cultural background is differentiated from culture to culture and includes not only words of their first language but also visual representations, gestures, movements, notions of social etiquette etc. So it is important for teachers in order to be able to avoid misunderstandings to be informed about these above mentioned characteristics so to focus on meaningful interactions. The knowledge of certain cultural differences can be acknowledged through a variety of activities and towards this achievement the teacher needs to use multicultural teaching material (Schwartz, Mor-Sommerfeld, & Leikin, 2010, p. 189).

According to Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) any language curriculum must emphasize in the enriching value of minority languages and cultures. In educational practices where teachers integrate aspects of the different cultural

characteristics in the form of classroom activities they are more likely to succeed in “promoting the self-esteem necessary for student achievement” (p. 322). Also, they are more likely to introduce multiculturalism and multiperspectivity to their students. A disregard of the cultural diversity that is represented in the classrooms may lead to negative attitudes toward different languages and therefore to children who speak these languages (p. 472).

Multicultural settings offer the ability to learn a second language and this ability is possible for all children. In this direction bilingual education can provide an effective setting for the acquisition of a new language (Kersten et al., 2010, p.81). Many researchers have tried to emphasize the importance of second language acquisition as a process that is based mostly on the first language and thus connecting the second language with the first. These connections according to recent language studies provide a strong link and build better associations in the direction of effective second language learning. Also, language teaching can result better outcomes when the second or the foreign language are introduced in the early years. Therefore it is important for teachers to be able to implement strategies oriented to the specific classroom needs. Some instructional techniques that can contribute to an effective second language acquisition when incorporated in instruction are discussed further below.

2.1. Total Physical Response

This technique allows children to receive comprehensible second language input without requiring them to speak. It can work well during the *silent period* of the child when his exposure to a new language is recent or he doesn't feel comfortable by expressing himself in this language. The child is allowed to participate in the process of the second language acquisition in a more friendly and non-threatening manner. In this type of instruction language is not used in all of its forms but is restricted in the use of commands. However, a variety of language forms is offered. This variety is necessary in order for the teacher to avoid to repeat the same language patterns and thus also leads to the decrease of the negative feelings of children when they have to participate in the same activities which are considered boring. In particular, children in the total physical

response listen to the command that is spoken in the foreign language and automatically have to execute the command by performing a physical reaction. Students can sit close to the teacher on both sides. An example of such an instruction technique can be the following. In English the teacher says “stand up” and he stands up. Along with him children must stand up too in order to execute the command. Then the teacher can say “walk forward” and everyone in the class walks forward. There are many commands that a teacher can use in order to stimulate certain physical responses. In this technique the teacher can begin with brief words or one-word commands but as the time passes the commands can become more complicated which means that within some minutes the morphological and syntactical structure of the commands can become more difficult. However, it should be noted that both listening and speaking skills can decrease the levels of comprehension. Listening training should not focus on phonological aspects that are separated from the environment or that are not connected to one another. If fluency in listening comprehension is the aim then children should be engaged through an intuitive readiness in order to begin making the foreign utterances. This second language approach is more effective especially in the early stage of foreign language learning when teachers concentrate on the acquisition of one skill at a time. For example, on the example of listening comprehension, if the students achieve a high level of listening fluency then the transition to speaking may occur more smoothly and without being stressful.

2.2. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning in second language acquisition is mostly used through authentic and meaningful activities focusing on the target language. In the process of cooperative learning small group activities that promote fruitful interactions take place. The main principles of cooperative learning are the following: cooperation as a value, heterogeneous grouping, positive interdependence, individual accountability, simultaneous interaction, equal participation, collaborative skills and group autonomy (Apple, 2006, p. 279). These principles have an additional value when they are implemented in a multicultural classroom where the multiple perspectives and languages pose

different and frequently challenging demands. Students gain multiple benefits by sharing their learning strategies with their classmates and by facilitating face-to-face meaningful interactions in the second language. The importance of this instructional technique is implied from the fact that meaningful tasks are based on meaningful interactions in order to be completed (Malone, 2012, p.8-9). Teachers who do so will be able to create a more effective environment for learning and thus it is more likely that they can help students reach their learning potential. Dörnyei (1997) argued that in classrooms where the teacher plays the central role in the learning process, the result may be positive, however for a short-period of time. On the contrary, on classrooms where cooperative learning takes place in the form of positive interdependence and support of autonomy in learning the positive results last for a longer period of time (p.489). Cooperative learning, can be seen as a process that encourages learners' motivation and autonomy through various creative collaborating strategies and thus, from the point of instruction it can be seen as "one of the most efficient instructional methods" (Dörnyei, 1997, p. 490). However, cooperative learning must be held in terms of active engagement and learners must be able to interact with each other. Towards this aim the teacher should actively be engaged through a necessary guidance on the structure of the process. He should state clearly the task goals, the rewards, the role that each learner would follow during the cooperative activities, the materials that would be used and also a set of rules for good behavior. The success of this process will mostly depend upon well-planned activities that require the implementation of specific tasks and roles from each of the participants together with a set of responsibilities during the within group cooperation. The sharing of responsibilities will help to assure that this cooperation will provide a high level of participation and achievement by all class members.

2.3. Language Experience Approach

During the period when children learn the first language additional literacy activities can promote the second language acquisition together with the first. In particular, teacher and students share an experience of some type in the first language and then discuss it in the second language.

The basic principle of the Language Experience Approach is that students use their own vocabulary, their language system and their experiences in order to create written texts. In this regard reading becomes a useful and pleasant process. Generally, this approach involves four steps. During the first step teachers initiate discussion among the students that focuses on a recent experience that took place in their school. For example, they discuss about a field trip or an unusual experiment. Through conversation teacher can encourage students to use oral vocabulary by asking them about the ways that they perceive this experience. Students' answers can be a useful way to reinforce their language skills. In the second step, students develop their thinking and express their opinions through the teacher's guidance to create an account. In the process of an ongoing conversation students' suggestions are recorded on chart paper in order to build a text thereby allowing students to examine and connect what they suggested to what it appears on the chart paper. The third step involves the reading of the account from the teacher. Students listen carefully the modeling of the language sound that is provided by a fluent speaker. Then students read numerous times the text and they become familiar with it. The teacher provides help when needed. In the fourth step, teacher encourages students to identify specific words from the text and develop "the decoding of skills of context, phonics, and structural analysis, using the account as a resource" (Nessel & Dixon, 2008). Students can also express in written speech their opinions about the enrichment of the account.

An example of this approach can be when students are working in order to make up a written story. At first, the teacher presents a beginning sentence and writes it on the chalkboard. Then students continue the sentence by adding more sentences below by proposing their ideas. When 4-5 sentences are written on the chalkboard students are encouraged to read what they have written as a group, in pairs and individually. Considering the first language this is considered a literacy activity. However, through this activity second language acquisition is promoted as it transfers the literacy knowledge and skills from the first to the second language system (Malone, 2012, p.9).

The advantages that this approach is offering as a teaching practice are related to the fact that students from the beginning learn to recognize the written words that are orally familiar to them. The process of learning already familiar

words in a meaningful context by discussing about their experiences and thoughts is much easier and interesting than the learning that takes place in an unfamiliar language context. In this way it is more likely for students to be engaged in the learning process when they are reading knowledgeable and relevant information in a dictated account that are closely related to their experiences. Also, it is more likely that they will comprehend the written text and therefore be more receptive to written texts in the future (Nessel & Dixon, 2008).

2.4. Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals are written products between a student and a teacher that start a conversation through a variety of topics. This communication takes place regularly. The topics are chosen by a mutual interest between the student and the teacher. When the topic has been chosen students write about it in their “journal” and the teacher responds to what was written from the student. In this process the teacher has mostly a participatory role in an ongoing written conversation with the learner. The teacher is not an evaluator who corrects or comments on the quality of the writing but mostly a person to interact with in the context of a written dialogue. Thus, the main goal of writing is to communicate. The topics that are aimed to writing can be of several types but some corrective comments can be stated by the teacher. This process provides teacher with the essential information about student’s language abilities or misunderstandings together with the opportunity to model correct language. From the students point of view it is an opportunity to develop their language performance by receiving an ongoing atypical evaluation in a friendly and non-threatening way. Many teachers of migrant students have found dialogue journals an interactive writing on an individual basis, which plays a crucial part in their classes. Students can use the language in an enjoyable atmosphere by interacting with proficient speakers. As this interaction takes place in forms of reading and writing students can use these skills in meaningful ways through a natural, comfortable link between other kinds of reading and writing activities. The teacher can acquire information about students and know them in a better way. This knowledge wouldn’t be easily acquired otherwise. For example

through the dialogue journals teachers can discuss student's cultural or linguistic issues or even problems that they are facing like adjustment to the new environment, school procedures or maybe personal interest and hobbies. This information can be valuable because it provides a safe environment for building strong ties, but also gives students access to new languages and cultures. Teacher can built relationships within students and also provide them with opportunities to reflect upon their ideas, problems and important decisions. What is interesting is the fact that all students can participate to some extend in the classroom conversations despite their language level and from the first day of the lesson. It is also interesting to note that dialogue journals can give feedback about students understanding as well as their language progress and thus the teacher can provide individualized instruction depending on the learning needs of every student. The main focus on writing in dialogue journals should be on meaning rather that the linguistic forms and this writing should be produced in the context of real topics of interest to the students. The written language that teacher uses serves as a linguistic input which is modified slightly beyond the students' language level. This input can be both "challenging" and "comprehensible" because it is related to what is was written from the students and they are more likely to read it and make comments. Also, the form of writing and the structure that the teacher uses can serve as a model of expression of a proficient language user. Thus it can provide information about the writing style and the manner of expression that it is used in appropriate settings. The more often students read and write and therefore are exposed to the second language the more confidence they will develop for their ability to express themselves through writing. There is evidence that dialogue journals develop students' writing and it becomes clear and more interesting over time and that these writings can form the basis of other writings in the future. One negative aspect of this whole process is the amount of time that teachers need to spend in order to respond to student entries. However, it depends on the teachers' discretion to find ways in order to manage the time spent for their responses to this process. This technique can work well when teachers want to gain useful feedback from their students and use it as a basis for future planning (Peyton, 1993, p. 4-5).

2.5. Scaffolding Language Learning

The term scaffolding can be used to provide appropriate assistance to students in order to achieve language goals that otherwise would be difficult for them without the appropriate help. Scaffolding includes all the things that teachers do after they predict the difficulties that the class or individual students will have with a given task. Through the process of scaffolding the learner is provided with second language input that is a little bit beyond his level. The support is given by a teacher or a classmate that is acting within a process of “scaffolding” trying to enhance the learners’ second language skills focusing in the academic aspect of acquisition. The “scaffold” can provide positive or negative feedback that results to the reinforcement of the learners’ language potential. This activity has its basis in Krashen’s idea of “comprehensible input, $i+1$ ” and Swain’s emphasis on comprehensible output in the learner’s zone of proximal development. The instruction presupposes a proficiency level from the provider of the scaffold and therefore in cases where the second language is actually a foreign language instructional activities concerning high-level academic goals may be difficult to achieve (Malone, 2012, p. 9). Scaffolding can be offered to children through the teacher in various ways. Visual scaffolding includes images and words that students can see and hear. This is an excellent way in order to provide comprehensible input as students will not only understand the subject content more easily but it is more likely that they will make progress in their acquisition of the second language. The input can become significantly comprehensible when teachers use images or words to explain concepts. Also, by transforming the input into more comprehensive forms of language teachers can help students to dismiss the affective filter which results from feelings of fear or boredom that are caused from the difficulty in understanding the language. Another kind of scaffolding can be the activation of the student’s prior knowledge at the beginning of the lesson or through a review at the end of the lesson concerning the key vocabulary of the unit. An example of what a teacher can do in order to provide a scaffold for the children that is aimed at promoting their reading abilities is the following. First he should take into account student’s background and ask for their opinions in order to make a connection with the text. Then he can prompt children to try and predict

what the text is about by showing pictures. He can also try to connect the text with children's experiences that are related to the content of the text. He can help children associate the concepts of the text with visuals and provide a structure analysis. Children can be advised to keep notes while they are reading and also write down questions that are related to a misunderstanding of certain parts of the text that they would have to read after. The work should be carried out within groups and children can select a topic that afterwards will have to present it in the classroom. However, successful scaffolding cannot be provided if language is acquired in the presence of the affective filter which according to Krashen depends on the emotional state of the learner. This means that even if the input is properly selected and presented, students' emotional responses affect their comprehension because it is more likely that a student under stress or disappointment will learn neither subject content nor new language. Thus it is important for students to feel secure and comfortable in the educational settings when learning occurs (Bradley & Bradley, 2004).

2.6. First language support for second language acquisition

Although in the past there were approaches that didn't take into account the level of the acquisition of the first language, more recently the research community suggested that the first language can be a useful medium for the acquisition of the second language. In particular, as Butzkaam (2003) states the first language is not restricted in subject related to language but is applicable to all school subjects. It is a powerful tool that can be used by the child systematically and with ease. The use of the first language or otherwise the mother tongue taught individuals to think, to communicate and to acquire an intuitive understanding of grammar. This intuitive understanding can become the basis not only for the learning of the grammar of the first language but also for grammars of other languages and this possibility is offered by mechanisms of the universal grammar that exists in every individual. Universal Grammar can benefit the learning of foreign languages as it serves as a tool that "gives the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (p.31). In practice teachers can use this theory in a variety of learning activities within the classrooms. When teachers want to

be ensured that students understood the topic and the concepts were clear to them they can ask for clarification through informal meaning checks in the first language. This clarification help students to feel comfortable by using a foreign language expression. Despite the fact that teachers can use a variety of teaching aids in order to make the content comprehensible their persistence to a monolingual support is controversial to the idea of foreign language learning. In order for teachers to overcome a monolingual view of the subject through the teaching process, they can use “utterance equivalents” and convey the same meaning in sentences. This is a technique that is known the “sandwiching” and it offers the translation between repeated lines on both languages of one text. This technique can also be applied by providing the idiomatic use of a sentence which is suited to a specific context so that the student can connect the sentence with the right intonation, voice quality, facial expressions and gesture and even paralingual sounds that accompany the oral speech. This type of communication can reveal the pragmatic aspects of meaning and can provide emotional connotations which is far from monolingual definitions or para-phrases and bilingual word-lists. Butzkaam offers more ways of using the first language in education contexts. Teachers need to select texts that have an educational value. However, these texts are often too difficult for students and require too much effort and time. In order to cope with similar situations teachers can use bilingual editions. Also, teachers can recommend students to look at the foreign language versions of their personal, favourite books and read them firstly in their first language and secondly try to read them again in the second language and talk about them in the classroom. This is a good way to help students to see through unfamiliar second language structures without having to analyze grammatical terminology but only to imitate it. Teachers can ask students to prepare special topics in their first language before they prepare them to the second language. They can promote the use of bilingual dictionaries first and then gradually they can introduce the use of monolingual dictionaries. Also, translation between short texts in the different languages can be a highly interactive exercise (Butzkaam, 2003, p. 31-6).

2.7. Activating learner's prior knowledge

Although it might be difficult for teachers in a multicultural classroom to cope with the challenges of multilingualism, some suggestions from researchers in order for teachers to include the first languages of students in the preschool classroom are the following:

- The reading of books can be held in the children's first language. This reading can be done by teachers, families, or even community members. Also, local libraries or children's families can provide the books. The books can also be made in the classroom and saved from year to year.
- The creation of books that include the children's first language. These books can be the books that are used in the classroom (for example about animals and each animal will be named with different languages) or individual books that can include information about children's families, with many words or labels in the first language).
- The teaching of rhymes, letters, and numbers can be held in the first language also. If there are adults in the preschool that speak the first language opportunities for children to interact with these adults must be provided. This interaction can be held through parental support also.
- The greetings in the classroom can be held by including all the first languages that children speak.
- The use of summary of key phrases of a story, a finger play or a song can be first introduced in the first language and afterwards in the second language.
- An emphasis can be put in the words that look alike in many languages or have common roots (for example elephant in English and elefante in French) through the connection of words between those languages
- Parents should be engaged in the learning process and thus should be informed about the topics that will be explored in the classroom (for example insects, farm animals etc.). In this way, families can encourage their children to learn some basic concepts before children are exposed to those concepts in the second language.

- Children can be provided with opportunities to interact with adults by using their first language. This can be accomplished by setting separate space and time for instruction in the first language to take place
- Children's first languages can be used to design the environment of the preschool. Labels can be put in different parts of the room or furniture through the use of printed material (Espinoza, 2013, p. 15-6).

Lucas and Katz (1994) propose a variety of ways for language implementation in the classroom settings that do not require teachers to know the linguistic background of their students. These are the following:

- The teacher can set a task for a group writing assignment in which students can develop their ideas by writing in their first language. In a first site students implement their tasks and at another site students communicate their ideas or tell their stories again by using their first language. Then they translate their sharing in the second language in order to present their ideas to the other students in the class.
- Students that share a common language background can form pairs. Teacher has to take into account that the pairs should consist of students with different learning levels so the one that is more fluent would be the language supporter of the other one that is less fluent.
- Students are prompted to use bilingual dictionaries in order to be engaged in multiple language discourses and enhance their understanding of difficult texts.
- Teachers can engage the family members in the school work by encouraging his students to get help when needed for their school work from their parents. This support can be introduced in their mother tongue.
- Students can be provided with books that are written in their first language and they can be encouraged by their teacher to read them.
- Teachers can communicate with parents by using written speech which can be translated into their native languages and parents are encouraged to read them in their native languages.

- Children can be awarded for their excellence in speaking and studying in languages that are not commonly studied (p.554-5).

Language is commonly used as a means of communication. When communicating is the main goal, this communication implies two things. The first one is that children should be able to deduct the meaning of each situation in which language is used and therefore understand the reason for each activity from the context. The context of information can be more supportive when teachers provide relevant information in addition to the language. Secondly, the understanding of both the context and the meaning of the activity can result to an understanding of the language. This leads children to construct gradually the language system of the second language by themselves.

From the teacher's side this has as a consequence a differentiation of the information channels that he uses in order to contextualize the language use. He therefore has to provide auditory and visual information in order to support learning opportunities that involve several bodily senses. In this context when teachers use second languages the following principles become very important:

- to create a rich language input environment, and regularly to guide children to every action with language
- to provide a variety of activities that use different use of the language and also that are meaningful for the children. This means that children will learn not only by playing games or through imitation but also by other types of exercises
- to prompt children to experience learning by handling objects in the classroom and by using the language to communicate by themselves
- to promote learning through the use of gestures, body language and pantomime
- to help children engage themselves in learning with authentic objects and through the use of different teaching aids, such as pictures, flash cards, books, videos etc.
- to create daily routines which will be easy for children to remember and will benefit children to understand the organization of the everyday activities

- to provide support and rewards in order to encourage the use of the second language without using pressure or forcing children to use the second language
- to implement expressions in both the first and the second language and reconstruct them in the correct form. These expressions can be developed through repetition and paraphrases and teachers can provide explanations frequently
- to focus on the language by highlighting similarities and differences between the first and the second language. However such type of activities should be implemented in authentic contexts and not through the linguistic exercise.

Children should be prompted to use the second language through a series of communicative activities that will include the content of various topics and also that will offer them meaningful experiences (Kersten et al., 2010, p.94). One step towards this direction is their engagement to playful activities which can promote students' learning. Play is considered as an effective preschool strategy for learning and recently has received increased attention from the research community. There is evidence that through play preschool children enhance their cognitive, academic and socio-emotional skills (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2013, p.105, 109). Children can be involved in the exploration of materials, prompting to move through space and to make choices about the activities in which they will be engaged. They can also be motivated to interact with peers and make dialogues with adults. The learning that occurs through play can support the development of preschool children with particular learning goals or by providing a less structured context for learning. Also, through the process of exploration children become active learners and learning occurs quickly and easily without having to put much effort.

2.8. The CLIL approach

The CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach is an alternative method that is used from early to higher education. In many European countries there are certain schools which implement CLIL in their language curriculum. This form of education offers a combination of the

teaching of school subjects other than language by using one or two foreign languages (Baidak, Borodankova, Kocanova & Motiejunaite, 2012, p.39).

According to Doyle (2005) the CLIL approach is built upon four basic principles. These principles are the following:

1. *Content*: The content must be carefully selected as it serves the basis for the learning process. Through the content students will have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills. The content can be either a subject or a project idea.

2. *Communication*: Communication is built upon language. The basic principle is that language is used as a means to communicate and learn. Also, language is the subject of learning.

3. *Cognition*: CLIL is aiming at developing higher order thinking skills. This process is not merely applying knowledge in different contexts but mostly actively constructing knowledge by creating their own understanding about the subject.

4. *Culture*: Culture should be represented in the study of a foreign language because culture and language are interrelated. Culture can be the focal point in order to discover self and develop tolerance and understanding towards the others (p.4).

The CLIL approach depends on a large degree to the willingness of teachers to choose different ways for their teaching practices. This approach can be flexible as it allows teachers to decide the contexts and the learning activities that will guide their instruction. It also allows teachers to choose the extent to which they want the specific subject or theme and the language learning to take place in their classroom.

There are some successful characteristics that have been reported for CLIL programmes. These characteristics are presented by Navés (2009) and are the following. A CLIL approach is effective when teachers provide instructions clearly and in a comprehensible manner. They describe the tasks appropriately and inform students about their expectations. In order to display new information and comprehensible input in different contexts teachers should use a variety of strategies such as “demonstrating, outlining, using visuals, building redundancy, rephrasing, scaffolding, linking new information to learner’s previous knowledge” (p.34). During the lesson teachers provide feedback to

their students and check if they are experiencing problems relating to comprehension and communication. Also, students should be allowed to express themselves both verbally and non verbally by using the first and the second/foreign language. However, progressively they are expected to respond only in the language of instruction which is the target language. Students should be involved in academic processes and develop cognitive abilities that would allow them to compare, identify, draw conclusions and recognize differences and similarities. Also, teachers should create learning environments that embrace the different cultures and appreciate diversity. The tasks of the instruction should involve hands-on activities, learning through experience, work on problem solving etc. Lastly, the learning in CLIL instruction can become effective through various types of learning: collaborative, autonomous and self-directed learning (Navés, 2009, p.34).

Additionally, de Graaf et al. (2007) proposed five main teaching practices for effective CLIL in the classroom that is directed at language acquisition (p. 620). These are presented below:

1. Teachers can provide comprehensible input by selecting authentic materials and texts in accordance with the students' level and through the use of scaffolds on the content and language. These scaffolding can be supported by the use of body language and visual aids.

2. Teachers should prompt students to focus on meaningful searching of the new vocabulary and manage their explicit and implicit types of corrective feedback. They should also help students to alter their incorrect answers by offering opportunities for practice in relevant reading and writing tasks.

3. The facilitation of language activities through examples that focus on form can be provided through the use of recasts, clarification requests and feedback and confirmation checks.

4. The output production can be encouraged through the use of interactive formats for both the oral and written speech. The oral speech can be encouraged by presentations, round tables and debates and the written speech can be encouraged by letters, surveys, articles and manuals. Learners should have the time to complete the task and speak only in the target language.

5. Teachers should encourage students to overcome their problems in language comprehension and language production by reflecting on their own strategies and use direct scaffolding (p. 620).

To conclude, it is very important for teachers to consider that as children enter the school years their use of words becomes complex and used in different settings. It is in this age that children acquire a new kind of knowledge, the metalinguistic awareness. This is the ability to think about the language and understand the words which can even define them (Gleason, 2005, p. 4). In this regard, at preschool years teachers must engage students to activities that are related to a variety of topics in order to promote language learning. Because of the fact that children in this age have the abilities to experience complex literacy activities such as looking at books with adults, writing and reading letters, discover meanings, correct errors and justify their thinking it is the perfect age to stimulate language development (Landers, 1990, p.6). In the following chapter some examples of best practices and case studies will be presented concerning multilingualism in early educational settings.

3. State-of-the-art in partner countries

3.1. Cyprus

Cyprus is a multicultural country. The diversified linguistic and cultural background of its population is visible in many social aspects across the society: schools, Universities, workplace. Cyprus, according to the Civil Registry and Migration Department, is a traditional destination for immigrants from Greece, Philippines, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Russian Federation, Romania, Vietnam and Ukraine. The challenges of multiculturalism led the Cypriot society to launch initiatives in order to keep up with the above mentioned societal changes. The reform of the educational system was one of the changes that were made in order to meet the different demands of the diverse population and keep in pace with the new reality.

In particular, policy makers, decided that already from the early childhood, in preschool education, policies should be taken towards multiculturalism and multilingualism. In this direction, the new reformed curriculum offers us a clear view about the philosophy that guides the general principles which serve as the basis of the educational system. Specifically, the basic philosophy in which the school curriculum was built is intercultural education. In this regard, the main goals of the new curriculum focus on the promotion of democratic values and the respect of the human dignity. These goals aim at preventing the negative consequences that might arise because of the attendance of immigrant students in school (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010).

These values are promoted across the school subjects. One of these subjects includes the learning of English as a foreign language. Students in preschool education have the opportunity to learn English and thus expand their knowledge and experiences with elements from other cultures. Intercultural understanding and openness towards other people and cultures is one of the main benefits of learning a foreign language at an early age. The purpose of introducing a foreign language at an early age mainly lies in the formation of positive attitudes towards foreign languages and the stimulation of the child's natural curiosity about other people and cultures. Also, it is clearly stated that children are allowed to speak in their mother tongue and to use it in order to cover the learning gaps in their attempt to communicate in a foreign language.

In school settings children must be able to learn about different traditional celebrations and customs from different cultures. For the purpose of teaching English to preschool education the PRO-CLIL approach is used. Through this approach the school subjects are taught in the foreign language. The emphasis is placed to the development of skills and knowledge in the school subject together with the acquisition of the foreign language. The implementation of PRO-CLIL is widespread in Europe and is promoted in all EU policy documents that are related to language learning and skills in foreign languages (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010).

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to promote a European dimension in the Cypriot educational system as Cyprus is a member of the Council of Europe and a full member-state of the European Union. Thus, it has undertaken many initiatives in order to engage teachers and schools in activities concerning the acquisition of the “European consciousness” and encourage the participation of schools in European programs and actions for language learning. As a result, many Cypriot schools have been participating in a variety of European programs and competitions such as Spring Day, The European Day of Languages, The European Language Label and other Life Long Learning Programmes. Through these programs Cypriot schools also organize European Clubs and create partnerships with other schools across Europe by using internet communications and e-mail exchanges (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014).

Another initiative is the Educational and Summer Camping Programme. Through this programme children that attend to the 5th and the 6th grade in the Primary Education in Cyprus and in other countries get to know each other and work together in activities that promote the love of the natural environment of the countryside. The main aim is to cultivate positive attitudes towards the environment by building friendships and learning about the Cypriot culture and history. Children that are coming from abroad have the opportunity to learn the Greek language, acquire information about the island of Cyprus and do some sightseeing. Through interaction children have the opportunity to socialize with other children at the same age, learn about themselves and improve their teamwork skills. They also learn to organize their social life in a multicultural environment. During the school year 2012-2013 the *Educational Camps* hosted

children in two different periods. In particular, five five-day periods were organized in October-November 2012 and seven five-day sessions in May-June 2013. Also, a meeting for children of the Maronite Community took place. During the *Summer Educational Camps* three programs took place. From these programs the Hospitality program involved 84 children and escorts from Greece and 26 children and attendants from Ukraine. Subsequently, through the program *Children's Summer Camps Abroad* 100 Cypriot children and their escorts were also hosted in Greek and Ukrainian Educational Camps (Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014).

3.2. Austria

In Austria one can find two forms of language acquisition of pupils with first languages other than German. More specifically, the first case includes pupils that come to Austria during mandatory education, so literacy in their mother tongue is more or less advanced upon arrival and they learn the language at a late stage. The second case includes pupils that are born in Austria and their primary socialisation is in the language of their family. For these pupils the second language is directly linked to school socialisation.

The above mentioned differences have as a result varieties in the second language acquisition, depending on the family situation, the age of arrival to Austria and the language skills of the parents. For instance, children coming to Austria at an early age or born in Austria, often show deficits in their first language. Children coming to Austria during mandatory school often show a solid knowledge of their first language, but have more difficulties learning German.

According to studies, the acquisition of the first language together with the growing up in the related culture is the basis for the second language learning. The problem for migrant children in Austria is that their first language is often not literalised. Therefore they often show related problems with learning the second language, as they cannot build up connections in between the first and the second language ("hypothesis of interdependence"). Without further lessons in the first language they risk the effect that none of both languages will be learned correctly and due to this fact educational and professional chances

are limited. That is the reason why the first language training of bilingual children of minorities also shows affective results. They gain a positive self-image of their own group, a positive relation to their own language. So in a study carried out in Vienna children of Turkish and Moroccan origin showed very positive effects not only in the first language but also in German and other subjects.

Studies for the second language acquisition are relatively new in Austria. Only since 2010 there are studies on the acquisition of German as a second language at the University of Vienna. For ideal conditions for migrant language acquisition a concept of holistic language acquisition should be developed. The Ministry of Education, Art and Culture has produced a draft version which is currently being debated. Most of the studies claim an inclusion of migrants' first language in school, so that children gain literacy in their first language or in both languages. There should be courses in mother tongue in the first years so that children possess profound knowledge of first language and may build up on this. The importance of a stable knowledge in both first and second language can be summarized as follows:

- Stable first language knowledge is important to learn the second language
- Ability for linguistic analysis and quality and quantity of language learning strategies for bilingual children is higher than for monolingual ones
- Development of linguistic creativity
- Higher ability for empathy of bilingual people

Due to these reasons one of the principle objectives of KINDERVILLA in Innsbruck, Austria is to encourage the children's linguistic and communicative skills. The organization hereby differentiates between the maintenance of these skills and the acquisition of new ones. A good command of the first language is the best way to ensure confidence in a second or foreign language.

This approach is already being used in the crèche and is continued in the kindergarten/preschool groups, where German is the main language accompanied by a foreign language. A German speaking kindergarten teacher is in charge of the group and is supported by a native speaking assistant.

In the crèche this model also includes the languages Turkish, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian (the languages of the largest migrant groups in Austria), hereby taking into account the needs of children with a migration background. There are bilingual assistants for these children. The contribution to the concept of inclusion recognises the child's family and cultural background, encouraging diversity and cultivating mutual empathy. But this concept is relatively new in Austria and in our region of Tyrol.

In the "Framework for Education for Austria" there is a chapter dedicated to "Language and Communication" with sub-chapters for: Language and Speaking, Verbal and Non-verbal Communication, Literacy and ICT. There is general information on strengthening the language, literacy and communication skills of children and young people. However, first and second language issues are not mentioned therein.

3.3. Bulgaria

In Bulgaria there are many country regions that are populated with Turkish and Romani ethnic groups which are bilingual (speak two languages). Their children tend to start school with a very limited lexical knowledge of the Bulgarian language, and this has as a result a series of difficulties in their linguistic education.

Since 1990 the focus on the language learning has been raised as more and more young children's parents have been showing a keen interest in linguistic education for their offsprings in kindergartens. Although that was not regulated at the beginning of the period, the crèches' staff showed initiatives and followed in the footsteps of the primary schools; they started initiating optional language classes for the infants (3 to 6 years of age). Again, these were welcomed and paid for by the parents whose children attended the corresponding educational institution. However, this is the least regulated area of education, which leaves the initiative and the organization of foreign language lessons and classes entirely to the staff in these institutions and to the children's families.

In order to reduce these problems the state has taken initiatives towards a language learning education. More specific, in accordance with the Education Section in the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of the Romani into

the Bulgarian society, the priorities of the National Programme for the Development of School and Pre-school Education (2006-2015) and the Updated Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minority Groups (2010-2015), the priorities for the pre-school education in Bulgaria are the following:

- Full integration of Roma children and students through their desegregation in kindergartens and schools in Romani neighborhoods, as well as creating conditions for equal access to quality education outside them;
- Support to schools to ensure access to quality education;
- Promoting intercultural perspective as an integral part of the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the process of modernization of the Bulgarian educational system;

The Ministry of Education introduced a National Curriculum for Early Language Teaching into Bulgarian primary schools in the school year 1993-94, and it is still in force. It states that all students will study one foreign language in Class 1 (6/7 years of age) and will begin a second one in Class 2 or 3. Students have the opportunity to choose from different languages: English, German, French, Russian, Spanish or Italian, though not all schools can ensure qualified staff for all these languages. Bulgarian universities were also quick to react to the new situation and set up Bachelor's programs in Primary School Language Teaching, which ensured qualified teachers for the purpose.

Since 2010 the obligatory education at a kindergarten level includes children at the age of 3 and also at the age of 5 and the preschool education has been introduced for 6 year-olds. The obligatory kindergarten for children that can attend at the age of 5 can be beneficial to children that their mother-language is different from the Bulgarian language. The goal is to teach obligatory the Bulgarian language, which is the official language for children in Bulgaria, and is being taught to children whose mother-language is not Bulgarian. For instance, to children who speak Turkish, Romani, Armenian, etc. The number of classes is four per week and these are optional for the students. The most popular language of this type taught at Bulgarian schools is Turkish followed by Jewish and Armenian.

During the transition period in Bulgaria private enterprise developed and so did private educational institutions for children of all ages: nursery schools, kindergartens, crèches, daycare and language centres, primary and secondary schools. What they all have in common is the special focus they put on linguistic learning. They are more flexible in satisfying the interests of both children and their families so they offer the teaching of more than one or two languages, and their staff often includes qualified and experienced native speakers, which are few of their advantages. A large number of these educational institutions have proved even more successful than the state-run ones so competition has been developing, which is good for the system as a whole. Not surprisingly, the most popular choice of first foreign language has been English, followed by German. In the English classes which is the most studied language for the children from 4 to 7 years old in order for teachers to achieve good results they use certain methodologies and materials in English. For instance “Happy Hearts” is a school system of three parts - Happy Hearts Starter, Happy Hearts 1 and Happy Hearts 2 from Express Publishing. Also “Tiny Talk” is a school system of three levels of learning the English language. However, at present the popularity of Russian as a first foreign language is on the rise, and the interest in Spanish, French and Chinese is increasing.

3.4. Italy

In Italy there are 11 recognized minorities, and a second official language for the autonomous region of Val D’Aosta (French). Also, Italy is one of the signatory countries of the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992.

Italian is the official language spoken in Italy; however, in some border regions of the country also minority languages are spoken. In 1999, an Act was issued, to regulate Italian policy in the field of minority languages (*Act 15 - December 1999, n. 482 "Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche"*). According to the Articles 2 and 4 of the act, the Italian Republic safeguards the language and culture of a variety of language minorities, including Albanian, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian, Francophone, and teaching at pre-school and primary school level shall be provided in both Italian and the

minority language of the students. Additionally, many languages are spreading due to rising migration waves. Even though the study of English as a foreign language at school remains predominant, new languages are being studied at school, including French, German, Spanish, as well as Arabic and Chinese.

Concerning the pre-school education, the Italian Ministry of Education launched a first survey in 1995, aiming to identify the existing approaches towards the teaching of a foreign language at National level. Following this survey, the first national project was launched, which provided for an on-the-job training addressed to teachers from 40 schools. A second project was then launched between 1997 and 2000, with 120 teachers from 15 Italian regions involved in a training to promote new experimental approaches in teaching foreign languages. In addition to these national initiatives, many other projects were launched at regional level.

In Italy, there are no specific central educational provisions to regulate foreign language teaching at pre-school age, so schools are flexible in designing their curricula. However some general requirements exist. Namely, English is a compulsory subject from the age of 6. From ages 11 to 14, two languages (and up to three) are taught (only one is compulsory). From ages 14 to 19, there is only one compulsory foreign language for all students. Currently, a bill is under discussion within the Italian Senate, which shall regulate and monitor the educational provision for children from 0 to 6 years (Bill n.1260 – Provisions for an integrated educational system from 0 to 6 years of age).

In the specific fields of pre-school and primary education, in 2012 some national guidelines were published, suggesting some criteria to be met in school curricula. Based on official provisions included in these national guidelines for pre-school and primary school curricula (*Indicazioni nazionali per il curricolo della scuola dell'infanzia e del primo ciclo d'istruzione*), foreign language teaching in kindergartens is not mandatory, but it is recognised that many children live in a plurilingual environment, and this may ease their interaction with a second language. From 1995 to 2005, many activities related to language learning and/or awareness raising about the role of language learning have been promoted, but no specific guidelines were provided by the State so as to guide schools in language teaching. Nevertheless, according to the above-mentioned guidelines, some general criteria are suggested for primary

and secondary school to ensure an effective language learning. These criteria include:

- Transversal training:
 - **Horizontal:** to be ensured via a proper design of fundamental subjects (Italian language, foreign languages and other teachings) so as to ease language/cognitive development: this will allow bilingual students to integrate the newly-acquired linguistic skills into the patterns of their native languages.
 - **Vertical:** ensuring the progression of learning objectives from each school level to the following one, and defining specific strategies for language learning.
- Ludic approach: integrating frontal teaching with games and playful activities.
- Use of ICT: allowing students to interact with other realities and to easily adapt their learning process to their individual needs.

According to the National Guidelines, students are expected to reach level A1 within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages at the end of primary school. Specific programs are not envisaged in the official educational system. According to the already mentioned monitoring survey, in most schools, the activities linked to the teaching of foreign languages have an average duration of more than 30 minutes once a week, and they are often ludic activities (role plays, games in the foreign language, nursery rhymes, songs, dances, drama, activities based on mimics or gestures, hand work, story-telling, fairy tales etc.). According to the survey, in most of the cases, the teachers try to speak the foreign language in class (68% of the teachers involved in the study).

3.5. Spain

Apart from the official language in Spain (Spanish) there are another three co-official languages: Catalán, Gallego and Euskera. In the regions of Cataluña, Galicia and País Vasco these languages are studied in the school, but not in the other regions of Spain. Most of the migrant groups come from central and south America where people speak Spanish too. For these migrant populations

the language is not a problem. In some cities of Spain there are many people coming also from other countries. In these cases, the regional governments can have special policies tailored to the needs of these groups.

In 1996 the Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council signed an agreement to introduce an integrated curriculum in Spanish state schools. In this way bilingual education was established in 43 state schools with 1200 pupils aged three and four. Since 1996 bilingual education has slowly but surely been introduced at every level of education from age three through sixteen in the project schools. The number of hours for learning a second language depends on the school. If the school is a bilingual school, the children will spend more hours teaching a second language and some of the subjects, like science, will be taught in English.

The English curriculum is also designed for the children in the kindergarten or pre-school aged 3 to 6. It is a basic curriculum where the children have a first contact with another language and start learning vocabulary. The English teaching in the early school years results to a substantial progression in pupils' learning during their initial years. Initially, their activity is based on actions, songs, chants, games, objects and visuals. Their utterances are of two sorts: learnt phrases and individual words, the latter often in response to the teacher's questions. Their pronunciation is generally very good and they show enthusiasm for what is asked of them. They also show high speed of comprehension and an ability to demonstrate this quickly through actions and mimes. By Year 2 of primary school, they have moved into the use of English for doing science in the form of studying the environment. They learn to understand and to complete correctly quite complex incomplete utterances given by the teacher; and they are challenged to provide longer utterances in response to technical questions. Evaluation Report which show some degree of verbal reasoning and they are acquiring increasing amounts of technical language which derives from the environmental theme they are studying.

Despite all the initiatives taken according the learning of languages the situation of early childhood education in Spain can be summarized as follows. There is a lack of political commitment in early childhood education and a fragmentation in different regional regulations and there is no support from the government. Professional work is underestimated. There is a low social

consideration of early childhood which is considered just as preparation to Primary School. Skills and abilities of children of these ages are underestimated.

3.6. Turkey

In Turkey there are immigrants and minority groups. They use their languages at home or in their daily life. But, no education of these languages is given at schools. More specific, there aren't any spoken languages apart from Turkish in the schools in means of education.

In the state schools, there are not any foreign language teaching programmes in Turkey. Teaching a foreign language starts in the 2nd grade of the Primary School. All of the private kindergartens include English, French or German languages in their curriculum and the teaching of these languages generally starts at the age of 4.

In the state school, teachers choose books that are recognized by the common European framework. Thus, they prepare the yearly guidelines of the books at the very beginning of the term and use these guidelines throughout the academic year. There aren't any special programmes for the teaching of second/ foreign languages in the kindergarten or in the pre-school education system.

4. Best practices-Case studies

The research concerning the second language acquisition is offering a large number of interpretations and explanations about concepts that are connected to the second language acquisition. These concepts are the basis for the teachers' understanding about the student population and offer them the opportunity to broaden their learning horizons in their view of teaching. Through the understanding of the different ways that children perform within a classroom teachers can be more productive and able to recognize specific "problematic" areas in language teaching that weren't visible before. This broadening of their classroom potential challenges them to be aware of the different pedagogical choices which are open to them. In order to promote school success in

multicultural educational settings there is a need for adjustments in these educational settings. Schools must take into account that children with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds present both a challenge and an opportunity to the preschool educators in order to cultivate multiple perspectives.

The practices that have a language basis are very useful for preschool children as there is evidence that children at a preschool age have already a substantial though not complete control over their first language. Additionally, children at the age of 3,4 or 5 have already formed an understanding of what language is used for and are aware of how the language that are using works. They have acquired a considerable amount of vocabulary words and phrase, they can use basic grammatical structures and they are already trying to transform their speech in terms of appropriateness of the language use in certain forms considering the where, when and with whom they are speaking. Children moreover, by the age of 5 already know how to use “scripts, personal reports, descriptions, event casts, plans, explanations and arguments” in some way education (Tabors & Snow, 1994, p.104). Although the sophistication and complexity of these skills will continue to develop as children grow older and begin school, the foundations of these skills have already been developed by the time a child attends preschool.

There are a number of schools worldwide that have tried to apply the theoretical framework of the second language acquisition to practices within classrooms with diverse student population. Some of these multilingual practices that were effective in teaching are presented below.

4.1. U.S.A.: Play and literacy learning in an early childhood classroom

A study that was conducted in a public pre-kindergarten class examined the role of play activities in the promotion of literacy on different languages. This study explored teaching in an early childhood kindergarten where children came from different countries. It has been stated by different researchers that play can have a significant contribution in all aspects of development. The study had as a starting point the fact that the playful character of activities that are used in preschool and kindergarten according to the literature, is more likely to result an engagement in more literacy behaviors during free-play time periods

if teachers introduce the literacy materials to children and prompt them to use those materials through the proper guidance. The interactive nature of play can become an effective factor towards the enhancement of literacy-enriched experiences for children. Also, the engagement in playful activities can provide multiple ways for children to learn by focusing on the development of a variety of skills and concepts. The development of these skills can take place in a comfortable and supporting environment where children feel capable of expressing themselves (Moon & Reifel, 2008, p.50).

In this study the teacher promoted play by engaging children in explorative, manipulative, fun and enjoyable activities, which included games or puzzles with pictures/words. Also, she used constructive play and dramatic play during circle or center time activities in the classroom (Moon & Reifel, 2008, p. 51-2). This study took place in a multicultural kindergarten classroom. The classroom's teacher was a white Anglo-American native-English speaker. The process of the data collection included research observations of the classroom, interviews with the classroom's teacher, informal conversations and self-reflective notes. The main goal of the study was to present the ways in which the teacher perceived the notion of play and how she managed to engage her students in activities of play in order to promote literacy skills in her classroom by using what she thought appropriate literacy activities. Because the pre-kindergarten class was multicultural for many children these playful activities were targeting in the development of the second language which in this case was the English language.

In order to engage children to play she used activities that involved learning in practice with materials that children could manipulate. By doing so she was able to draw children's attention and engage them to learning. The curriculum was transformed into materials that were visible and tangible. The classroom's furniture were often put in different places in order to transform the classroom to a new place and new materials were frequently presented to promote children's natural tendency to explore their environment. She often initiated conversations in which she was the facilitator, she provided children with toys and materials and she was also participating as a player during children's literacy learning in which children with diverse language backgrounds took place.

The main aim of the activities that teacher used in play-time was to create scaffolds for children's literacy development. At the beginning she provided children with step by step guidance on how to use materials to play and eventually she reduced the scaffolding and played together with the children. In the end, children were helping each other to learn literacy through play.

The play that teacher used in order to develop the learning of English as a second language was through spontaneous ways. She also used wooden unit block construction areas for play where she tried to reinforce children's literacy in second language by providing materials like pencils, papers, books and markers. She view spontaneous and exploratory play as having the same value with the structured play and she appreciated its value for teaching integrated lessons. She also made questions and suggestions in order to stimulate the children's reading and writing skills during this period of spontaneous play. In this way children could naturally connect literacy learning with their play situation (Moon & Reifel, 2008, p.56-60).

4.2. Washington/U.S.A.: Learning in English and in Spanish: a bilingual Head Start program

Skagit kindergarten is a network of kindergartens in Washington DC. Each center educates children mostly with Spanish cultural background from birth to age 5. In some of these centers the school leadership noticed that they were facing literacy problems with bilingual children. As a consequence they decided to implement practices in order to advance their offered program and change its approach to overcome this problem. The problem came in surface after 2002 when child assessments showed that although 3-year-old children that were speaking Spanish, entered kindergarten at a similar level with their peers that were speaking English after a year this level started to decrease (Youngquist & Martinez-Griego, 2009, p. 92).

The school leadership decided that in order to transform the language approach and learning in their classrooms they had to change their goals. They trained the school staff through in-service training courses where the teachers became aware of the research that was conducted and the results that have

been proposed for effective bilingual practices. They also, acquired basic theoretical information about bilingualism in terms of development, including the academic, cognitive, emotional, social and physical aspect (Youngquist & Martinez-Griego, 2009, p.93).

After the training, the school started the process of change. Firstly, they tried to raise the staff awareness. In this regard an outside expert was used to implement a workshop in order to persuade the teachers for the importance of the support for the learners' cultural background and first language. The expert placed emphasis in the communication with children in different ways: oral stories and folklore and additionally art, drama and music. The expert also noted the importance of involving the family and the community in this process of change in order to support children at home (Youngquist & Martinez-Griego, 2009, p.94).

The goal of the program was changed. The support of different languages had to take place in school and at home. Teachers asked for bilingual books and the school's bilingual library increased its capacity. Also, teachers were following training courses beneficial to the implementation of different teaching strategies focused on the two languages. From an organizational point of view, the school included four primary strategies:

- Hire bilingual staff whenever possible.
- Support monolingual staff in improving their language skills.
- Support monolingual staff in working toward a credential or degree.
- Engage language aids.

After the school leadership finished with the organizational work every school started to test new models in order to determine which was the best given program. This process involved the consideration of both the language and cultural experiences of the children as well as the bilingual language skills of the staff of each school. Each school followed the practices that best suited to its needs and its teacher's needs. The staff which was supported by the school leadership attended to monthly meetings in order to share information and reflection. In this context, a culture of sharing and support was created among the staff. They helped one another to ensure that strategies met program expectations.

The results from this planning and the change of vision of the kindergarten program were fruitful. An assessment of the children's literacy skills since the program changed showed a progress equal to or better than their English-speaking peers. Another, important aspect was that families understood the importance of their own language and its value. English and Spanish speaking families alike were excited about their children becoming fluent in two languages (Youngquist & Martinez-Griego, 2009, p.97).

The transformation of the preschool curriculum from an English immersion program to a bilingual program where the Spanish language also was part of the literacy and language skills were appreciated in both languages, was a success. A carefully designed stepwise program followed by a full support from both the staff and the leadership led to the following results:

- The school staff acquired useful information about language learning and curriculum approaches concerning bilingual/dual language educational approaches
- Support was provided for the encouragement of the use of bilingual and multicultural materials for children; parents and also additional staff was provided when needed, and
- The school hired a number of staff members with bilingual skills who were also educated in order to support the school vision; also, bilingual staff was used for the support of the monolingual staff

This intervention was mostly based on the encouragement of the staff to try and develop new strategies and expand their understanding about their student population. In this direction, the staff was receiving an ongoing support and was prompt to reflect upon and share the teaching practices with other staff. As a result, the school leadership was ensured that the strategies that were implemented in the curriculum were in accordance with the program expectations.

4.3. Canada: Cultural and linguistically inclusive approaches to curriculum: the case of a kindergarten

This research study was held in a multicultural Canadian morning kindergarten classroom of 27 children aged 4–5 years. Specifically, the Maple Leaf Public School is located in a northern suburb of Toronto. The majority of the school's student population are coming from cultural minorities. Hence, in most families English language was an added language and first languages were spoken at home. Most of the school teachers were white but there were also teachers from different parts of the world as Sri Lanka, India, Iran and China. The research questions were initiated by the fact that in contrast to the cultural, the linguistic capital of students is not perceived as a valuable form of literacy. Specifically, although there is support for the incorporation of the student's cultural capital in both extra-curricular and occasional curricular activities this is not the case for their language capital. This is because teachers often ignore their home languages and literacies by virtue of the commonly spread idea that first language acts as a negative factor in their academic achievement (Taylor, Bernhard, Garg & Cummins, 2008, p. 270, 276).

An inclusive pedagogical approach and language learning strategy that takes into account the first language of the learner is Dual Language Identity Texts. This learning strategy, includes texts written in both languages, the first and the second and it's cognitively challenging. This strategy recognizes and empowers the student's cultural identity. These texts can combine visual, written and oral items which students or their families choose to demonstrate and present. They can also include personal or cultural aspects of their identities because these texts are related to their own lives (Taylor et al., 2008, p.270).

In this study the curriculum for dual language texts aimed to the reinforcement of the cultural and linguistic capital of minority students. By taking into consideration students' identity these activities were expected to empower their cognitive and literacy skills in different ways. Also, teachers and families were responsible for the encouragement of their identity and learning. In the study an introductory meeting was included between the research team, teachers and administrators. In this meeting examples of inclusive pedagogy

were discussed. The families and their literacies were highly valued in the project (Taylor et al., 2008, p.278).

At the beginning of the school year the teacher together with the students discussed the family histories of migration and transnational ties on a display map of the world. Children were encouraged to write their names in the second language (English) and in their first language. These names were also placed outside the classroom door in order to be visible for teachers, other children and parents. As a result children were interested to stop and comment on these names and the different languages in which they were written and this was the first step towards the development of awareness of the linguistic diversity of the classroom. Inside the classroom the teacher also supported students to share their ideas in their first language (Taylor et al., 2008, p.277, 279).

Children were also motivated to write books in their first language and then in carpet time they were encouraged to share their books with one another. This sharing resulted to the children's excitement as they were not only listening to their peers but they were also able to share their own books. This process increased their enthusiasm and provided children with confidence and satisfaction about the books that they had created. They were involved in dialogues about the books that they had written and had the chance to read both the English and the first language sections of their books to the entire class. Also, a workshop was held by an expert in order to engage the families and their literacies. In this workshop parents and family members developed dual language stories that could be shared with children (Taylor et al., 2008, p.277-8).

The above mentioned literacy practices introduced multilingual students transnational interconnections and created cultural and faith-based communities of practice. This case study emphasizes to the vital part of families as partners in children's multiliteracies development (Taylor et al., 2008, p.289). The created dynamic cultural flows resulted to the increase of the comfort and the confidence that children felt when they used their first language in the classroom setting. This project was an example of how the idea of multilingualism was established through dual language book practices.

4.4. U.S.A.: Writing development in a multilingual kindergarten classroom

In Andie Cunningham's multilingual kindergarten class a teacher describes her experience in a classroom in which children typically spoke at least six different languages. From the beginning she believed that learning should be based on children's knowledge, experiences and needs and that children should be assisted in order to expand their knowledge and understanding about the value of literacy. Once she noticed that writing skills played an important role in children's literacy growth, she started paying more attention to the acquisition of the written language in order to expand children's overall literacy growth (Shagoury, 2009, p. 52).

Research findings suggest that bilingual children that are speaking two languages from an early age is more likely to create hypotheses about how first and second language works and thus they try to sort out the written language in both their first and the second language. Thus, it is very useful to allow children to express themselves in active ways in the written language. Processes of exploration about the ways in which written language works in different situations are carried out through hypotheses and when children are engaged in ways of reconstruction of the written language system it is more likely to make it their own. For these reasons, the teacher throughout the school year was prompting children to create their own story-books.

Children that were speaking a different language home than the one that was used at school were encouraged to use gestures, pictures and simple phrases when they wanted to communicate with other children or with the teacher. Some children were using movements and gestures to represent their drawings to the class. The drawing pictures led the children to make a slowly and steady transition to adding letters to them. They were also prompt to copy letters in the different languages that they were speaking and compare them by adding also their representative sounds (Shagoury, 2009, p. 53-4).

Gradually, the teacher asked children to try and explain their stories in their first language and then to translate it to the language of the class. Time was given to children that weren't comfortable to speak and express themselves. For this reason, reading and writing processes were applied to stimulate

conversation in order for children to find opportunities to share their interests and stories by responding to one another. The teacher was trying to guess the meaning of the children's stories by speaking out words in order for children to be aware of their meaning. This guessing allowed children to learn more words in a playful way. Writing, drawing and discussions were a comfortable way for children to share their interests and stories and communicate with each other. Children were also prompted to write on journals by using drawings about different stories (Shagoury, 2009, p. 55).

Children were using the first language in order to test hypotheses about the use of the second language in the written speech. An environment of positive communication was promoted for all children despite of their spoken language together with the fact that they were learning a second or even a third language. In order for the development of the dual language learner's writing to be enriched some suggestions for teachers can be proposed from the study's overview:

1. Each child must be seen as an individual. Every child has a unique writing character and its development reflects its distinctive qualities. Teachers have to develop friendships with children and know with whom every child works, their interests and their writing practices.

2. Children should be motivated to write and draw their own stories from the beginning and before they become proficient to speak in English.

3. Teachers should design their lessons in ways in which opportunities for sharing children's writings will take place not only among their peers but also among adults.

4. Time and space should be provided in children in order to feel more confident on testing their hypotheses about the written language.

5. The first language of the child should be appreciated and classroom activities can be performed in many different ways that promote the use of the first language.

6. Printed material in a variety of languages and alphabetic and logographic systems should be at a field of vision for all students (Shagoury, 2009, p. 57).

To conclude, this study shows that it is essential for children to feel that they belong to a learning community where their first language is appreciated and in which they are encouraged to communicate with each another. Learning tasks in order to make meaning can be performed when children through collaboration are encouraged to determine the tools and the tasks rather than by focusing on individual exercises.

4.5. Cyprus: Teaching foreign languages in preschool education: a PRO-CLIL approach to language learning

In the Cyprus educational system the language approach that in the recent years is promoted in order to teach a foreign language is CLIL. In this approach language learning is fostered through intercultural interactions by taking into account the cognitive components of the learning subject. The main purpose of this approach is not only to foster communication in a foreign language but also to cognitively challenge children in a certain language content (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p. 137).

The teaching of CLIL can be implemented through different strategies. One of these strategies is storytelling. Stories can be an essential part of the language teaching as they provide information not only for language and content but also for culture as well. Especially, for preschool children stories can become a comprehensible and memorable content associated to their experiences, interests and feelings. There is a variety of story topics that teachers can use in their classroom. What is more, these stories can beneficially be connected to the school's curriculum including animals, nature, games, family, environment, hobbies etc. (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p.137-8).

Through stories children can communicate and interact not only with the teacher but also with their peers. Also, when listening to a story children can react by using either verbal or non-verbal behaviors and thus express their ideas and construct knowledge in different ways. In order for this strategy to be effective, teachers must select carefully the stories and the materials that they will use together with the appropriate methodology depending on the class. In

particular, when teachers are selecting a story they should take into account the following: the story must have a clear storyline, plenty of repetition, opportunities for participation, helpful illustrations and the language should correspond to the linguistic level of the classroom (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p. 137-9, 142-3). Below some examples of good PRO-CLIL practices are presented in order to show the implementation of this language approach to early education in Cyprus.

This approach in pre-primary and primary age groups that involve storytelling activities is implemented mostly to promote curricular goals through a combination of a variety of subject areas. For example, Math, Geography, Science etc. (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p.145). Also, the learning takes place in the foreign language with the additional help of the native language whenever needed. There are different stages in which language activities can be implemented. These stages are: the pre-storytelling stage, the while-storytelling stage and the after-storytelling stage. In following paragraphs some examples of effective PRO-CLIL practices that teachers in Cyprus implemented will be presented.

Concerning the pre-storytelling stage, a good strategy that teachers used was the introduction to dolls and puppets. These dolls and puppets served as friends in order to set the scene for the storytelling and in parallel they stimulated children's natural curiosity. In the story "Monkey and Me" by Emily Gravett one teacher brought a monkey puppet which was alike with the one in the story and asked children to answer what they thought about the monkey's name, its residence and other relevant information. In another story "Handa's Surprise" a teacher introduced a black doll and ask children to discuss about her and her interests. The discussion took place in the first language and then continued to the foreign language during the presentation of the new vocabulary that would appear in the story (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p.148).

Concerning the while-storytelling, children were prompted by the teacher to understand the new vocabulary about animals through the use of cards which represented pictures of these animals. For example in the reading of the story "There was an old lady who swallowed the sea" by Pam Adams the picture of the lady was placed on the board and children had to put the sea creatures to the board in order to demonstrate the particular animals that the lady

swallowed. Other activities related to while-storytelling were the use of masks in order for children to perform certain actions of the stories or the “silent play” in which children had to adopt roles and imitate the details of the story while the teacher was reading (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p.149).

Lastly, in the after-storytelling stage teachers tried to connect the events of the story with children’s own interests and experiences. For example in the story “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” children created their own chart with their favourite fruits after they had discussed about their favourite fruit in the classroom. Additionally, in the story of Handa that was mentioned before children had the opportunity to learn through experience by creating Handa’s jewelry and dancing and singing a Kenyan song related to the story in order to comprehend the new knowledge (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p.152).

To conclude, children had the opportunity to learn through stories the new language in a friendly and enjoyable way. They were able to receive linguistic input through a variety of practices, for example by playing games or singing. The CLIL programmes that were presented can be an effective method to teach language to pre-primary and primary education (Ioannou-Georgiou & Verdugo, 2011, p. 154).

4.6. Suggestopedia

This is an original system, especially developed for studying of foreign languages, developed by Prof. Georgi Lozanov and it has been acknowledged in a world scale. At this system by the means for classical art, dance, theatre, game and much emotion are unlocked the reserves of the human mind and a quick building of knowledge is achieved, which then remain in the memory and can be quickly and easily accessed. Suggestopedia offers lessons to many languages including English, Spanish, German, France, Italian and Russian.

4.7. Europe: Language Rich Europe

“Language Rich Europe” is an international project developed jointly by 1,200 specialists in education, business, media and public services in 24 countries and regions of Europe. It was initiated by the British Council, and is

supported by the Program for Culture and Education of the European Commission.

This program aims to support intercultural dialogue and diversity in Europe where a huge variety and richness of languages exist. According to the programs' publication "Language Rich Europe. Trends in policies and practices for multilingual Europe" (2012) the overall objectives of "*Language Rich Europe*" which is co-funded by the European Commission, are:

- to facilitate the exchange of good practice in promoting intercultural dialogue and social inclusion through language teaching and learning
- to promote European co-operation in developing language policies and practices across several education sectors and broader society
- to raise awareness of the European Union and Council of Europe recommendations for promoting language learning and linguistic diversity across Europe.

4.8. Spain: "Baby Erasmus"

"Baby Erasmus" programs were formed to meet the needs of bilingual children. In these programs many children can participate from the age of 3. "Baby Erasmus" programs practice the guidelines recommended by the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. Some of these practices are:

- Create meaningful learning contexts. Storytelling (either stories or narratives in general) can be the perfect way to encourage listening, speaking and oral interaction.
- The iterative learning and / or imitation is really effective at this age, having to repeat such that says a certain character in the story, or to memorize a song or poem.
- The establishment of routines is important because it helps to structure what happens in class.
- A maximum immersion in the target language is very important; in this regard students learn the target language not only by the teacher but also with the help of a diverse range of resources such as songs, DVDs, cards, etc.

- The involvement of parents in the nursery and primary education is essential to clearly understand all the objectives of teaching and learning, thus ensuring mutual understanding between the school and parents.
- Continuity and advancement are factors that characterize primary education. Students should be motivated from both their school and their family to learn a foreign language. Therefore, “Baby Erasmus” covers the entire language training cycle (0-6 years) and later accompanied the students with extracurricular classes.

Conclusions

The European Union has stated in many reports over the last decade that multilingualism is an integral element of most of the European communities and this element should be taken into account when it comes to the design of language-based programs. In this regard, there are also many researches that have showed that multilingualism if supported appropriately can benefit individuals especially if it is introduced at an early age. Thus it is important for initiatives to be taken towards this direction.

This report takes from bibliographical research data and also data derived from the examination of case studies for best bi/multilingual practices at an early education level in order to show how important it is to develop policies that support multilingualism. From this state-of-the-art research it became evident that there are worldwide initiatives that have been developed at a school level or through the development of projects for the support of multilingualism. However, it seems that in a state-level, according to the data taken from partner countries, multilingual initiatives are far from being fully appreciated or achieved.

To conclude, students at an early age should find opportunities to develop their linguistic and cultural knowledge and thus become multilingual people in multilingual societies. In this direction, the aim of the project is to provide

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