

# The Montessori Method in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2020**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Učiteljski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:147:340993>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-07-20**

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

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SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

MATEA KLUBIČKA  
DIPLOMSKI RAD

THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE

Zagreb, rujan, 2020.

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DIPLOMSKI RAD

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Smjer: engleski jezik

Zagreb, rujan, 2020.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to present the Montessori Method of teaching with a focus on teaching English as a foreign language. The first part of the paper contains a theoretical overview of the Montessori Method in general and in the context of foreign language learning. The main principles and aims of the method are described. Also, the thesis presents activities and materials for language learning in a Montessori school. In addition, three alternative approaches, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia and Helen Doron are presented and compared to the Montessori Method. In the second part of the study, previous research on the topic of Montessori Method in teaching English in the primary and pre-primary educational institutions in various contexts is reviewed. Also, articles which suggest implementing Montessori's values in public primary and pre-school education are presented.

**Key words:** Montessori Method, teaching English as a foreign language, primary school education, alternative teaching methods

## SAŽETAK

Cilj ovog rada je predstaviti Montessori metodu kao alternativni način podučavanja s naglaskom na podučavanje engleskog jezika kao stranog jezika. Rad je podijeljen u dva dijela. Prvi dio rada donosi teorijski pregled Montessori metode u kontekstu podučavanja engleskog jezika kao stranog jezika. Opisana su glavna polazišta i karakteristike navedene metode. Nadalje, predstavljeni su materijali i aktivnosti koji se koriste u Montessori školama za podučavanje jezika. U prvom dijelu rada su također prikazane tri alternativne pedagogije, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia i Helen Doron i uspoređene s Montessori metodom podučavanja. U drugom dijelu rada analizirani su članci na temu Montessori metoda u poučavanju engleskog jezika u školskom i predškolskom obrazovanju. Opisani su i članci koji opisuju i predlažu primjenu Montessori načela u predškolsko i školsko obrazovanje.

**Ključne riječi:** Montessori metoda, poučavanje engleskog jezika kao stranog jezika, odgoj i obrazovanje u osnovnoj školi, alternativne metode podučavanja

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
SAŽETAK .....	4
1. INTRODUCTION .....	7
2. Maria Montessori .....	8
3. The Montessori Method .....	10
3.1. The Sensitive Periods .....	12
3.2. Stages of Development.....	16
4. Basic Principles of Montessori Education .....	17
4.1. The “Prepared Environment” .....	18
4.2. The Educated Teacher .....	19
4.3. The Child’s Freedom and Development of Discipline.....	21
4.4. Montessori Materials .....	22
4.4.1. Montessori Materials for Language Learning .....	23
5. Montessori Curriculum (Important Didactical Views of the Organization of Learning) .....	27
5.1. Work Periods.....	28
5.2. Daily and Weekly Plans .....	29
5.3. Assessment Methods .....	29
6. Other Alternative Methods in Comparison to the Montessori Method .....	29
6.1. Waldorf.....	29
6.2. Reggio Emilia.....	31
7. The Montessori Method and Foreign Language Instruction.....	32
7.1. Helen Doron .....	32
7.2. Overview of Studies .....	34
7.3. Implementing Montessori’s Values in Teaching English as a Foreign Language .....	39
8. The Montessori Method in Teaching English as a Foreign language in the Croatian Context .....	44
8.1. Foreign Language Curricula in Croatian Montessori Kindergartens .....	45
DISCUSSION .....	47
CONCLUSION .....	49

REFERENCES.....	50
IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA .....	53

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, in the time of globalization, with English as a primary language of communication, there is a high demand for learning English as a second language at an early age. There are many teaching methods available for teaching English around the world (Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia, Communicative Language Teaching, etc.), one of which is the Montessori Method. It was established by Maria Montessori at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, it has inspired many educational experts, teachers, educators and parents all around the world, who viewed this way of teaching as an appropriate answer to the developmental needs of children. The basic principles of the Montessori Method mirror some of the alternative methods which were on the rise during that period in Europe: hands-on experience and active learning, freedom for children and teachers and abandoning strict conventional teaching methods (Matijević, 2001).

Montessori focused education on the child, because she believed that the child carries an intrinsic desire to learn. “Help me do it myself” is one of the core principles of the Montessori Method which Montessori teachers and educators follow to this day. Another core principle is the environment prepared according to developmental stages of children which is created to encourage children to become more independent, patient and organized. The prepared environment is created by the teacher or educator, who is an essential part of this method. The Montessori teacher plays a role of an unobtrusive leader, offering children guidance and help when needed, leaving them the freedom engage in constructive individual work. In Montessori schools, children have the freedom to choose the learning materials, the workplace, to move around and to work at their own pace without any interference from the teacher or other children. The child’s individual work is respected, and children, even though they have a lot of freedom, are taught to respect their peers’ work and to be patient with each other.

The aim of this thesis is to present a theoretical overview of the basic principles of Montessori Method and examine its effects on teaching English as a foreign language by analysing previous studies done on this topic.



## **1. Maria Montessori**

Maria Montessori was born on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August in 1870 in Chiaravalle, Italy. Her parents were Alessandro and Renilda Montessori and she was their only child (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997). The family moved to Rome when Maria was twelve, which meant that she could receive a good education. Even though her parents wanted her to become a teacher, as it was expected from a woman at that time, she protested and gained entrance in school for natural sciences and technology, which, until then, only male students could attend. It was during that time that she found an interest in sciences, especially biology which inspired her to study medicine and apply to the University of Rome (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997). Even though it was a mostly male populated field, and despite prejudices of the 19<sup>th</sup> century towards women and opposition of her father, she gained entrance to the medical school. In 1896 Maria Montessori graduated to become the first woman Doctor of Medicine in Italy (Britton, 1995).

Upon graduating she first worked as an assistant in the San Giovanni Hospital. In 1897 she worked as a doctor at the University of Rome. While working at the clinic, she encountered weak-minded children who were put into asylums among the criminally insane, far away from other people, because they were unable to function in school or their families. These children were locked away with no sensory stimulation of any kind (Britton, 1995). During one of her visits, Maria Montessori saw the children playing with crumbs on the floor after lunch. She realised that the children had nothing to play with and that they had the need to explore the world with their hands. (Britton, 1995). This idea, that the path to intellectual development is through the hands, is a major theme in her Method (Britton, 1995, 8). She began to work with children and became aware that weak-mindedness is at first a pedagogical problem and that care for physical health is not enough for child development (Philipps, 1999).

In 1899, at the Orthophrenic School in Rome, she trained teachers in a special method of observation and education of mentally disabled children (Britton, 1995). While searching for information about the treatment of mentally deficient children, she discovered the work of two French doctors, Jean Itard and Edouard Seguin. Itard studied deaf-mutes but he was better known for educating and socializing a boy who was found abandoned in the forests of Aveyron, in France. His approach was to

stimulate the boy's mind systematically through the senses (Britton, 1995). Seguin, Itard's student, devised a sequence of muscular exercises to bring about a change in behaviour and so educate the child through a method he described as physiological (Britton, 1995, 10). Based on their work and information she had gathered from her research and observation of the children at the clinic, Maria Montessori devised special materials and methods for educating special needs children. After two years, special needs children that she taught passed public exams for regular schools. She raised a question of the quality of education for children without disabilities if special needs children could reach their level after only two years of learning (Philipps, 1999).

These findings raised her interest in education even more, and in 1901 she left her work at the Orthophrenic School and started studying pedagogy, psychology, and anthropology at the University of Rome (Britton, 1995). Seitz & Hallwachs (1997) say that one of the reasons why Maria Montessori left the clinic was of a personal matter, i.e. she fell in love with her colleague, Dr. Guiseppe Montesano, and they had a son, whom she named Mario. Britton (1995) says that Mario was brought up by foster parents, but later was adopted by his mother. One of her biographers, Rita Kramer stated that Maria Montessori 'deprived of the experience of caring for her own child turned her attention increasingly to ways of meeting the needs of other children' (Britton, 1995, 10). M. Montessori finished her study in 1904 as a professor of anthropology (Philipps, 1999).

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1906, in San Lorenzo, following Montessori's instructions, the first Children's House, called 'Casa dei Bambini', was built. Maria Montessori got an opportunity to test her theories with healthy children (Philipps, 1999). The school was equipped with furniture fitted for children and specially designed sensorimotor material. The children had freedom in choosing their own activities and worked at their own pace. Montessori observed that healthy children loved to play with the materials that she had designed for special needs children. The play was spontaneous and long-lasting, the children showed deep concentration and involvement in the activities (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997). In the following two years, other children's houses were founded. Her methods appeared to have the same effect on all children, no matter what their background was. She proved that 'all children were capable of achieving and becoming independent learners when taught by her methods' (Britton, 1995, 11).

The world's press wrote about her achievements and the success of her method. She quickly became internationally recognized. In 1909 she published her first book called *The Method of Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to Infant Education and the Children's House*, later retitled *The Discovery of the Child*. The book described in detail her method for schools and nurseries, and was translated into over twenty languages (Britton, 1995).

In 1909, Montessori started training teachers and giving lectures as an introduction to the Montessori Method. Her first lecture in Rome was followed by lectures in London, Barcelona, Paris and India. Her lectures were attended by participants from all around the world (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997). Her method became widely known and similar schools started to open in America, Japan and European countries (Britton, 1995). In 1929 she founded *AMI – Association Montessori Internationale* with her son, Mario Montessori, in Amsterdam. Shortly after the beginning of World War II Montessori went to India, where she remained during the war years. As a result, India is a great Montessori centre to this day. After WWII, new Montessori institutions were built and the old ones were reopened (Philipps, 1999). Upon her return to Europe, Montessori continued to travel extensively, teaching and lecturing, and she was honoured by many countries with royal, civic and academic awards (Britton, 1995). She was nominated for the Nobel prize for peace in 1949. Maria Montessori passed away in Holland in 1952 (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997).

After her death, the Montessori Method continued to grow and has done so to this day. Britton (1995) says that in October 1991 all the major Montessori associations met in New Orleans and formed an umbrella organization called *The Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education*.

## **2. The Montessori Method**

The pedagogy of Maria Montessori is based on scientific observations of the child's spontaneous learning, encouragement of the child's actions, and respect for the child's independence. Montessori sees and respects the whole child. The basic principle is to help the child in all developmental stages of physical, psychological and spiritual growth (Philipps, 1999).

Montessori (2003) criticized the school system by saying that the children are constricted by instruments that are destroying their bodies and minds. She claimed that

desks, rewards and punishments served only to bring discipline into the classroom which meant not moving and being silent. She believed that those methods do not allow children to learn and grow.

Maria Montessori based her concept of learning on the premise that all children pass through distinct stages of development from birth to eighteen. Every child enters each stage at a different age. However, each stage follows the one before and relies on it, and no stage can be omitted (Britton, 1995). Maria Montessori believed that every child carries an individual, secret intrinsic plan of growth that directs the child's physical, spiritual, and mental development. She called them "secret mechanisms", which represent inner potentials for learning, that, combined with the right stimuli from the environment, lead the child's development (Schäfer, 2015). According to Matijević (2001), these inner powers for self-development can be activated only if the children are surrounded with an appropriate environment. Therefore, the role of the teacher is to create a "prepared environment" and materials which encourage children to learn by themselves.

According to Matijević, 2001, the "prepared environment" in a Montessori classroom is adapted to children's age and stage of development. It is a stimulating environment which provides the child with simple and engaging materials for learning made from natural materials. The materials vary in its complexity depending on the child's level of learning. The children have freedom in choosing the materials and duration of work. The teacher often works with the child individually, however he or she does not impose the way of working with the material and does not insist on correcting mistakes. The intervention of the teacher is reduced to a minimum, the teacher is a moderator between the didactic material and the child and helps the child to develop through its own effort.

Britton (1995) states that Maria Montessori realized that all children have an inborn motivation to learn and that they cannot be stopped from learning. The learning process starts from birth and the fundamental processes of how children learn are laid down very early in life. Children learn through spontaneous play and experimenting with things in the world around them. Montessori observed that all children learn through active participation, by being involved in a practical way, and by attempting to do something themselves, particularly by using their hands. She put great emphasis on

the connection between the brain and movement, she believed the process of learning had three parts: the brain, the senses and the muscles, and that all three must co-operate for learning to take place.

Montessori also recognized the child's need to repeat an action over and over again in order to perfect the actions. When the child continuously repeats an activity, he/she is building up automatic patterns which will become fixed as mental images. This can help the child to learn a language. If the parent constantly talks to a child about what he is doing and narrates the events that are happening to him, he/she will eventually learn the words connected to the actions (Britton, 1995).

Britton (1995) states that from her observations of children at different stages of development and exposure to children from different cultures, Montessori identified "the universal characteristics of childhood" which apply to all children, no matter what their background is. These characteristics are:

- "All children have 'absorbent' minds
- All children pass through 'sensitive' periods
- All children want to learn
- All children learn through play/work
- All children pass through several stages of development
- All children want to be independent" (Britton, 1995, p. 12).

### **3.1. The Sensitive Periods**

From her observations of children, Maria Montessori noticed that all children pass through a phase when they keep repeating an activity for, what seems, no apparent reason. They become so immersed in what they are doing, that, for the time being, it is the only thing in which they are interested. Montessori called this phenomenon the polarization of attention. It is the child's ability to intensively concentrate on an activity and enjoy it. She stated that this behaviour should be supported and encouraged because it is the child's way of learning about the world around him/her (Schäfer, 2015).

Montessori observed that during the first six years of their life all children pass through sensitive periods. Philipps (1999) explains that the sensitive periods are

periods in which a special tendency to receive certain types of stimuli is expressed, to which the organism responds spontaneously, and which periodically occur during development.

Britton (1995) offers a good example that explains the sensitive periods. When going to the supermarket, many parents may notice that their two-year-old wants to touch everything around him. He wants to pick something up, touch it, turn it around, try to find out what it is and then put it back, and then probably do it again. According to Montessori, this behaviour is a sign of a sensitive period. The child has a need to develop new knowledge and skills through senses. If a parent tries to stop this behaviour the child might be annoyed and throw a tantrum which is his way of showing that he has an unsatisfied need to learn. Once the child has acquired all the knowledge he needs, the phase passes and another one occurs.

Maria Montessori identified six sensitive periods:

- Sensitivity to order
- Sensitivity to language
- Sensitivity to walking
- Sensitivity to the social aspects of life
- Sensitivity to small objects
- Sensitivity to learning through the senses (Britton, 1995, p. 13).

Neural connections in the brain develop best when the child is learning, i.e. when the offer from the environment corresponds with the child's readiness to learn and stage of development (Schäfer, 2015). The Montessori Method is about supporting these learning periods with a stimulating environment and not just letting them pass. If done right, the child can learn more in one year than a student does during his or her whole study – of course concerning completely different learning contents (Schäfer, 2015). However, Montessori said that development is individual, not all children are the same, each child will go through the periods with different intensity, at different pace and in different order.

### **Sensitivity to order**

Sensitivity to order appears in the first year and continues through the second year. During this period, children strive to categorize all their experiences, and it is easier

for them to do this if there is order in their life. They also like to be handled in a similar way, by the same person or people and in a familiar environment. The baby at this age has a need for consistency and familiarity so that he can orientate himself and construct a mental picture of the world around him. Also, in this period children may get very upset by changes, such as going on a holiday or moving to a new house (Britton, 1995). Because of the child's need for order, Maria Montessori highlighted the importance of nurtured and harmonious environment. Even the Montessori materials in Montessori schools have their special place and order on the shelves so the children can easily find them (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997).

### **Sensitivity to language**

Montessori strongly believed that a child should be taught a language since the day he/she is born. She was a forerunner of a theory that children are born with a natural capacity for language and communication and therefore possess inborn structures that enable them to make sense of the sounds and words they hear from an early age (Britton, 1995).

The sensitive period for language begins at birth. According to the Montessori theory, the sensitivity to language appears the earliest and lasts the longest. The child learns the language from his environment without understanding, teaching or visible effort (Philipps, 1999). The ability to use language plays a vital role in all subsequent intellectual growth. From their birth, babies watch their parents talk and listen to their voice, absorbing all the time. During this period, the child is rapidly acquiring language. By the age of six, the child will have acquired a large vocabulary, basic sentence patterns and the inflections and accent of language with almost no direct teaching (Britton, 1995). However, this does not mean that the child has achieved full language competence, he/she will continue to learn more complex sentence structures and extend his vocabulary throughout childhood. There are studies which show that if the child in this period is not exposed to language, it can lead to irrevocable damage. The child could even suffer limitations in his intellectual growth (Britton, 1995). For this reason, Maria Montessori believed that it was very important for adults to converse with children as much as possible, to narrate what is happening and what they are doing, continually enriching their language and learning new words (Britton, 1995).

The sensitive period for language represents a period in a child's life when a child has a predisposition for language learning. During this period the child will respond only to a certain type of stimuli at certain times.

- Until the 1<sup>st</sup> year of life – sensitivity to speech – from unarticulated voices to first words
- From 2 to 3 years old – the child uses speech to articulate his/her thoughts
- 4 years old – sensitivity to writing
- 5 years old – sensitivity to reading
- 6 years old – sensitivity to grammatical structures (Buczyinski et al., 2019).

### **Sensitivity to walking**

The child moves from the very beginning. When the child first learns to walk, he/she has the need to practice and perfect the skill. Young children have the need to repeat an action, this is the reason why the child will walk just for the purpose of walking. He is fascinated with the action and will repeat it until he perfects the skill and does not have the need to do it anymore. Also, very young children are capable of walking long distances if they do it at their own pace. If a parent goes for a walk with a child and walks at the child's pace, stopping when the child wants to and moving when he is ready, it is very possible that they will cover a great amount of ground (Britton, 1995).

### **Sensitivity to social aspects of life**

Around the age of three, the child becomes aware that he/she is part of a group. He becomes more socially active and begins to show interest in other children of his age, and gradually starts to play with them. Montessori noticed “that at this stage, children began to model themselves on adult social behaviour and gradually acquire the social norms of their group”. (Britton, 1995, p. 16).

### **Sensitivity to small objects**

At around age one the child pays great attention to small objects. At this stage the child will pick up any small object that **he**/she finds, observe it, touch it and probably put it in his mouth. This urge to pay attention to detail comes from the need to learn. By paying attention to small details, the child gradually connects information and builds his understanding of the world (Philipps, 1999).



## **Sensitivity to learning through the senses**

From the moment a baby is born he receives impressions of the world around him through his five senses. A special period for practising and perfecting sensory abilities is from the age of two to four, especially for artistic expression. It is important to give the child the opportunity to practice his sensory abilities, by doing so the child builds a foundation for artistic creativity and clear perception (Philipps, 1999).

### **3.2. Stages of Development**

According to Britton (1995), Maria Montessori described three stages of development from birth to the age of eighteen during which children learn qualitatively in different ways.

The first stage lasts from birth to the age six. During the first three years the child learns primarily through what Montessori called an “unconscious” or “**absorbent**” mind. During this period the child unconsciously soaks up information from the environment, learning about it at a rapid rate. This way of learning is unique to the young child and lasts for the first six years of his life. All impressions made on the child’s mind shape and form it, therefore having an impact on his future development. Because of that, all early experiences are of vital importance for the child. Montessori considered this the most important part of the three stages. From age three to six the child develops a “conscious” mind, he is still absorbing information from his environment, however, he has now developed a memory and a will. Now, the child is able to control his actions and express what he wants. The child’s mind is still “absorbent” but now shows a conscious will to learn. In this phase, the child can easily acquire new skills. During this period, the child has a sensitivity to language, and acquires it from observing and listening to others. That is why Montessori believed that it is very important for parents to converse with children, to give them every opportunity to express themselves and enrich their language (Britton, 1995). Seitz & Hallwachs (1997) state that Montessori called the first stage a “creative” period. During this period the child learns through all his senses. The learning process is unconscious, and the child learns about the world through motor movements and feelings. In order to allow the child to satisfy his needs, the parents and educators should give the child freedom to act on his own. In Montessori pedagogy, freedom means freedom of choice in an environment that is suited for children’s needs.

The second stage starts at age six and ends at age twelve. During this period the child is exposed to academic knowledge. Montessori called this stage the period for acquisition of culture. During this period, the child becomes more self-aware and starts to seek social activity. Therefore, it is important to encourage the child to enrol in activities in which he can gain social experiences. Furthermore, in this period, children start to understand rules and expect them to equally apply to everyone (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1997). The child is now ready to learn how to write, read and calculate. He is interested in the world around him and wants to learn more about it, he explores the world by asking questions and seeking explanations of more abstract topics like truth and death. Furthermore, his intellectual interest for life around him will depend on opportunities that he is surrounded by, therefore, it is important to include a complete picture of the world in his education. During this period the child is expected to “explore a wider world and develop rational problem solving, cooperative social relations, imagination, aesthetics, and complex cultural knowledge” (Edwards, 2002, p. 10). Moreover, the child starts developing moral consciousness and starts to wonder about right and wrong as well as how to act in certain social situations (Schäfer, 2015).

The third stage starts at age twelve and ends at age eighteen. This is the period for the acquisition of independence. Many changes take place during this period which can be difficult for the child to go through alone. Even though the child is older he still needs as much attention and care as when he was under the age of six (Britton, 1995). The child is becoming a young adolescent who is seeking his position in society and questioning everything that he has learned. Puberty is an unstable and intensive period of development which can cause stress and uncertainty. Students want to be recognized and appreciated by adults. However, when discussing it, they are not seeking advice from adults but counselling in a way “help me do it myself” (Schäfer, 2015). During this period, children “reconstruct themselves as social beings and are humanistic explorers, real-world problem solvers and rational seekers of justice” (Edwards, 2002, p. 10).

### **3. Basic Principles of Montessori Education**

According to Lillard (2014), three basic principles of Montessori education could be defined:

- Prepared environment

- Educated teacher
- A child's freedom and development of discipline

The role of the Montessori pedagogy is to create the right working environment. It is easier for children to concentrate on their work, encourage and help each other grow in calm and relaxed environment than in a noisy classroom filled with aggression and the struggle for a better position (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996). If the child feels good in his surroundings, if he is not afraid and is allowed to make a mistake in order to find the right solution to a problem, he will be able to use the opportunity provided to him by the freedom of choice (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996).

#### **4.1. The “Prepared Environment”**

One of the basic principles of Montessori pedagogy is the prepared environment. Maria Montessori has written specific instructions on how to arrange a Montessori Classroom and how the teachers should behave.

According to Philipps (1999), the prepared environment is an environment which is suited to children's needs and which offers everything a child needs for his physical, mental and spiritual development. Learning materials must be appropriate to the child's abilities in the sense that they encourage his development. The learning materials are organized by complexity, they guide the child from easier to more difficult exercises, from concrete materials to symbolical materials and then abstract materials, and from an easier to more demanding level. Montessori materials are made according to strict standards prescribed by AMI. The materials should encourage the child to learn and work with them. A Montessori teacher introduces the materials to the child and encourages them to discover all its potentials.

Maria Montessori believed that environment which is prepared for the child is both a sign of freedom and an educational tool. She provides the child with an opportunity to play or work with the material in a way which he finds the most comfortable. This means that the child can move around freely during a lesson, which is why the classroom must be arranged in a way which allows children to move. Research in neuropsychology shows that the environment affects learning (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996). Therefore, not allowing the child to move around the classroom and explore its possibilities prevents the child from learning. A child develops only if he is provided with an opportunity to gain experiences on his own. The prepared environment offers

children the opportunity to experience that learning can also be something beautiful (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996).

According to Philipps (1999), a well-prepared environment makes the work of a teacher easier. When all children are independent in their work, the teacher can dedicate his/her time to smaller groups or an individual child, he or she can help when needed or demonstrate an activity. In this way the teacher gives an example of calm and balanced work.

In the Montessori classroom tables and chairs are suited to the size and strength of children, they should be able to pick them up and move them around the room. For individual work, children can use small tables or carpets as workstations which are kept on special stands where children can easily reach them (Philipps, 1999). Also, the room is decorated according to Montessori aesthetic criteria, with real photographs of nature, works of art as well as children's written works and paintings. Furthermore, the room is large enough so the children can move freely, walk and dance. In the room can also be found plants and, if possible, a classroom pet, that the children can take care of with the teacher. Next to the wall are stacked open cupboards full of materials for children's independent work. All parts of the materials in the classroom should be clean, complete and neatly stored in the right order on the shelves so the materials can be easily found (Philipps, 1999). This teaches the children the importance of taking care of the materials and handling them with responsibility.

Montessori emphasizes that the prepared environment should be a harmonious, unique whole, and not just a collection of different things, toys, and materials. The prepared environment allows children to discover the world with joy and learn through experiments (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996).

#### **4.2. The Educated Teacher**

In a Montessori school, the teacher's role is very different than in the 'traditional' school. A Montessori teacher is not a lecturer, he or she is an organizer and helper. The role of the teacher in the Montessori Method is integral to the learning process. The teacher gives initial instructions at the beginning of a lesson, but then he or she leaves the children to work on the activities independently. Occasionally, he or she gives pointers and motivates the children. The teacher demonstrates how to work with materials, and then the children choose the materials to their liking and work at their

own pace. The child has the freedom to choose the order and duration of specific activities. Montessori pedagogy is child-centred, which means that the choice of methods and contents of work is based on the needs of the child (Matijević, 2000).

The Montessori teacher should be an indirect leader, he/she should allow the children to build their personality, to find their rhythm, to make their own decisions, and to become independent (Philipps, 1999). This means supporting the child with positive reinforcement, when the child needs it, encouragement, and freedom of choice. Furthermore, according to Philipps (1999), the Montessori teacher must have a good nature, he/she should be cheerful and gentle. Also, it is very important how the teacher presents himself, he/she should be attentive in speech and gestures, calm, and patient. He/she should take care of his appearance; his/her clothes must not distract the children from the materials. It is also very important that he/she has good communication skills, especially with the parents. Children adapt their behaviour to the behaviour of adults (Philipps, 1999). Therefore, the teacher should always know what is happening in the child's home so he/she could better understand the child's behaviour in school. The Montessori teacher must be aware of him/herself and his/her behaviour around children. Philipps (1999) states that a good Montessori teacher understands the Montessori theory, the child's development periods and sensitive periods and uses that knowledge to recognize the child's needs and adjust to them. He/she knows how to use and demonstrate the learning materials. He demonstrates the learning materials always in the same way, without explaining the process, allowing the child to see and understand how to use materials by himself. Also, the teacher does not impose his ideas on how the child should learn, but he gives the child the freedom to discover his own way of learning.

In the Montessori classroom children can freely and spontaneously choose the material they will work with and decide for how long and how many times they will work with it by themselves (Matijević, 2001). The teacher will sometimes suggest an activity to the children, and if they accept it, the teacher retreats. The teacher often works with the child individually however, he does not impose a way of working with the material and does not insist on correcting mistakes (Matijević 2001). The teacher will wait for the child to spot the mistake on his own and give him an opportunity to find a solution without any guidance. The child must not feel as if the teacher was "above" him. However, the teacher is merely a connection between the didactic

material and the child. This way of teaching encourages the child to become more independent in his/her learning and develops his/her critical thinking..

According to Philipps (1999) the responsibilities of the Montessori teacher are as follows:

- To preserve order and monitor the learning materials in the prepared environment.
- To know how to use and demonstrate the learning materials.
- To assist the child in his own natural process of self-development.
- To know how to appropriately prepare a rich, real and always changing learning environment which will enrich the child's experiences and interests.
- To observe the atmosphere in the classroom and make sure that other children do not disturb the child who is in a state of deep concentration.
- To know how to indirectly help the child without excessive involvement in the child's work.
- To help the child when he is choosing the learning materials.
- To respect the state of deep concentration – the child must not be disturbed in any way. The teacher must not get involved in solving a problem, only if the child asks him to.
- To address the child when he has completed a task and give him a word or a smile of encouragement.

#### **4.3. A child's Freedom and Development of Discipline**

“Help me do it myself” is one of the core principles of Montessori's pedagogy. Maria Montessori observed that children do not want to be served, they want to be independent. Children want to learn, but on their own. The role of the teacher is to help the child to become independent by allowing the child to make mistakes and correct them on his own. In Montessori schools, discipline must come through liberty. Montessori believed that children should be given more freedom in school and in everyday life (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996).

According to Philipps (1999), in her schools, Maria Montessori gave the children the freedom of feeling, thinking, and decision making. By freedom, she considered the

inner freedom of action and movement that all people have. With her method, Montessori frees the child of things that limit his spontaneity. The child is encouraged to become independent. Instead of external guidance the teacher guides the child indirectly, giving him autonomy. Montessori believed that the child is free if he is familiar with his environment. Working with the materials in the Montessori environment teaches the child how to connect with the reality and encourages his willingness to commit. By systematically encouraging the child to commit, the teacher affects the child's development of the ability to act freely. We give the child freedom by creating the prepared environment in which he can reach the desired goals. Furthermore, Philipps (1999) also says that freedom must be learned, it is a developmental process in which one learns independence, discipline and responsibility. Responsibility means discipline and self-control. If the child is given freedom to choose the activities he wants to work on and manages to finish it by himself, he practices decision-making and builds his autonomy and independence.

Schäfer (2015) states that freedom must not be misunderstood, giving the child freedom does not mean that everything is allowed, on the contrary, freedom needs significant boundaries. The child is faced with these boundaries in the limited number of materials and in the prepared environment which is divided in workstations (Schäfer, 2015). Thus, the child is given freedom in an environment that is created for him to explore his limits.

According to Philipps (1999) we need freedom in order to practice responsibility and need the ability to be responsible in order to really be free. For the Montessori Method, the parents and the teacher also need to be disciplined and responsible, because the children look up to them as role models and learn from them what it means to be free and how to live in freedom.

#### **4.4. Montessori Materials**

Philipps (1999) says that Montessori classrooms are equipped with specially designed materials created from different materials such as wood, leather, paper, metal, etc. Maria Montessori based the design of these didactic materials on her observations of children and the works of Itard and Séguin.

According to Matijević (2001), the classroom environment should be arranged and customized according to the needs of the child. Children's basic psychological needs

are movement, order, language and love for the environment. To meet these needs, every Montessori classroom should have: materials from everyday life (materials for cleaning, locking the door, button fastening, etc.), movement development materials, sensory development materials (especially for touch and listening), language materials, and math materials (Matijević, 2001). These materials are colour coded and neatly arranged in the classroom so that the children can easily find and reach them.

Also, according to Seitz & Hallwachs (1996) there is only one set of each set of materials in a Montessori classroom. If a child wants to work with a certain material, and if he finds that somebody else is using it, the child is faced with a choice; the child can either wait for the other child to finish with the activity, join the activity or postpone the activity for the next day (Seitz and Hallwachs, 1996). In this way, children learn how to organize their time and practice patience.

Philipps (1999) states that each set of Montessori materials includes the ability to spot errors. The ability to spot errors is an important principle of Montessori pedagogy. The material is designed so that children can find a solution or a way to a solution on their own by direct or indirect error control (Philipps, 1999). The child is learning by making mistakes, he/she can solve a task only if he/she solved all the previous tasks correctly. It is important to give a child the opportunity to spot a mistake on his own. Spotting and solving a mistake educates the child, it is a requirement for careful, independent, and concentrated work.

#### **4.4.1. Montessori Materials for Language Learning**

As already mentioned, Maria Montessori developed a standardized set of materials for various areas, e.g. mathematics, geography, for everyday life and for the school's primary language. However, Montessori never developed a standardized set of materials or a concept for foreign language learning in Montessori schools. Therefore, the teachers were mostly the ones to decide how to implement foreign language learning in a Montessori school (Winnefeld, 2012). Nowadays, for example, in the Montessori Primary School "Barunice Dedee Vranyczany" Zagreb, Croatia, some lessons are taught in English as a part of the Cambridge program. The subjects included are English, Math and Science. The lessons are conducted within the basic groups, as additional classes for the subject of science, and during the free time period in the morning (<http://www.os-montessori-bdvranyczany-zg.skole.hr/nastava/posebnosti>).



In a Montessori school, a language is first taught through speaking, then writing and, finally, reading. In the field of language teaching in a Montessori school, there are four groups of materials:

- The first group - introduction and preparation for reading and writing
- The second group - total reading – reading with comprehension
- The third group - introduction to the parts of speech
- The fourth group - reading analysis – sentence structure analysis

Most of the materials are introduced according to the principle of a three-period lesson, the three steps or periods help the child to learn vocabulary and concepts. The three periods are:

1. Naming or introducing the object by the teacher
2. Recognizing or identifying the object by the child
3. Naming or remembering the name of the object by the child.

The materials will bring the wanted success and inner satisfaction to children only if offered in the right way and time. All the Montessori materials are a means with which the child explores the language and helps him to expand, deepen and understand the language he is learning (Buczynski et al., 2019). By using the concrete material for language, the child can expand his vocabulary and awareness of the mother tongue or gradually master a foreign language (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996). Montessori developed materials that encourage speaking, naming and describing, composing words with letters and practising writing. Also, materials for writing and reading names of objects, and materials for written expression of thoughts children learn a language from listening, speaking, reading and writing lessons (Philipps, 1999). Materials and activities used in a Montessori school for language learning are: “metal shapes and inserts, talking about the prepared environment, speaking during practical life exercises, speaking while working with materials for sensory development, telling stories, conversations, sandpaper letters, distinguishing sounds, moveable alphabet, writing, reading, word classes, grammar box and sentence structure” (Philipps, 1999, p. 100).

Because of the lack of literature on how to teach a foreign language in a Montessori school, the following paragraph(s) present some of the Montessori materials and activities for teaching a primary language.

### **Listening Materials and Activities**

In her book *Montessori Play and Learn: A Parents' Guide to Purposeful Play from Two to Six* Britton (1995) describes one of the Montessori activities for practising listening called the Silence Game. Maria Montessori developed this activity while working with partially deaf children. She stood at one side of the class and softly called out the name of each child in turn, when the child heard his name, she went quietly to him. Because their hearing was impaired, the children had to listen very carefully and be very quiet as well. Montessori then tried this activity with healthy children. On her way to the classroom she met a woman carrying a baby, she took the baby and carried it into the classroom. When students came up to her to look at the baby, she told them: 'Look how still the baby lies. Can you be as quiet as he is?' She was surprised when the students became very quiet. From that moment she played the Silence Game with the children, she noticed how much the children enjoyed it and how rested they appeared after it. The children can also be asked to stay very quiet and listen carefully to the sounds around them. After a minute or more, the teacher asks the children what they have heard and talk about it. However, the quiet time must not be imposed on the children, it must be mutually agreed. This activity helps children to become more attuned to different sounds around them and to develop control, also it is good for the child's auditory awareness.

### **Speaking Materials and Activities**

Philipps (1999) states that in a Montessori school pictures are often used for learning new vocabulary. The pictures are grouped according to concepts found in the human environment, in the world of animals and plants. The names of objects, animals and plants which are unknown to the child are introduced according to the concept of the three-period lesson (Philipps, 1999). Before that, children learn vocabulary through rhymes, poems, verses, picture-books, and books which are shown during circle time or individually according to the child's preferences.

Another activity described by Britton (1995) for practicing speaking is called "The Object Game", it is used when the child is learning letter sounds, it helps the child to identify and analyse different sounds. In the book, this activity is mentioned for practising the mother tongue, however, it could be applied in a foreign language class. There are two groups of objects, each beginning with a different letter. One

group of objects begins with, for example, a letter 'b' – a box, a ball, a bead, a button, a book. A second group of objects begins with another letter such as 'p' – a puzzle, a pencil, a pin. The first group of objects is laid out on the table, the teacher points to them one at a time and says the word while making sure the child can clearly hear the sound 'b' at the beginning of each word. Then the teacher adds objects from the second group and repeats the same. The teacher picks up one of the things beginning with the sound 'b' and says: 'I spy with my little eye something else beginning with b', and then asks the child to choose one of the other things that begin with 'b' to show that the child can recognize the sound in a word.

### **Writing Materials and Activities**

Probably the most well-known Montessori material for language learning are sandpaper letters. The letters are divided into red consonants and blue vowels made of sandpaper glued on wooden tiles. The child traces the letters with his index finger remembering the shape of the letter. In this way the child learns how to write even before learning the meaning of the letters. The Montessori method of learning how to read and write teaches the child to 'feel' the individual letters first and then compose words and sentences (Seitz & Hallwachs, 1996). Furthermore, metal frames and inserts of different shapes, for example geometric ones, are also used to indirectly prepare the child for mastering writing. The child outlines the shape on a paper with a colour pencil and then fills in the shape in the middle using a different colour pencil. With this activity the child learns how to hold and control a pencil and practices making lines and curves which will be helpful later when the child starts to learn how to write letters (Philipps, 1999).

In a Montessori school, at the age of four, when the child had just acquired the skill of writing, he/she will be inspired to use this skill repeatedly (Philipps, 1999). However, the child likes to have the free will, he will not be as happy to write dictations as when he can choose a picture or an object and write about it to the tiniest details. The Montessori teacher can fulfil this will to write by preparing cards and pictures as prompts for writing, it does not matter how complicated the words are, the child will be happy to copy it (Philipps, 1999). Also, at this point, it does not matter if the child can read what he wrote. It is enough if the teacher reads the word for him, the child will start with 'total reading' when he masters writing completely (Philipps, 1999).

## **Reading Materials and Activities**

According to Philipps (1999) in a Montessori school the child starts to learn how to read by matching small objects with cards that have the names of the objects written on them, followed by matching cards with pictures with cards with written words. The child can check his answers by looking at the picture cards with words written under the pictures. Furthermore, to practice reading, a child is given tasks which he must read and then fulfil. For example, the child is given a card with a name of an object that can be found in the classroom. The child reads the word with the teacher and then finds that object in the room and places the card next to it (Philipps, 1999). Also, there are strings of words with highlighted letters for practising reading. The words are also put into small booklets which encourage children to read. Moreover, children are also given puzzles which they try to solve and write down the answer (Philipps, 1999). Also, children read sentences that describe pictures, this will inspire the child to later choose a picture by himself and write sentences that describe the picture. The described activities show how to teach reading in an interactive and interesting way. They gradually introduce reading with pictures and games which are engaging and interesting to children.

Another activity for preparation for reading is called “Moveable Alphabet” (Britton, 1995, p. 60). This activity is also helpful for practising listening for the sounds in words. The idea of the activity is to build a word starting with the sounds and then, by putting the sounds together quickly, saying the word. The child will learn how to read by sounding out the letters. The teacher puts five sets of individual letters of the alphabet and a box of small objects in front of the child. The objects should be a three-letter phonic word. The teacher asks the child to choose one of the objects and then asks him/her what sounds he/she can hear in that word. When the child says the sound, the teacher asks him/her to find that sound among the letters. Then the teacher asks what sound comes next in the word, when the child says it, the teacher asks him/her to find that letter. When the child finds all the letters from the word, the teacher builds the word in front of the child and reads it to the child.

## **5. The Montessori Curriculum (Important Didactical Views of the Organization of Learning)**

The Montessori Method is the most widespread alternative method of teaching in the early years of schooling. However, secondary Montessori schools can be found in Italy, Germany and the Netherlands as well as teacher training institutes for teachers and educators for Montessori preschools and schools (Matijević, 2001).

Matijević (2001) says that the duration of a Montessori school depends on the organization of the school system in a state. This means that Montessori primary schools can last four, six or eight years, depending on their location. Also, some primary schools can last nine or twelve years. Because Montessori classrooms are mixed, some classes may have up to four different age groups. Montessori schools are organized by city authorities, citizens and teachers' associations, or religious communities. If they are not organized by the state authorities, some schools may be private. As well as public schools, the state also controls Montessori schools. The substantial difference is in the method of teaching and education. The main program guidelines that apply in public schools also apply in Montessori schools, however, Montessori schools provide children with more opportunities that encourage independence and responsibility, as well as various creative and spontaneous activities for children that cannot be predicted by the program in advance. Matijević (2001) also states that the main educational guideline is to create appropriate conditions for the development of the child's overall personality, i.e. to encourage the child to realize all his abilities. It is very important that the child is happy to go to school, that is why the prepared classroom must be designed to respond to the children's needs and to accommodate different types of their activities. Therefore, the prepared classroom aids the child toward constructive individual work.

### **5.1. Work Periods**

According to Matijević (2001) lessons in Montessori schools are divided into work periods, also known as work cycles. A Montessori work period is an uninterrupted block of time, during this time, children have the freedom to explore the prepared environment and engage with the chosen materials. During a work cycle, children enjoy the work they love while also acquiring basic life skills. The length of a work period depends on the age group and the school. The first work cycle is called 'free

work'. The start of the morning work period is not fixed, children start coming in the classroom from 8:00 till 8:30 am and, without interrupting the others, select their materials and start their individual work as they have previously been taught. Children can work individually or in pairs. The time and the engagement with the materials depend on the child's personal interests on that day. When the child is content with his work, he will tidy up the materials and neatly put them back in their place on the shelf and take a short break before his next activity. The first work cycle is followed by joint class teaching. All children participate in activities guided by the teacher. The teacher decides on the activities from observing the children's individual works during the first cycle of the day. Also, this part of the day is dedicated to sport games and music activities as well as fieldtrips and visits to museums.

### **5.2. Daily and Weekly Plans**

Montessori schools implement their organizational structure by working with daily and weekly plans. Children are included in organizing the plans, this gives them the opportunity to plan their activities accordingly. The plans help the child to have a better overview of their work and to plan their actions toward achieving their goals (Buczyinski, 2019).

### **5.3. Assessment Methods**

Matijević (2001) states that the results of the child's work are not assessed according to previously set norms, but according to the child's abilities and individual characteristics. Depending on the child's age, the child also participates in the assessment and planning the activities with the teacher. Grades are recorded for the needs of parents, students and the schools. Usually, the activity monitoring documentation highlights the variables or goals that the child needs to achieve. The teacher, with the help from the parents, evaluates whether the child is confident in the mastered actions or if there is a need for more practice. Close cooperation between teachers and parents is crucial for monitoring and encouraging the child's achievements.

## **6. Other Alternative Methods in Comparison to the Montessori Method**

Nowadays, there are many influential educational ideas available. Waldorf and Reggio Emilia are progressive approaches to early childhood education that appear to

be growing in influence all over the world. In the following sections, the two approaches are compared to the Montessori Method.

### **6.1. The Waldorf Approach**

Waldorf education was founded by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), an Austrian scientist and philosophical thinker. He integrated two forms of understanding and experience, spiritual and scientific ideas, and founded “Anthroposophy” which represents “knowledge of the true nature of the human being”. In 1919, Steiner was invited by Emil Mott, to found a school for the employees of the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. The idea was to establish a school that would educate people able to create a just and peaceful society (Edwards, 2002).

“Rudolf Steiner believed in unity of spirit, soul, and body, and that good education restores the balance between thinking, willing and feeling” (Edwards, 2002, p. 7). Although they have differences, both Montessori and Waldorf theories are based on theory of child development. They both created curricula that meet and support the phase of development of every individual child. Steiner divided the learning process into three cycles of seven-year stages, each with its own distinctive needs for learning. Another aspect of Waldorf education that corresponds with Montessori is the definition of “work”. In Waldorf schools imaginary play is considered the most important “work” of the young child and the activity through which the child grows physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This can be compared to Montessori’s “free play” and constructive individual work with learning materials. Furthermore, in Waldorf schools the focus of education is on bodily exploration, constructive and creative play, and oral (never written) language, story and song, which is also something that meets Montessori’s beliefs. In Waldorf schools, children are also deeply engaged in activities and develop powers of concentration in motivation. Uninterrupted play is also an important aspect of Waldorf education and is a significant part of every school morning. Steiner put great importance on the “rhythm” and balance of energetic and restful play. In Waldorf schools, the teachers follow a cyclical schedule of yearly, weekly, and daily activities, including festivals and foods. The same teacher stays with the same children and classroom group from 7 to 14 years. “This approach fosters an integrated, multisensorial approach to learning and expression, with more emphasis on oral listening and memory than is found in other

early childhood models for the primary years” (Edwards, 2002, p. 8). Children study literature, folktales, and mythology; rhythmic musical movement (eurhythm), practical crafts, natural sciences, foreign languages, art and music. A lot of emphasis is put on telling stories, for example, the teacher might introduce a mathematical problem as a story where the numbers are characters. Another similarity between the two approaches is the role of the teacher, like in Montessori schools, the Waldorf teacher also presents the materials before the children start working with it. Furthermore, the role of the teacher is to be a didactic moral leader who provides a harmonious classroom atmosphere full of themes for caring for the community and for the natural and living worlds. Classrooms in Waldorf schools are colourful and full of natural materials and carefully chosen teaching props, the classrooms are aesthetically pleasing, uncluttered, warm and homelike. However, there are no books in Waldorf schools, whereas Montessori encourages children to learn from books with images of the real world. In both approaches, teacher roles change as the children get older (Edwards, 2002).

## **6.2. The Reggio Emilia Approach**

The Reggio Emilia approach is named after the city Reggio Emilia in northern Italy where it was founded by educators, parents, and children after World War II. They wanted to reconstruct society and build an exemplary system of municipal preschools and infant-toddler centres. Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), the visionary founding director, led the system to evolve “from a parent cooperative movement into a city-run system that exercises a leadership role in Italy and throughout Europe, and now increasingly in Asia, Australia, North America, and other parts of the world” (Edwards, p. 6). “Programs in Reggio are family-centered and serve children at infant-toddler- and preschool levels with first priority given to children with disabilities or social service needs” (Edwards, p. 6). Reggio Emilia is not a formal model, it does not have defined methods, teacher certification standards and accreditation processes as Waldorf and Montessori have. “Instead, educators in Reggio Emilia speak of their evolving ‘experience’ and see themselves as a provocation and reference point, a way of engaging in dialogue starting from a strong and rich vision of the child” (Edwards, 2002, p. 6).



Malaguzzi sees the child as social from birth, full of intelligence, curiosity and wonder. His vision is “education based on relationships” which “focuses on each child in relation to others and seeks to activate and support children’s reciprocal relationships with other children, family, teachers, society, and the environment” (Edwards, 2002, p. 10). The children in Reggio Emilia schools express their ideas through words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow and dramatic play, music, etc. The role of the teacher is to support the child in exploring and investigating the world. One of the similarities with the Montessori education is that the Reggio teacher also observes the child and follows his interests. The teacher plays a role of *artful balancing* between engagement and attention which is another similarity between the two approaches. Observation is also something the two approaches have in common, in Reggio schools the teacher, “based on careful and sensitive listening, observation/documentation, and reflection with other adults, the teachers serve as resources and guides to the children” (Edwards, 2002, p. 14). The classroom teachers work in pairs, mentoring and collaboration is an important component in this approach. Another similarity that the two approaches have is the prepared environment. The teachers in Reggio schools organize environments that are rich in possibilities and provocations that invite the children to explore and solve problems, where they often work in small groups. Like in Montessori schools, the Reggio teachers also provide instruction in tool and material use if needed, they help the children to find materials and resources, the teachers sometimes enter the group of children while they are doing an activity and sometimes, they observe from the side. Another similarity is documenting the child’s progress. The school’s physical environment is also very important, it “receives much attention and supports exchange and relationships through physical qualities of transparency, reflectiveness, openness, harmony, softness, and light” (Edwards, 2002, p. 14).

## **7. The Montessori Method and Foreign Language Instruction**

The following section presents an alternative method of teaching English as a foreign language called the Helen Doron Method compared to the Montessori Method, as well as an overview of previous studies dealing with the influence of the Montessori Method in foreign language teaching and learning in kindergartens and primary schools.

## **7.1. Helen Doron**

The Helen Doron method was developed by Helen Doron (1995), a British linguist and educator, in 1985 in Israel. She taught Israeli children English using cassette tapes with recorded stories and poems she recorded herself. The method uses elements of the Humanistic Approach, Suzuki method, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, and is also inspired by the works of M. Montessori, G. Lozanov and G. Doman among some others. Helen Doron herself went to Montessori kindergarten and says that she has been greatly influenced by the Montessori Method when creating hers. Helen Doron opened her first learning Helen Doron Early English center in 1990 and her business has been exponentially growing ever since. Today, the Helen Doron Educational Group is one of the leading companies in educational franchising that offer English classes to young learners.

Doron (2010) states that the main principles of the Helen Doron method are mother tongue language learning, repeated background home hearing, positive reinforcement, leaning in a fun way and building on success. According to Helen Doron (2010), children should acquire a foreign language in the same way they acquire their mother tongue. Children acquire their mother tongue through repeated hearing and positive reinforcement from the parents, the same should be done with teaching English. In Helen Doron schools, children are taught in small groups up to 8 children, classes are organized by the children's age. The small groups allow the teacher to work individually with each child. Helen Doron English lessons are filled with fun and playful activities that engage children in learning. The Helen Doron teacher's role is to create a positive, playful, fun, yet learning atmosphere in which the children feel respected and accepted. Like in Montessori schools, the children are allowed to make mistakes. The teacher waits for the child to correct his mistake or gently guides him towards the correct answer. Furthermore, the Helen Doron teacher is guiding the child towards the behaviour that is universally considered 'good', which is one of the main principles of the Montessori Method, and teaches him to respect the others inside and outside of the group. Another similarity to the Montessori pedagogy is freedom, children have the freedom to move around the class during the lessons, as long as they are not interrupting the others in learning. The teachers do not insist on discipline. Like in Montessori schools, in Helen Doron classrooms children have a lot of room and personal space for learning. Another similarity is the use of materials and props. In

Helen Doron classes, props are extensively used to promote learning and engage children in the lessons. The props should be made from safe and natural materials. As in Montessori schools, the children learn through all the senses, therefore the props should be visually pleasing, tactile and olfactory. Also, the teacher presents the activities and materials first (like Montessori teachers) and then the children repeat the activity on their own (Doron, 2010).

## **7.2. Overview of Studies**

Studies of the Montessori Method in teaching foreign languages have been conducted by researchers all over the world. Some of them are presented and examined in the following text.

The goal of Jendza's (2016) participatory action research, conducted in Montessori primary school in northern Poland, was to examine in what way the participants of the research project could transcend their tacit knowledge concerning foreign language education. Also, how do all the interested parties understand their own practices in the context of a given field. The findings of the research show that the Montessori method, complete as it may seem, contains a number of issues either insufficiently characterised or simply omitted by its author. Therefore, there is a need for creative inspiration and enrichment of teaching rather than a strict application of the method. Furthermore, the Montessori's methodology of teaching foreign languages showed to be too mechanical and lacking in sufficient educational opportunities for real communication. Moreover, the Montessori linguistic material, in terms of foreign language teaching, showed to be either too lexically and grammatically complex or linguistically too easy and not interesting for the children, thus, inadequate. The author finds this is connected to the fact that the materials are imported from Anglo-Saxon countries and designed for learners whose mother tongue is English, and that is why the materials should be customized to both children's personal needs and English language competences. Finally, the author suggests that the Montessori teachers, in this school should be more familiarised with general contemporary theories of education and psychology.

The aim of Adisti's (2018) study was to describe the implementation of Montessori's values into Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) at Aisiyiah Kindergarten in Karanganyar, Indonesia, using a descriptive qualitative method. The

participants are preschool age children whose mother tongue is Indonesian. The researcher discovered that the application of Montessori's values in TEYL increased students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English. The author concluded that when given the freedom to choose activities to their liking, the students enjoy the activities more and are more active, independent and responsible for what they learn. However, the author found some weaknesses in applying Montessori's values in TEYL, such as the difficulty to control student achievement result because there is no testing in Montessori schools, and the requirement of a highly creative approach from a teacher in applying Montessori's values so that the students do not get bored of doing free activities all the time.

The authors Ghaffari, Kashkouli and Sadighi (2017) compared the Montessori Method to traditional teaching methods in learning English as a second/foreign language. The objective of their study was "to challenge many teachers of the existing beliefs and direct them toward focusing on individual learning and critical thinking which are the major goals of Montessori methods" (p. 211). The authors present a list of advantages of Montessori education in comparison to conventional ones. As the first advantage the authors state the academically and socially superior results that the Montessori classrooms produced in contrast to traditional programs. Upon completion of kindergarten, Montessori students achieved better results on standardized math and reading tests than their peers in public and private schools. By the end of elementary school, the Montessori students wrote essays with more imagination and depth than their peers in public and private schools. Furthermore, research showed that some young Montessori students mastered reading and writing before age 6. Moreover, "a comprehensive evaluation of middle school programs in the U.S. showed that, Montessori students reported greater affect, potency, intrinsic motivation, flow experience and undivided interest while engaged in activities during school" (p. 216). The authors state that one of the reasons for the success of Montessori education is the teacher's role to assist the child in the development of self-growth from childhood to adulthood. The Montessori approach "enabled children to learn how to solve problems, developed social responsibility, time management skills and become fulfilled adults within their time" (p. 216). However, the authors also listed some limitations of the Montessori Method. Even though the method has been largely accepted, its pedagogical principles have never been formally accepted by administrators and

policymakers in traditional schools. Scholars neglected it because it lacks academic assessment. Programs were also restricted due to “the lack of trained Montessori professionals, the costs of implementing and maintaining new programs, and the reluctance of administrators to implement an ideology that deviates so far from traditional subject-based pedagogy” (p.217). The authors concluded that there is more work required on discipline and socializing among students. Furthermore, the Montessori Method offers some help in L2 learning context, especially in enhancing the understanding of individual differences among English learners considering environmental factors. The authors state that the Montessori Method has the potential to bring about some positive changes not only to our education system but also to society at large. Finally, the authors concluded that the reason why the Montessori Method is not used in all schools in the world is the fact that not every educator is familiar with the Montessori Method. This article does not mention the location of teaching English as a second language in a Montessori environment and it does not provide the context of the investigation. Also, the article is too general and does not provide concrete examples of teaching. Therefore, more research is needed on the information presented in the article.

Using an action research design Aktas (2017) aimed to examine whether the Montessori Method was an effective means by which to teach English as an Additional Language (EAL) to young preschool children while using a social justice platform. The author states that with the rise in globalization, social justice has taken an even more important role in education, especially for young EAL students. There is a question of how a socially just education can be provided to groups of children who move to a new country due to the globalization trend and are in need of learning English as a second language. The author chose the Montessori Method as the basis for the EAL program because of its’ focus on social justice and student voice within its’ framework. The study was conducted in a preschool in the Kanton of Zürich, Switzerland. The researcher conducted fourteen lessons over a fourteen-week period. The researcher used a non-English speaking environment in order to obtain the most accurate results of language development. Nine children took part in the study, all with a different previous exposure to English and of different nationalities and ethnicities. All lessons conducted were planned by using the Montessori Method for teaching language. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) objectives were

used to monitor the progress of the participants. The author highlighted the importance of spoken language comprehension, stating that language learning occurs most effectively through production and reading/writing. For that reason, each lesson conducted started and ended with a singing circle where the participants could create connections between the words they heard and their meaning. <sup>7</sup>Considering the age of the participants and their attention span, there were three to four activities in each lesson. The results showed that even children who had no previous exposure to English showed evidence of language learning. Two of the participants had no previous exposure in English and experienced a silent period until week nine and week 12. As they began to feel more comfortable in the learning environment, their oral demonstrations began to increase. The other two participants, one of them with previous exposure to English, were particularly vocal and by the end of the study were making word chunks to convey meaning. Other children, who had previous exposure to English, started to engage in conversation, however had not reached the same level of word chunking. Two participants, who had no prior knowledge of English, could answer questions directed toward them, but could not engage in initiating conversation beyond making requests using one or two words. All the participants made similar progress each month of the study, increasing their comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and attempts at spoken English. Finally, the author concluded that “even when children do not live in an English-speaking country, employing the Montessori Method can have positive results for English language learning” (p. 6).

Handayani (2014) conducted a descriptive qualitative research with four-year-old children in Play Group II Class at Singapore Piaget Academy International Elementary School Solo Baru. The author collected the data from observation of English lessons and interviews with teachers, teaching staff, students and parents. The author observed the children’s learning process, how children learn using the Montessori Method in learning English I in everyday experience at school. The researcher also observed how the children handle the learning materials, how they learn in groups and how they perform their achievement. The researcher also paid attention to the fact that, in Montessori pedagogy, the process of learning is more important than the result, and because of that repetition and practice of learning is applied in this learning style. The researcher found that the school has set and applied a technique which allows children to learn English easily. The teaching method related to all objectives of the English

language lesson: listening, speaking, reading and writing. For teaching listening the teachers used the following: dialogues, songs, poems and reading comprehension. Also, the children practised listening from a play, conversation, poems and singing; the teachers also used devices such as tape recorder, computer, and television. For practising speaking, the teachers used activities such as: modelling, drilling for comprehension exercise, repeating, problem solving, and discussion about a short story that the children listened to previously. The researcher observed that the children were very active, creative and brave when participating in these activities because the Montessori Method allows the child to be spontaneous and express themselves freely without fear of making a mistake, which is very important when learning how to speak a foreign language. Furthermore, there were two types of reading activities according to the aims: drilling of reading to improve children's basic skills of English language and reading library books to develop children's knowledge. The teacher used books with colourful pictures and easy and short words in order to make reading interesting to the children. The researcher observed that the children started to recognize the meanings of new words, recognize sentence structure and learn punctuation. Finally, the researcher observed that learning how to write was the most difficult part of English lessons for young children, because the writing skill requires not only cognitive functions but motor skills as well. Repetition is essential for acquiring writing skills. The researcher states that colourful and attractive pictures make children more interested in writing. Finally, the findings of the research showed that "Montessori is the world modern class education system that has been proved to be very effective and functional for teaching English for children in playgroup class" (p. 12). Also, the researcher concluded that the following aspects of the Montessori Method were significant for learning the English language in this school: innate desire to learn, parent's support, teacher's professionalism, peer's influence, and the teaching method. The researcher states that these components of the Montessori Method are promising in creating an "extraordinary, respected and talented person, especially in mastering English as his second language, in cognitive, motor and social aspects" (p. 14).

### **7.3. Implementing Montessori's Values in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

The following section contains articles in which the authors present activities and suggestions on how to implement Montessori values in teaching English as a foreign language.

In her article, Wysmulek (2009) presents the possible applications of the Montessori Method and chosen principles in teaching foreign languages. The author states that the implementation of the Montessori Method in language learning classes could be useful for several reasons. Firstly, the author says that “the humanization and individualization of studying process could be practically realized through implementation of Montessori principles in foreign language classes” (p. 452). As an example, the author mentions Montessori principles as the teacher’s role as an observer and helper in the prepared environment, working with every child individually, respecting the child and giving him freedom in discipline. Secondly, the author says that in a Montessori class the child has the freedom to learn the language at his own tempo and according to his own abilities. She agrees that one educational program cannot be applied to all children, which is why it is important that every child is guided by the teacher through his own individual way of learning. Thirdly, the author presents an example of a Montessori lesson and concludes that “new technologies as Project Making, Portfolio Method, Role Play, Circle Check and many others can become one connected system, not separately organized lessons” (p. 452). Also, the author states that the system of class organization, giving homework and checking the classwork in Montessori lessons “is very similar with the modern approaches of teaching English language” (p. 452-453). Finally, the author concludes that the dissemination of the Montessori Method in the world shows that this principle of education is very promising. Also, the method could be applied to any class in needed extend and that using it can help in solving some educational problems.

The article written by Akhsanova and Salyakhova (2016) describes their working experience in a Montessori preschool in Russia. The authors used the Montessori Method to develop subject-spatial environment of a foreign language. It was based on speech development area, the learning to read and write area, sensory education area, and the zones of travelling and geography, which is also taught in English. In the



article, they present and give suggestions for Montessori activities they used for reading and writing, speaking and listening, the study of sounds, activities to learn and practice vocabulary, and activities in geography. One of the activities the authors conducted is the activity which prepares children for reading and writing. They used frame-inserts, the game material of M. Montessori. The task is to encircle the figures of frames and inserts, line them with coloured pencils and memorize English matching of concepts, for example: “blue, pink, a square, a star”. The children can also make syntagms or phrases as: “It’s a little red oval; I like this black square; a yellow house, a big star”. This activity develops the child’s sensory skills, the child’s ability to distinguish different forms of figures and their location visually and by touch, it trains the child’s optical-spatial thinking, teaches the child to recognize different shapes and colours, develops observation and attention, as well as good eye, fine motor skills and the coordination of hand movements. The conclusion drawn from their observations was that using the Montessori Method in teaching English to pre-school children “significantly increases the effectiveness of English language mastering by children, contributes to the development of their personal qualities, increases the level of motivation to learning, satisfies the educational interests of children, develops their communication skills, expands the worldview of children, helps to create a more complete picture of the world, and it makes a positive influence on development of readiness to school among preschool children” (p. 763). Furthermore, they concluded that Montessori’s pedagogy is constantly evolving with teaching and learning techniques which were tested by years of practice. These techniques require creative teacher’s approach, the integration in the system of training concerning rhythmic, musical and regional geographic components, graphic activity, theatre arts, and creative tasks in the system of education. These components assure that preschool children reach a high level of foreign language mastery.

In her article, Winnefeld (2012) states that “bilingual education seems to be feasible and applicable in Montessori education” however, “even in a bilingual classroom the Montessori way of learning may not allow for very much oral production of the foreign language” (p. 69). The author states that L2 production and interaction, using communication strategies as negotiation of meaning and modified output, have a positive influence on L2 learning and support its’ development. The author suggests Task-based Language Learning (TBLL) as one way to promote oral

language production and the use of communication strategies like negotiation of meaning. Therefore, in the paper, the author argues that TBLL is a promising approach for the facilitation of L2 production and thus the development of speaking skills in a Montessori context. Also, the author hypothesizes that TBLL can be implemented in a bilingual Montessori environment while still making the Montessori Method of learning possible. The author introduces TBLL as “a means of enabling individual foreign language learning in a Montessori environment so that the development of speaking skills is facilitated as well” (p. 70). The author presents task designs and examples and discusses their effect on learners’ interaction and performance during task-based interaction. Finally, the author concluded that the lack of opportunities for children to produce a foreign language in some Montessori schools can be resolved by implementing Task-based Language Learning techniques in order to create such opportunities for oral interaction and L2 production. Also, the author states that, based on consideration of previous research findings on the effects of task design and implementation variables, the implementation of TBLL in a Montessori elementary classroom appears to be beneficial. Furthermore, the author states that TBLL could be applied during the first work cycle called ‘free work’. The TBLL tasks would not interrupt the ‘free work’ period, “since the variety of tasks can become part of the prepared environment and task-based work can happen on the basis of interest, individual choice, and auto-education, i.e. the Montessori way of learning” (p. 79).

The paper written by Rosanova (1997) describes and discusses the language immersion approach of the Intercultural Montessori School in Oak Park, Illinois for children aged 2 to 6. This school follows the Canadian immersion school model where the teachers “refrain from speaking the majority language under any circumstances for at least the first three years of the program” (p. 2). The Canadian immersion model aims to help children who are speakers of the majority language to become bilingual. Most of the children in the school are native speakers of English with a small number of children who are native speakers of their targeted languages. Foreign languages taught in the school are Spanish, French, Italian and Japanese. The author states that eleven years of experience with early childhood immersion in a Montessori environment taught him that “if a child is neurologically and emotionally sound, if a child comes from a supportive and at least minimally literate family, and if the child is in the second language immersion Montessori environment consistently enough and

long enough, then it is not normal for the child to remain monolingual” (p. 6). According to the author, the children’s communities, as well as individual children, also progress through developmental stages and divides them into four developmental stages of a Montessori community: the pre-production stage, the early production stage, the speech emergence stage and the intermediate fluency stage. In a newly founded children’s community, there will typically be children between the ages three to six. During their first year in the school, none of the children will speak any of the target language, that is why this stage is called the pre-productive stage. The children will say only isolated words, phrases or routine expressions, or will not speak in the target language at all. Also, “their first task is to develop social and cognitive strategies which enable them to understand and eventually to develop a receptive vocabulary” (p. 10). Furthermore, during this period the children get distracted very easily and have a need for routine, and heavily rely on contextual cues for understanding. However, the author states that the children definitely understand the target language. They respond by gesturing or nodding, pointing to a picture or item under discussion, by performing a logically appropriate action, by saying the names of other children or by saying yes or no in a target language. During this stage, the teachers use a lot of demonstration and repetition, as well as fixed phrases in many predictable situations such as greetings and clean-up. Also the teachers tend to emphasize accuracy in their speech in order to accommodate to problems with which the children struggle even in their mother tongue, such as lack of prepositions or other elements of syntax, but also to help the young children to concentrate, which can be hard for them when learning a new language. Moreover, the children at this stage have little interest in formal language materials, however they are more focused on practical life, gross and fine motor development, lessons of grace and courtesy, sensorial, and basic math materials. The early production stage is when the first significant shift in the structure of the children’s community occurs. The older children start to mentor the younger ones and comment on each other’s behaviour. Also, the children are now able to follow some directions. And the second-year children are able to produce a variety of simple words and short phrases. Now they are not just saying yes and no in the target language but also responding with one-word answers to either/or questions and general questions like “who”, “what” and “where”. However, the questions must be concretely referenced so the child can understand it. Also, in this stage children show more interest in books in the target language, especially the stories they know in English

because they already know the basic story line. The author also says that the children are now more interested in reading and writing materials just as in a monolingual Montessori environment. It is so because “all of the literacy preparation materials in the practical life and sensorial development areas are unaffected by the presence of the second language. They are obvious and as useful when presented in Spanish or in Japanese as when they are presented in the child’s native language.” (p. 14). Furthermore, children in their second year in the community in this Montessori school can produce at least two-word strings in the target language. However, they supplement with alternative strategies, for example “they may simply speak English, but with a Spanish accent or with Spanish word order or body language”, this shows “a significant advance in children’s underlying working knowledge of the target language” (p. 14-15). Also, in the second year, singing songs and movement play a big role in learning a foreign language, because of that the teachers plan group times which emphasize song, rhyme and movement, especially line-walking with “appropriately metered classical music” (p.15) which encourages children to hum or sing the songs in the target language. The next structural shift occurs when the children are in their third year, ages five and six. The children have now mastered most of the letters of the alphabet and first-level presentations of the materials. Because of that the teachers can now introduce variations and extensions of basic materials and more children engage in more work. “The older children begin to speak in longer phrases, often producing whole sentences and longer utterances” (p. 15). However, the children do not yet speak fluently, there still are “noticeable gaps and errors in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation” (p.15). Despite these limitations, some children possess the vocabulary and facts necessary to convey the message. The children can now begin to engage in a class discussion. Also, the oldest children are now more likely to be able to engage in more abstract or demanding tasks and begin to take interest in working with the Montessori grammar materials such as those for nouns and adjectives. In addition, the oldest children are able to comprehend and follow more complex directions and also explain such directions to the younger children without the teacher’s help. In the last stage, the intermediate fluency stage, appears when the children start to engage in “cooperative work”. The oldest children already know their role in the community and can usually help younger children to find their roles. The younger children “are now being exposed to episodes of full sentences and connected narrative which are neither directed by nor centered on the teacher. Children who are slightly older are vastly more

powerful as models than any teacher can be” (p. 18). In conclusion the author states that their "experience at InterCultura indicates that young children’s growth toward bilingualism is both resilient and robust under the right circumstance” and that “the basic Montessori curriculum and standard Montessori practices supply the rudiments of what most children need” (p. 34). Also, he argues that the three to six classroom is an exceptionally good environment for the development of the basic social language, however, the development of Cognitive and Academic Language appears to be more problematic. In addition, the author explains that the Montessori teacher of potentially bilingual children should be able to identify the typical problems of second language learners, and also “carry on systematic, unobtrusive assessment which allows children to reflect on and assess their own growth in language skills” (p. 35).

## **8. The Montessori Method in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the Croatian Context**

There is a need for more research on the topic of teaching English as a foreign language in Montessori schools in Croatia, as not many could be found for the purpose of this thesis.

The aim of the study conducted by Silić (2007) was to gradually create and develop a stimulating environment in a kindergarten which will, in a natural way, encourage children to communicate in their mother tongue, but especially in a foreign language. Also, the author wanted to discover what kind of an impact educators and grownups, peers and media have on the child’s process of learning a foreign language (English). The research was conducted at the kindergarten “Potočnica” in Zagreb. The researcher employed action study with elements of ethnographic approach, which allowed the direct monitoring, consideration and alteration of the existing conditions for encouraging communication in a foreign language. The author emphasizes the importance of creating as many situations as possible in which the children can listen to communication in English as a foreign language as well as situations which require them to communicate in a foreign language without direct teaching or insisting on speaking the language. The author states that, in the beginning of learning a foreign language, those situations should be simple and connected with their everyday experiences and activities, such as: greetings, asking for food or toys, various requests, etc. Also, those situations should appear naturally, without imposing it upon children

or insisting on repetition and use of the language. The researcher also observed when do the children start to use English expressions and their frequency opposed to the mother tongue. The participants were 19 children (10 girls and 9 boys) from ages 3 to 6, who had no previous exposure to English, except one girl. A great impact on the study had the findings of many educators, including Maria Montessori, who emphasized the importance of an environment rich with stimuli for children of young age, especially for children up to 3 years old, because until the age of 3 the brain activity is two times more frequent than the adult brain. The researcher states that a stimulating environment and people that the children are surrounded with are very important for language development. Children develop speech and good communication skills by communicating, for that reason children should be put in situations where they are exposed to the (foreign) language, because in that way they make connections of meaning and develop their linguistic knowledge. Therefore, the more stimulating, diverse and demanding the environment for gaining new experiences in various activities, practical life situations and games, the more knowledge will the children naturally acquire. The research findings showed that offering children activities and stimuli for listening to a foreign language in a natural, familiar and playful way gradually develops abilities and a need to communicate in that language. Furthermore, the author concluded that they made a quality achievement in the realization of a foreign (English) language in a natural way in a preschool environment. They moved away from a predetermined plan that put content and grammar learning in focus, and, together with children, educators and other factors, created a change in planning of the educational process. At the end of the research, the author concluded that they succeeded in encouraging and creating a will and need for spontaneous communication in a foreign language in children's everyday situations and activities. Also, to achieve these goals it is necessary to enable quality formal education at the faculties of teacher education who would have the same level of education in working with children and in foreign language.

### **8.1. Foreign Language Curricula in Croatian Montessori Kindergartens**

The following section presents a selection of Montessori Kindergartens in Croatia which offer programs for teaching English as a foreign language.

The Montessori kindergarten “Montessori Dječja kuća” from Split, Croatia has an early English language learning program that nourishes the child’s cognitive-linguistic, emotional and social competences. The program is a combination of several theories; Maria Montessori’s theory of individual learning, the theory of acquiring a mother tongue at preschool age, and the theory of foreign language learning. In this kindergarten, children learn and communicate in English spontaneously, in everyday activities; from their arrival in the morning, individually in smaller groups, in activities that all children do together, and during visits and excursions. The kindergarten organizes activities in authentic surroundings which encourage the children to communicate in English, also the children learn English while creatively expressing themselves through movement, play, music, artistic expression, drama, stage and others. English in this kindergarten is not taught in the typical school way, but through specific life situations, because the child is able to repeat and imitate certain linguistic phenomena, but also use them in the correct context, without intentional learning, i.e. teaching. Furthermore, the teachers keep records on the child’s progress in all areas of learning. They monitor the child’s development, especially speech and communication in Croatian and English (<https://www.dv-montessori-djecjakuca.hr/program-rano-ucenje-engleskog-jezika-prosirimo-nas-pogled-na-svijet/>).

Montessori kindergartens “Cekin” in Slavonski Brod, “Sunčev sjaj – Nazaret” in Zagreb, “Srčekko” in Zagreb, “Mali cvijetak” in Split, also have programs of early English language learning for young children which follow principles of the Montessori Method.

## **DISCUSSION**

Implementing the Montessori Method in teaching English as a foreign language has shown to be beneficial for many reasons. The children are more motivated to learn, they enjoy the activities more because they have the freedom to move around and choose the materials and activities they want to work on. Also, the children are able to control their attention during tasks, solve social problems and play cooperatively. Moreover, research has shown that using the Montessori Method increases the effectiveness of English language learning, contributes to the development of their personal qualities, increases motivation for learning, satisfies the educational interests of children, develops communication skills, expands the worldview of children, helps them to create a more complete picture of the world, and it makes a positive influence on development of readiness to go to school among preschool children. In addition, upon the completion of a Montessori school, some children have scored results academically and socially higher than those who completed traditional programs.

The Montessori Method offers many effective activities and materials for foreign language learning, such as projects, wooden letters, portfolio making, a variety of games, role play, etc. Because of that the role of the teacher in a Montessori school is very important, the teacher should possess great knowledge of the child's development and Montessori principles in order to successfully prepare the classroom environment, which will fit the children's needs and motivate them to learn, as well as demonstrate the learning materials. Furthermore, the Montessori teacher guides the child towards learning, adapts the environment to the child's developmental stage, subtly motivating the child to spot possible mistakes. A foreign language is taught in a more natural way. The teachers use it in everyday situations such as greetings and clean-up time, especially with younger children who heavily rely on context when learning. Also, the Montessori Method has shown to be effective when the children are taught reading and writing.

In contrast, the research has shown that the Montessori Method has some limitations such as lack of academic assessment, which is why it is largely neglected by scholars, some programs being restricted due to the lack of trained Montessori professionals. Also, administrators are reluctant to embrace a method that deviates so far from traditional subject-based pedagogy. Although the Method has been highly



successful all over the world, there are still prejudices toward its methodology. There is a question of discipline in an environment which lets children to move freely and without restrictions. Also, some argue that the Montessori teachers should receive more education on psychology and other pedagogies.

Even though many studies have been conducted on effectiveness of the Montessori Method in teaching English as a foreign language with young learners, there is still a need for more research on the implementation of the Method in elementary schools.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to present the main characteristics and principles of the Montessori Method and examine its effects on teaching English as a foreign language to young learners.

The analysis of research done by researchers from around the world has shown that the principles of the Montessori Method, such as: the prepared environment, children-sized tables and chairs, interesting, colourful teaching materials, the educated teacher, hands-on learning experience and learning through the senses are an effective way to learn a foreign (English) language. Children feel that learning is a kind of enjoyment, they enjoy exploring the world around them and experimenting with the materials. Also, research (Silić, 2017) has shown that the more the children are exposed to a foreign language, the more effectively they learn. Furthermore, research (Akhsanova & Salyakhova, 2016) has proved that implementing Montessori's values to preschool education significantly increases the effectiveness of mastering English by children, it has a positive effect on the development of their personal qualities, motivating children to learn, it fulfils the children's educational interests, helps them to develop their communication skills and expands their worldview. Furthermore, implementing Montessori's values in teaching English to young learners showed that it increases students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English. Moreover, when the students are given the freedom and responsibility to choose their own activities, they tend to enjoy the learning process more than when the activities are forced on them. Also, when taught with this method, the children are more active, independent and responsible for what they learn.

However, complete as it may seem, the Montessori Method appears to have some weaknesses such as the difficulty to control student achievements because there is no examination. Also, the Montessori Method requires teachers to be very creative in their teaching so that the learning experience remains interesting for children.

Finally, it can be concluded that the dissemination of the Montessori Method in the world shows that this principle of education is very promising. Also, the method could be applied to both elementary and preschool education in needed extend, for example: activities and materials, more freedom in choosing topics and class organization, thus using it can help in solving some possible educational problems.

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## **IZJAVA O SAMOSTALNOJ IZRADI RADA**

Ja, Matea Klubička, pod punom moralnom odgovornošću izjavljujem da sam diplomski rad izradila samostalno, isključivo znanjem stečenim na Učiteljskom fakultetu, služeći se navedenim izvorima podataka i uz stručno vodstvo mentorice doc. dr. sc. Marije Andrake i su-mentorice doc. dr. sc. Ivane Cindrić, kojima se ovim putem još jednom srdačno zahvaljujem na pruženoj pomoći tijekom izrade diplomskog rada.

U Zagrebu, rujan 2020.

Potpis:

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