

# Pre-primary EFL acquisition and outdoor curriculum

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**Mentor rada:  
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## **ZAHVALA**

Prije svega, voljela bih iskazati svoje zahvale mentorici doc.dr.sc. Alenki Mikulec na brojnim savjetima, nesebičnoj pomoći te podršci prilikom izrade završnog rada.

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## SUMMARY

The importance of teaching a foreign language to preschool children has been recognized by the National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education. The teaching methodology for early childhood and preschool FL teaching has not been prescribed in the sense that it favors one specially designed teaching methodology procedure, rather the foreign language is woven into children's everyday activities (Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje, 2015). Since the usage of the English language has spread to every continent, it is beneficial for children to start learning it from an early age. Also, age is believed to be one of the factors influencing foreign language acquisition, i.e., children are considered more adept at learning foreign languages than adults. One of the important areas of language development, especially in the early childhood is vocabulary, which children can, if appropriate teaching procedures and materials are used, acquire quite easily.

Learning that happens "in", "about" and "for" the outside space is referred to as the outdoor curriculum or forest kindergarten. The goal of the forest kindergarten is to help children become more active, confident, creative and to develop critical thinking. In today's world, there is more pollution and destruction of nature, and people in general are becoming alienated from the nature. However, children who experience nature as a calming environment as they grow up are more likely to love and appreciate it in the future.

The main objective of this thesis was to gain insight into EFL acquisition of children enrolled in the programs of early EFL acquisition and outdoor curriculum. The sample included 21 children aged four to seven. The first phase of the research was based on the recordings and notes of everyday activities and the children's conversations with the kindergarten teacher. The second phase was the interview with some of the children. There was a total of 11 interviews and participants were aged five to seven. The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively.

**Key words: EFL acquisition, outdoor curriculum, pre-primary, vocabulary development.**

## SAŽETAK

U Nacionalnom kurikulumu za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje prepoznata je važnost poučavanja stranih jezika za djecu rane i predškolske dobi. Metodologija poučavanja stranoga jezika nije propisana na način da se preporučuje primjena jednog posebno oblikovanog metodičkog postupka, već je strani jezik utkan u svakidašnje odgojno-obrazovne aktivnosti u vrtiću (Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje, 2015). Budući da se engleski jezik jako proširio i govore ga brojni stanovnici svih kontinenata, korisno je da se s učenjem engleskoga jezika krene od najranije dobi. Isto tako, smatra se da su godine jedan od čimbenika koji utječe na usvajanje stranoga jezika, odnosno da djeca bolje savladaju usvajanje stranoga jezika nego odrasle osobe. Jedno od značajnih područja usvajanja jezika, naročito u ranom djetinjstvu, je i rječnik, koji djeca uz primjenu odgovarajućih postupaka i materijala mogu svladati relativno lako.

Učenje koje se odvija „u”, „oko” i „za” vanjski prostor naziva se *outdoor* kurikulum ili šumski vrtić. Cilj šumskoga vrtića je pomoći djeci da postanu aktivna, samopouzdana, i kreativna, te da razviju kritičko mišljenje. U današnjem svijetu čovjek sve više zagađuje te svakodnevno uništava prirodu. Međutim, djeca koja doživljavaju prirodu kao mirno mjesto više će ju voljeti i cijeniti u budućnosti.

Ovaj završni rad prikazuje rezultate istraživanja provedenog u cilju da se dobije uvid u usvajanje engleskoga kao stranoga jezika među djecom koja pohađaju programe ranoga usvajanja stranoga jezika i outdoor kurikulumu. Sudionici ovog istraživanja bila su djeca od četiri do sedam godina, ukupno njih 21. Djeca su upisana u cjelodnevni posebni program ranog učenja engleskog jezika. U prvoj fazi istraživanja na temelju snimaka i bilježaka prikupljeni podaci o svakodnevnim organiziranim aktivnostima u vrtiću i razgovorima između odgajateljica i djece. U drugom je dijelu obavljen intervjua s nekolicinom djece. Sveukupno je bilo 11 djece u dobi od pete do sedme godine. Podaci su odrađeni kvalitativno.

**Ključne riječi: outdoor kurikulum, predškolski odgoji i obrazovanje, razvoj rječnika, usvajanje engleskoga jezika.**

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## INTRODUCTION

*Every child has the capacity to be everything.* Doris Lessing, *Shikasta*

English language learning has gained increasing popularity for many years. Therefore, it is considered a good idea to enroll children into EFL programs at a very young age. Children learn new pieces of information by continuously asking many questions and answering them. Some of the factors that influence foreign language acquisition are age, language policy, and stages of vocabulary development. Young learners have some additional challenges, such as the ability to pay attention for long periods, low concentrations, and long-term memory storage (Stupin, 2019).

Learning that occurs in nature is called outdoor curriculum or forest kindergarten. In today's generation, this type of studying is not very widespread, but people in the past lived like that. Children learn from adults, so it is crucial to teach them about proper care for nature from an early age. Žagar (2018) stated that the goal of the forest kindergarten is to create children who will be more active and self-confident.

The first chapter deals with pre-primary language acquisition, more specifically language policy, the impact of early start on foreign language learning and acquisition and vocabulary development. The second chapter describes outdoor curriculum, more specifically history, goals and benefits as well as its usage in Denmark and Croatia. The third chapter of the thesis presents the research – aims, participants, instruments, procedure and results. The last chapter is conclusion, summary of the most important research findings.



## 1. Pre-primary EFL acquisition

English as a foreign language (EFL) has become increasingly popular because of the globalization and technological progress worldwide. Consequently, many parents enroll their children in EFL programs at a very early age to ensure a more successful future for them. The phrase *pre-primary aged children* defines children between three to seven years of age (Fruk, 2019). One of the reasons why some researchers have recommended an early start is because children in the pre-primary years have a natural eagerness to learn something new; they are enthusiastic, spontaneous, impulsive, and curious. Children usually ask many questions, but that is because they learn by asking questions and being persistent in getting an answer. Also, they are less self-conscious than older learners, which makes them more inclined to use language more frequently and confidently, first by copying and repeating, then by building on their prior knowledge and creatively rearranging it (European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, 2019).

However, children also have limited attention span, occasionally poor concentration skills, lower long-term memory retention, lack of learning strategies (they must learn how to learn while learning a language), and lack of emotional maturity (Stupin, 2019). These elements all need to be taken into consideration when teaching foreign languages to pre-primary aged children.

Children who are introduced to a foreign language in the right way will become aware that there are differences in languages as well as in cultures, and they can accept that better than those who do not learn a foreign language (Stupin, 2019).

Taylor (2012; as cited in Stupin, 2019) stated that learners apply three steps while acquiring the second language: Exploration, Go for it, and Proficiency. The first step, “Exploration”, refers to when the young learner communicates without using words, making assumptions, and evaluating situations. The importance of motivation during this time cannot be underestimated. The second step, “Go for it”, implies that a young learner has grasped a sufficient amount of the second language to communicate and form simple sentences. Young learners’ exposure to the second language is as essential as their willingness to communicate. Step three, “Proficiency”, describes young learners’ process of learning new vocabulary and grammar. Young learners begin to use the second language more regularly and in various situations. Even though these three steps

appear relatively uncomplicated, young learners will experience problems like applying first language rules to the second language, mixing languages, and more.

Due to the fact that play is a child's natural learning environment in pre-primary age, early foreign language acquisition should be integrated into situations where the language is meaningful and practical, such as in everyday or playful scenarios. This could be done through bilingual storytelling, pretend play, or sociodramatic activities (European Commission, 2011).

### **1.1. Language policy**

Language policy represents the decision-making process concerning the teaching and use of language and its careful elaboration by those with authority to do so for the benefit of others (Cooper, 1989). Spolsky (2004, pp. 4–5) defined language policy as language practices, ideologies, and organizational decisions. He draws attention to the fact that while some countries include their language policy in their laws, some do not. Additionally, although some countries implement these policies, others do not.

The Croatian National Curriculum for Early Childhood and Preschool Education came into force in 2015. It encourages and strengthens the development of eight essential competencies for lifelong learning, which is the objective of the educational policy of the Republic of Croatia, accepted by the European Union. One of the competencies is communication in a foreign language. It is recommended that a child of early childhood and preschool age learns a foreign language in a stimulating environment, while playing and participating in other activities that are purposeful for him or her. In order to achieve this, the situational approach to learning is considered the most appropriate, enabling the child to learn, understand and use the language meaningfully in various activities and situations. According to this approach, teaching a foreign language is not done in accordance with specially designed teaching methodology procedures, but is woven into the everyday educational activities conducted in kindergartens. The development of this competence is facilitated by encouraging intercultural understanding and communication of children with other subjects in the educational institution and those outside of it (Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje, 2015).

## 1.2. Age and foreign language acquisition

Foreign language acquisition is influenced by many factors, one of which is age. It has been generally accepted that children are more adept at learning languages than adults. According to Khasinah (2014), younger age is better for language acquisition, but adults are better at learning language rules and systems.

Nevertheless, only research carried out in a natural learning environment shows evidence that children are better at language learning than adults. According to Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis, there is a time in a person's development when learning a language is more manageable than at any other time. He asserts that the critical period is caused by biological development and lasts till puberty and that language acquisition may become more challenging after puberty due to the brain's reduced capacity for adaptation (Richards, 1985).

Young children's second/foreign language acquisition is similar in many ways to the acquisition of their first language/mother tongue, which is natural and effortless. Experts agree that there is a 'critical period' for developing one's first language/mother tongue, beyond which it is less likely to occur with ease. The same tends to apply in the case of second/foreign language learning. An early start is therefore essential to gain native-speaker levels of competence, particularly in pronunciation and intonation (European Commission, 2011, p. 7).

Oyama (1976) said that children who start learning a foreign language at an early age are more likely to have a more native-like accent than those who begin as adolescents or adults.

The opposite findings are reported by studies carried out in formal learning environments. Ellis (1985) summarized the data on the age factor and stated that while the starting age has no impact on the course of EFL, there is a correlation between the learners' ages and their learning rate. Namely, it was found that adolescents learn language and vocabulary faster than adults and younger children.

In some or all of the following characteristics, a formal setting can be different from a natural setting where the foreign language is the target language:

- (1) instruction is limited to 2-4 sessions of approximately 50 minutes per week
- (2) exposure to the target language during those class periods may be limited both in source (mainly the teacher) and quantity (not all teachers use the target language as the language

of communication in the classroom) and quality (there is a large variability in teachers' oral fluency and general proficiency)

(3) the target language is not the language of communication between peers

(4) the teacher's oral fluency in the target language may be limited

(5) the target language is not spoken outside the classroom (Muñoz, 2008, pp. 578-579).

In conclusion, despite the fact that the optimum age for beginning formal FL instruction has still not been agreed upon, benefits of an early start have been confirmed, but only when other factors have been considered and conditions have been met.

### **1.3. Stages of vocabulary development**

Vocabulary plays an important role in a person's life and future possibilities. Reading ability is closely tied to having an extensive and varied vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2007). We are witnessing a time in which there is less and less reading, storytelling, and conversation in the family. In addition, taking into account how much time a child spends at home versus in kindergarten, it is the responsibility of the kindergarten as an educational institution to provide children with a stimulating environment and promote the acquisition of complex speech and linguistic experiences that a child can use as a base to construct their reality. Therefore, speech is a part of the culture and develops both by speaking and listening, in relation to other participants, and within a quality social environment (Velički, 2009).

Nation (2001) has divided vocabulary into four groups: high-frequency words, academic terms, technical words, and low-frequency words. High-frequency vocabulary should be thoroughly covered because it is incredibly beneficial for learners. For those who intend to learn in English focusing on specific purpose areas it is vital to concentrate on technical and academic vocabulary. Low-frequency vocabulary occurs so infrequently that spending class time on these words is not worthwhile. In order for students to learn these more uncommon words on their own, teachers could instead offer them vocabulary acquisition practices.

Andrešić et al. (2010) presented nine stages of child's first language development, from birth until the sixth year of life (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Stages of mother tongue vocabulary development*

0 - 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expresses moods by making sounds, laughing, and crying</li><li>• Listens to sounds</li></ul>
3 - 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plays with one's speech organs and creates different sounds</li><li>• Responds with laughter to pleasant sounds, crying to angry and unpleasant ones</li><li>• Imitates adult sounds after six months</li><li>• Starts producing syllables</li></ul>
9 - 15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understands gestures, facial expressions, and changes in the tone of voice</li><li>• Understands simple instructions and carries them out</li><li>• The first word with meaning appears</li><li>• Imitates new sounds and actions</li><li>• Shows what he or she wants by gesture, pointing, or vocalization</li></ul>
15 - 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spoken words are primarily nouns, between 5 to 20 words</li><li>• Repeats words and phrases</li><li>• Answers "what is it" questions</li><li>• Asks for what he or she wants by vocalizing, pointing, or touching</li></ul>
18 months – 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uses about 50 recognizable words</li><li>• Can point to and name everyday things</li><li>• Imitates animal sounds or calls them</li><li>• Repeats the new words they have heard</li><li>• Begins to use verbs, adjectives, and pronouns</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Answers questions adequately with "yes" or "no"</li> </ul>
2 – 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names things for everyday usage</li> <li>• The length of the sentence is 2 - 3 words</li> <li>• Asks simple questions</li> <li>• Answers the questions who, what, where</li> <li>• Begins using past and future tenses</li> </ul>
3 – 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a sentence of 3 - 4 words</li> <li>• Asks why, when, and what if questions</li> <li>• Uses pronouns</li> <li>• Uses connected speech about things that have happened</li> <li>• Knows one's name, age, and gender</li> </ul>
4 – 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tells long stories</li> <li>• Asks about the meaning of words</li> <li>• Counts to 10</li> <li>• Forms a sentence of 4 - 6 words</li> <li>• Names a circle and a triangle</li> </ul>
5 – 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pronunciation of all sounds is correct</li> <li>• Uses complex sentences with all kinds of words grammatically correctly, recognizes and names numbers and letters</li> </ul>

Note: Retrieved from Andrešić et al., 2010, pp. 11-17.

Sekelj (2011) listed four stages in acquiring a foreign language vocabulary. The first stage is listening, and it is essential for a good understanding of a foreign language. In the initial phase, the teacher is the first and only model children have, and they will spend a lot of time listening to the teacher while playing simple games, singing songs, or listening to stories. The second stage is speaking. Most children equate the process of learning a foreign language with learning how to speak and want to be able to do it as soon as possible. Usually, children learn basic vocabulary that is close to their world, and that will give them the feeling that they can communicate. The third stage is reading, which is a complex process that depends on the language knowledge of the reader.

Furthermore, for reading to be successful, children must apply all components of language knowledge. The fourth stage is writing. A proper approach to developing writing skills requires an awareness of the difference between speaking and written communication.

### **1.3.1. Ways of improving vocabulary base**

Developing the vocabulary base is essential to improving communicative competence. In the English language, there are several word formation processes which may contribute to vocabulary development. One of these processes is affixation, which is used to change the existing words into new ones by adding prefixes or suffixes. A prefix is an affix that is placed before the word's root (e.g., preschool), and a suffix is an affix attached after a word's root to form a new word (e.g., teacher). Further such processes are borrowing from other languages such as Latin, French, Greek, German, etc., blending two different words to create a new term (e.g., breakfast and lunch = brunch), clipping or shortening (e.g., burger instead of hamburger) and compounding, which is a process involving two or more free morphemes (words) combined to produce a new word (e.g., a preschool child). Additional similar processes are conversion, which involves transferring a word's base to a different word class without affecting the word form (e.g., the word help can be both a noun and a verb), reduplication (e.g., bye-bye), and neologisms, i.e., making new words (Amadi & Ogu, 2019, pp. 1-6).

## **2. Outdoor curriculum**

Outdoor curriculum can be defined in many ways, but the most comprehensive definition is that it is every learning "in", "about" and "for" the outside space. This definition explains the activity's setting, subject matter, and goal. "In" indicates that learning occurs in any outdoor space, from school playgrounds, zoos, parks, national parks, forests, and meadows. "About" explains that the subject is the environment itself and the cultural aspects connected with the national environment. Furthermore, nature can be a base for learning mathematics, history, art, geography, biology, and physical activities. Finally, "for" tells us the purpose of external learning, which is the implementation of cognitive and psychomotor competencies to understand, use, value, and preserve natural resources (Outdoor Education—Definition and Philosophy, 1989). Piaget (1962) said that children learn spontaneously in the right environment. Considering all the benefits of children spending time outside and Piaget's statement it may be proposed that children might learn better in an outdoor environment.

### **2.1. History**

Williams-Sieghfredsen (2012; as cited in Valjan Vukić, 2013) stated that the original idea of the Forest School approach first appeared in the 1950s in Sweden, after which it gradually spread across the world. In Denmark, this approach was applied more extensively 30 years later. Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, i.e., Wales, England, and Scotland, this approach was applied 40 years later. The term Forest School approach is described as a motivating and attractive approach to learning and playing outside for children and young people, which affects the natural development of children.

Roberston (2009; as cited in Žagar, 2018), mentioned Ella Flautau as the person who opened the first forest kindergarten in Denmark. She spent much time in the nearby forest with her own and her neighbor's children. After a while, some parents liked that, and they founded a group and established the first forest kindergarten.



## 2.2. Goals and benefits of the outdoor curriculum

According to the Immanuel College Function Centre, the goal of the forest kindergarten is to create children who will be more active, confident, creative, and self-critical (Žagar, 2018).

As the starting points of the forest kindergarten, Wair and Rea (2006; as cited in Žagar, 2018), list several psychological theories, some of which are Lewin's theory of living space, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development and Skinner's behaviorist learning theory.

Also, Louv (2015, p. 48; as cited in Žagar, 2018) mentions research that was done in Sweden and Norway, in which it was found that children after spending one year in a natural environment and a natural playground have better motor skills in terms of balance and agility. Further benefits of children's enrolment into a forest kindergarten have been defined as follows:

### 1) Cognitive benefits

Children continually practice their focus, observation, discovery, construction, sorting, and experimenting. Also, they are more interested and active in their free play, and they do not feel the pressure that they need to do something. According to some studies, children learn better when they are moving around, dancing, playing, and singing. Because of the teaching and learning methods used in the forest kindergarten, children have a better sense of critical thinking than children from more traditional kindergartens (<https://www.thewildwoodspgh.com/benefits-of-forest-kindergarten>).

### 2) Social/Emotional benefits

In nature, unstructured free play increases social interaction, teaches teamwork, compromise, and negotiation. Children can solve real-life problems and they learn how to treat others with kindness and compassion by observing the kindergarten employees. Children are calmer and more relaxed after spending time in nature, which improves their ability to concentrate. Although potential disputes are not completely eliminated, they are less likely to occur possibly because children have an open area for play, and natural toys are used instead of the traditional

ones, which promotes more positive social development (<https://www.thewildwoodspgh.com/benifits-of-forest-kindergarten>).

### 3) Spiritual benefits

Spending time in nature with children helps them to grow their sense of wonder and amazement for the natural world. Children acquire the ability to recognize beauty throughout the natural world. Children who experience nature as a calming environment as they grow up are more likely to love and appreciate it in the future as well (<https://www.thewildwoodspgh.com/benifits-of-forest-kindergarten>).

### 4) Physical and motor skills

As a result of learning in nature, children are better at digging, running, hiking, balancing, skipping, jumping, climbing, carrying heavy and oversized objects, coordination, and walking across uneven natural terrain. Moreover, children who attend the forest kindergarten have stronger immune systems, which makes them more resistant to illnesses. It is less likely that children will become obese if they spend time in nature and being active from an early age. Furthermore, children are more aware of risk and insecurities as their sense of sight is more developed because they can more easily focus on objects closer and farther away (<https://www.thewildwoodspgh.com/benifits-of-forest-kindergarten>).

## **2.3. Outdoor curriculum in Denmark**

According to Dean (2019, p. 56), Denmark's recognition of the general health and leisure benefits of introducing an outdoor curriculum from a very young age has contributed to Forest School (FS) becoming "a natural extension of a cultural norm" (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012). Moreover, spending time outdoors engaging in rest, leisure sports, and contemplation has been the most important aspect of Danish culture. "Across Denmark, educators and stakeholders worked on cultivating a place where young children could develop positively and gain an appreciation of a natural outdoor setting" (Dean, 2019, p. 56). Since Denmark is one of the countries where

outdoor curriculum is most accepted, the pedagogical principles followed by kindergarten teachers in this country will be presented next:

- 1) A holistic approach to children's development and learning
- 2) Every child is unique and competent with a specific way of thinking and feeling
- 3) Children learn actively in interaction with people and materials from the environment
- 4) Children learn through their own experiences in real life using natural materials and tools
- 5) Children thrive best in a child-oriented environment
- 6) It is necessary to provide time for children to experience and develop independent thinking
- 7) Children learn most through social interactions (Vukić, 2013).

#### **2.4. Outdoor curriculum in Croatia**

In Croatia, this pedagogical principle is not widespread, but still, some kindergartens do offer outdoor curriculum or forest kindergarten. Firstly, there is a kindergarten in Pula, which opened in 2019, and which offers children of early childhood and preschool age the opportunity to spend most of the day in the forest and in the fresh air. Moreover, it provides full-day, half-day, and weekend services enabling children to spend time in nature. One of their goals is to include the whole family in the kindergarten's activities and work to strengthen unity within the family. Children spontaneously choose activities that are available to them at a particular moment. Special attention is directed towards acquiring work habits by implementing simple and valuable activities such as lighting a campfire, making toys, composting, and picking fruits and herbs from the forest and garden. Kindergarten teachers also care for children's health by organizing organic food growing. Children spend the entire day in the woods regardless of weather conditions. Although the cold and rain are an obstacle for adults, they represent fun for well-dressed children. If a storm is coming, children and teachers can hide in one of their shelters <https://sumskadjeca.com/>.

The second example is the Waldorf kindergarten "Šumska vila". It is located right on the edge of a beautiful oak forest close to the center of Zagreb. Children can explore the woods and

meadow, study plants and animals, run, hide, and play imaginative games. The program includes organized activities such as working in the garden, gathering and drying medicinal plants, as well as cleaning the forest. Children like routines, so unavoidable activities are the morning circle with gesture games, finger rhymes, and storytelling before lunch. Staying in the fresh air improves the children's immune system <http://www.sumskavila.com/?lang=en>.

The third example is the Kindergarten Matije Gupca, where the research for this thesis was conducted. The kindergarten was founded in 1945 and it has four separate facilities in the City of Zagreb. Since 2012, they have been participating in the Comenius program and the e-Twinning portal. They have participated in the activities of the Erasmus+ program since its inception and are currently implementing two program activities, KA1- Professional Development and KA2 “MLO” (Moving and Learning Outside) – Strategic Partnerships. A typical day in this kindergarten starts with a morning circle, after which children go outside to play with natural toys until lunchtime. They also go outside after their afternoon rest. Children like to play hide-and seek and do gardening <https://vrtic-matijegupca.zagreb.hr/default.aspx?id=29> .

### **3. Research**

The research for this thesis was conducted from March to June 2022 in the “Kindergarten Matije Gupca”. It was focused on the usage of English as a foreign language. This chapter presents the research aim, participants, and research instruments, and discusses the results of the research.

#### **3.1 Research aim and participants**

The aim of the research was to gain insight into EFL acquisition of early childhood and preschool-aged children enrolled in a kindergarten implementing outdoor curriculum.

The research included a sample of 21 participants, children aged four to seven. All children are enrolled in a full-day special program in Early Learning of English.

#### **3.2. Research instruments and procedure**

Firstly, since the research participants are young children, it has to be stated that the recommended ethical principles have been applied in the research. The information the participants shared in the study is protected as the research was completely anonymous and before the research the participants were informed that they could choose whether they wanted to participate in the study and they could withdraw at any time without any consequences.

The collected data were qualitative. The first set of data consisted of recordings and field notes of everyday activities conducted in the kindergarten and children's conversations in English with their kindergarten teacher. The observation lasted seven days.

During the second phase of the research, some of the children aged five to seven were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. There was a total of 11 interviews whose transcript is presented in this thesis.

### 3.3. Results

The first section presents the transcribed communication between the teacher and children on seven separate days during their stay in kindergarten. Since the aim was to gain insight into children's usage of the English language, their communication was recorded and presented here literally, including the possible language use errors and mistakes made by children.

The same routine was followed every day. The children arrived and after breakfast they had their circle time. The teacher said to them "Lions<sup>1</sup>, make a circle", after which the activities started. The activities ended when the teacher said "Take your chairs and go wash your hands."

During each activity, all children actively participated and performed the choreographies they had learned with each song or rhyme. They knew all the text so they sang it, either without the music or with the help of the music played via YouTube application.

#### Day 1

Teacher: "Make a circle and put the toys under your chairs. Let's see who is here today."

At that moment, a girl named K comes into the circle.

Teacher: "Where have you been?"

K: "I was been to the doctor, so she could see my blood."

Teacher: "Are you sick, or was that something for the school?"

K: "Something for the school."

The teacher started the activity with flashcards and asked questions about them.

Teacher: "This is the number..."

Children: "Six!"

Teacher: "Okay, color?"

Children: "Blue"

Teacher: "What is this (pointing at the image on the flashcard)?"

Children: "Jacket."

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<sup>1</sup> Lions is the name of children's kindergarten group

Teacher: "This is the number..."

Children: "One!"

Teacher: "Okay, color?"

Children: "Red."

Teacher: "Now, I think this is an animal; who is this?"

Children: "Spider."

Teacher: "Color?"

Children: "Black!"

Teacher: "This spider has got eight..."

Children: "Legs!"

Teacher: "This is a..."

Children: "Tiger."

Teacher: "Tiger is actually a wild..."

Children: "Animal"

Teacher: "But what kind of an animal?"

Children: "Wild cat."

After the introductory activity, the children started to sing a nursery rhyme about a traffic light:

*"Red light, red light, what do you say? I say stop, stop right away.  
Yellow light, yellow light, what do you mean? I say wait, till the light is green.  
Green light, green light, what do you say? I say go, go right away!"*

Teacher: "Koje je sada godišnje doba, is it winter?"

Children: "No, Spring. "

Teacher: "Now we will play a game. When I say spring - jump and winter - make a house. The winner is the last one who stays."

Children individually played the game, but when they got out of the game, they cheered for friends who were still playing.

Teacher: "Take your chairs and go wash your hands."

## Day 2

After the researcher entered the room, the teacher said that children are starting to use English in the group even when the researcher was not around.

Teacher: “Lions, make a circle.”

Children and the teacher dance and sing to the song *Make a circle*.

*Make a circle, big, big, big.*

*Small, small, small.*

*Big, big, big.*

*Make a circle, small, small, small.*

*Hello, hello, hello.*

*Make a circle, round and round.*

*Round and round.*

*Round and round.*

*Make a circle, round and round.*

*Hello, hello, hello.*

*Make a circle, up, up, up.*

*Down, down, down.*

*Up, up, up.*

*Make a circle, down, down, down.*

*Now sit down.*

The teacher chose the counting rhyme *Eeny, meeny, miny, moe* for the new game, *Grizzly bear*.

*Eeny, meeny, miny, moe*

*Catch a monkey by the toe*

*If he hollers, let him go!*

*Eeny, meeny, miny, moe.*

One child was in the middle of the circle and pointed their finger from one child to another while saying the counting rhyme.

When they finished *Grizzly bear*, the teacher said “Now we are going to play a new game called *We're going to Kentucky*, where we will sing and dance.”

*We're going to Kentucky*

*We're going to the fair*

*To see the senorita*

*With the flowers in her hair.*

*Shake it shake it shake it,*



*Shake it like you care,  
Shake it like a milkshake,  
And shake it everywhere.  
Shake it to the bottom,  
Shake it to the top.  
Now turn around and turn around  
Until it is time to stop.*

Children loved the game because of its fast rhythm and they all actively participated.

Teacher: "What does it mean to shake it?"

Children: "Protresi."

Teacher: "What does it mean do you like it?"

Children: "Da li voliš."

Teacher: "Make a line, please. Let's do *Pinocchio*" (Children and the teacher dance and sing to the song).

*Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm! Right leg!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm! Right leg! Left leg!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm! Right leg! Left leg!  
Chin up!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.*

*Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm! Right leg! Left leg!  
Chin up! Turn around!  
Everybody in. Everybody out.  
Everybody turn around. Everybody shout. Hey!  
Everybody ready. Here we go.  
Let's do The Pinocchio.  
Right arm! Left arm! Right leg! Left leg!  
Chin up! Turn around! Sit down!*

Teacher: "What does it mean to sit down?"

Children: "Sjedni."

After that, the teacher and children sang and danced to another song titled *Over the deep blue sea*:

*~Twas a sunny day when I went to play  
down by the sea.*

*I climbed aboard a pirate ship  
and the Captain said to me,  
"We're going this way, that way.*

*Forwards, backwards.*

*Up and down, up and down.*

*Over the deep blue sea."*

*"Twas a windy day when I went to play  
down by the sea.*

*I climbed aboard a pirate ship  
and the Captain said to me,  
"We're going this way, that way.*

*Forwards, backwards.*

*Up and down, up and down.*

*Over the deep blue sea."*

*"Twas a rainy day when I went to play  
down by the sea.*

*I climbed aboard a pirate ship  
and the Captain said to me,  
"We're going this way, that way.*

*Forwards, backwards.*

*Up and down, up and down.*

*Over the deep blue sea."*

*"Twas a snowy day when I went to play  
down by the sea.*

*I climbed aboard a pirate ship  
and the Captain said to me,  
"We're going this way, that way.*

*Forwards, backwards.  
Up and down, up and down.  
Over the deep blue sea.”  
”Twas a stormy day when I went to play  
down by the sea.  
I climbed aboard a pirate ship  
and the Captain said to me,  
“We’re going this way, that way.  
Forwards, backwards.  
Up and down, up and down.  
Over the deep blue sea.”  
“This way, that way.  
Forwards, backwards.  
Up and down, up and down.  
Over the deep blue sea.”  
“This way, that way.  
Forwards, backwards.  
Up and down, up and down.  
Over the deep blue sea.”*

Teacher: “What does big water mean“

Children: “Velika voda.“

Teacher: “Are you tired?“

Children: “No.“

Teacher: “Then, let's repeat. It is a rainy day.“

Children: “Kišno vrijeme.“

Teacher: “Snow?“

Children: “Snijeg.“

Teacher: “It is a snowy day?“

Children: “Padao je snijeg.“

Teacher: “Kako se kaže kišobran?“

Children: “Umbrella.“

Teacher: “How do we sing our song?“

Children: “Rain, rain, go away. Come again some other day.“

Teacher: “Do you want to go on a lion hunt?“

Children: “Yes.“

The teacher and children sang and danced to the song *We're Going on a Lion Hunt*.

*We're going on a lion hunt  
We're going on a lion hunt  
I've got my binoculars  
I've got my binoculars  
I'm not scared  
I'm not scared  
Oh, Look at that tall wavy grass  
It's so tall  
Can't go over it  
We can't go over it  
Can't go under it  
Can't go under it  
We're just going to have to go through it  
Just go through it  
swish swish swish  
We're going on a lion hunt  
We're going on a lion hunt  
I've got my binoculars  
I've got my binoculars  
I'm not scared  
I'm not scared  
Uh oh, there's a big river  
Oh! We can't go over it  
We can't go over it  
We can't go under it  
We can't go under it  
We're just going to have to swim it  
I hope it's not too chilly  
splash splash splash  
We're going on a lion hunt  
We're going on a lion hunt  
I've got my binoculars  
I've got my binoculars  
I'm not scared  
I'm not scared  
Ugh, look at all that mud  
Ewww, so muddy  
We can't go over it  
We can't go over it  
We can't go under it  
We can't go under it  
We're just going to have to go through it  
Ew, do I have to?  
squish squish squish  
We're going on a lion hunt  
We're going on a lion hunt*

*I've got my binoculars  
I've got my binoculars  
I'm not scared  
I'm not scared  
Uh oh, what's that  
It's a cave  
We can't go over it  
We can't go under it  
We're just going to have to go into it  
Are you sure?  
step step step  
We're going on a lion hunt  
We're going on a lion hunt  
I've got my binoculars  
I've got my binoculars  
I'm not scared  
I'm a little scared  
Sure is dark in here  
What's that in the corner  
I feel 2 big ears  
I feel 2 big ears  
I feel 1 wet nose  
I feel 1 wet nose  
I feel 2 sharp teeth  
I feel 2 sharp teeth  
I know what that is  
What?  
It's a lion  
Let's get out of here  
Let's run out of the cave  
step step step  
Ok, quickly back through the mud  
squish squish squish  
Ok, let's cross the river  
splash splash splash  
Quick, through the tall grass  
swish swish swish  
Through the yard, up the stairs, into the house, close the door  
We're safe!  
That's a close one  
Let's not go lion hunting anymore!*

Next, the children sat down on the carpet and the teacher brought a cube with numbers.

Teacher: "Do you know that number?"

Children: "This is number four."

Teacher: "Can you count to four?"

Children: "One, two, three, four."

Teacher: "Z, who is your best friend?"

Children: "My best friend is M."

### Day 3

Me: "Good morning Lions!"

Children: "Good morning teacher!"

Me: "How are you?"

Children: "Happy"

Me: "Why?"

Child 1: "Because I play with all my friends."

Teacher: "Lions, make a circle."

The teacher and children played a traditional American nursery rhyme *A-tisket, a-tasket*.

Teacher: "What does it mean I dropped it?"

Children: "Baci."

Teacher: "Let's repeat! A girl is?"

Children: "Cura"

Teacher: "Kako se dečko kaže?"

Children: "Boy!"

Teacher: "If it is a girl it is-.."

Children: "Her pocket."

Teacher: "If it is a boy it is..."

Children: "His pocket."

Teacher: "Knock, knock who is there?"

Teacher: "mooo, moo."

Children: "It's a cow!"

Teacher: "Knock, knock who is there?"

Teacher: "meow, meow."

Children: "It's a cat!"

Teacher: "Knock, knock who is there?"

Teacher: "squish, squish."

Children: "It's a rat!"

Teacher: "My name is H, and my favorite color is black. Now you go."

Child 1: "My name is M, and my favorite color is pink."

Child 2: "My name is J, and my favorite color is pink."

Child 3: "My name is M, and my favorite animal is a red panda."

Child 4: "My name is M, and my favorite food is spaghetti."

Child 4: "My name is K, and my favorite song is LOL."

Teacher: "Can you sing it?"

Child 4: "I can try but I have not sing it for a while."

Teacher: "Let's hear it, please try. Or maybe another song?"

Child 4 sings the song *Astronaut in the Ocean*.

Teacher: "What is your name and who is your best friend?"

Child 5: "My name is G and my best friend is D."

Teacher: "K how old are you?"

Child 4: "Six."

Teacher: "And how old is G?"

Child 4: "Six."

Teacher: "Excellent."

After that, the teacher called up the children one at a time and told them to do a task in English.

Teacher: "Stand up, touch the ground, brush your teeth, comb your hair, stand on one leg, wave, sit down, touch your ears, and take off your slippers."

The following conversation happened between two girls in the group playing together:

Child 1: “K, reci na engleskom moje tenisice su crne (Eng. K, tell me in English my shoes are black).“

Child 2: “My shoes are black.“

Child 1: “K, reci na engleskom haljina mi je lijepa (Eng. K, tell me in English my dress is pretty).“

Child 2: “My dress is beautiful.“

At lunchtime, the teacher chose one child to tell the others to start their meal.

Child 1: “Have a nice meal.“

Children: “Thank you very much.“

#### **Day 4**

Children recited the counting rhyme *Eeny, meeny, miny, moe*, and *The Alphabet Song*.

*A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y and Z.*

*Now I know my ABCs.*

*Next time won't you sing with me.*

Teacher: “Recite što smo posadili vani?“

Children: “Sunflower!“

Teacher: “Ali, što smo posadili od suncokreta?“

Children: “A seed.“

Next, the teacher and the children say the rhyme:

*I plant a little seed in the ground.*

*Out comes the sun, big and round.*

*Down come the raindrops soft and slow.*

*Out comes a flower. Grow, grow, grow.*

Teacher: “What does grow mean?“

Children: “Rasti.“

Teacher: “What does big and round mean?“

Children: “Veliko i okruglo.“

Teacher: “What does down come the raindrops soft and slow mean?“

Children: “Lagano pada kiša.“

Teacher: “What does I plant a little seed mean?“



Children: “Ja sam posadio sjemenku.“

After this the teacher used the flashcards with different plants and asked the children to name them. Some of them were: daisy, poppy, cornflower, violet, sunflower, and snowdrops. To finish the activities related to flowers, they sang and danced to *Sing a Song of Flowers*.

*Sing a song of flowers, Flowers all around.  
Flowers that are growing, Growing in the ground.  
Flowers of every color, Make a pretty view.  
Red and pink, Orange and yellow, Blue and purple too!  
Red. Pink. Orange. Yellow. Blue and purple too!  
Sing a song of flowers, Flowers all around.  
Flowers that are growing, Growing in the ground.  
Flowers of every color, Make a pretty view.  
Red and pink, Orange and yellow, Blue and purple too!  
Red. Pink. Orange. Yellow. Blue and purple too!*

Teacher: “K, describe a sunflower.“

Child 1: “Beautiful and yellow and orange from inside. It looks like a real sun. That is why they are called sunflowers.“

Teacher: “Sit down, now. K, bring me something blue and tell me what it is.“

Child 1: “Blue ball.“

Teacher: “Z, bring me something green and tell me what it is.“

Child 2: “Green sword.“

Teacher: “D, bring me something orange and tell me what it is.“

Child 3: “Orange pillow.“

Teacher: “M, bring me something black and tell me what it is.“

Child 4: “Black pen.“

Teacher: “M, bring me something yellow and tell me what it is.“

Child 5: “Yellow sword.“

Teacher: “A, bring me something yellow and tell me what it is.“

Child 6: “Yellow sword.“

Teacher: “E, bring me something blue and tell me what it is.“

Child 1: “But teacher, we have already blue.“

Child 7: “Blue toy.“

Teacher: “M, bring me something green and tell me what it is.“

Child 8: “Easy, peasy. Green pillow.“

Teacher: "Well done everyone. Now, put your arms behind your back, please."

The teacher recited the nursery rhyme *Two little birds sitting on a wall* with the children.

*Two little birds sitting on a wall.  
One named Peter, one named Paul.  
Fly away, Peter, fly away, Paul.  
Come back, Peter, come back, Paul.  
Two little birds sitting on a wall.  
One named fast, and one named slow.  
Fly away, fast, fly away, slow.  
Come back, fast, come back, slow.  
Two little birds sitting on a wall.  
One named quiet, one named loud.  
Fly away, quiet, fly away, loud.  
Come back, quiet, come back, loud.*

## **Day 5**

Mother's Day was in a couple of days, so the children learned a new song with the choreography called *Happy Mother's Day*.

*If you love your mommy, clap your hands.  
If you love your mommy, clap your hands.  
If you love your mommy, clap your hands.  
If you love your mommy, clap your hands.  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day.  
If you love your mommy, stomp your feet  
If you love your mommy, stomp your feet  
If you love your mommy, stomp your feet  
If you love your mommy, stomp your feet.  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day.  
If you love your mommy, jump up and down  
If you love your mommy, jump up and down  
If you love your mommy, jump up and down  
If you love your mommy, jump up and down.  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day*

*Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day.  
If you love your mommy, your mommy, touch your elbows  
Touch your knees  
Touch your toes  
Now freeze  
Touch your hipbones  
Touch your wrists  
Touch your nose  
Blow a kiss.  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day  
Happy Mother's Day, I love you more than I can say  
You mean the world to me, happy Mother's Day.*

Teacher: "Kako ćete reći mami u subotu kada ćete joj dati čestitku?"

Child 2: "Happy Mother's Day!"

Then they sang and danced to the songs *The Bees Go Buzzing, Mister Sun, and Ladybugs Fly*. The children cheered at the end of every song.

Teacher: "Sit down on the carpet and make a circle."

Then the teacher used flashcards with pictures of different animals and asked the children to name them, e.g. bear, duck, bird, cat, dog, sheep, horse, goldfish, monkey, and frog.

Teacher: "How are you feeling today F?"

Child 1: "Happy."

Teacher: "How are you feeling today M?"

Child 2: "Sleepy."

Teacher: "What did you have for breakfast M?"

Child 3: "Cereal bowl."

Teacher: "Kako se kaže kruh?"

Children: "Bread."

Teacher: "Kako se kaže čaj?"

Children: "Tea."

Teacher: "Kako se kaže mlijeko?"

Children: "Milk."

At the end of the activity, a new game called *I spy with my little eye* was played. In this game, the teacher had pictures of various animals and showed them to the children to name them.

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "Ladybug."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "Grasshopper."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "That is a bee."

Teacher: "What does a bee make?"

Children: "Honey."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "Fly."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "A bear."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "An ant."

Teacher: "I spy with my little eye."

Children: "Butterfly."

Teacher: "What color is it?"

Children: "Pink and purple."

## **Day 6**

The teacher recited with the children the song *Little fish*.

*I'm a little fishy watch me go.*

*I swim fast, and I swim slow.*

*When the sharks come out, I dare not play.*

*I dive down deep and swim away!*

Teacher: "What does it mean to dive down deep?"

Child 1: "To znači zaroni duboko."

Teacher: "What does sand mean?"

Children: “Pijesak.”

Teacher: “Sit down!”

After that, the teacher recited with the children the rhyme *Number One, Touch Your Tongue*.

*Number one, touch your tongue.*

*Number two, touch your shoe.*

*Number three, touch your knee.*

*Number four, touch the floor.*

*Number five, learn to jive.*

*Number six, pick up the sticks.*

*Number seven, point to heaven*

*Number eight, open the gate.*

*Number nine, touch your spine.*

*Number ten, let's do it again.*

Teacher: “M, what does it mean to open the gate?”

Child 1: “Otvoriti vrata.”

Teacher: “K, what does it mean to touch your spine?”

Child 2: “Dotakni kičmu.”

Teacher: “M, what does it mean to touch the floor?”

Child 3: “Dotakni pod.”

Teacher: “M, number six?”

Child 4: “Pick up the sticks.”

Teacher: “A, number three?”

Child 5: “Touch your knee.”

Teacher: “D, number five?”

Child 6: “Learn to jive.”

Teacher: “J, number eight?”

Child 7: “Open the gate.”

Later, the teacher recited with the children a new song titled *Thanks a lot*.

*Thanks a lot,*

*Thanks for Sun in the sky.*

*Thanks a lot,*

*Thanks for clouds so high.*

*Thanks a lot,*

*Thanks for whispering wind.*

*Thanks a lot,*

*Thanks for the birds in the spring.  
Thanks a lot,  
Thanks for the moonlit night.  
Thanks a lot,  
Thanks for the stars so bright.  
Thanks a lot,  
Thanks for the wondering me.  
Thanks a lot,  
Thanks for the way I feel.  
Thanks for the animals,  
Thanks for the land,  
Thanks for the people everywhere.  
Thanks a lot,  
Thanks for all I've got.  
Thanks for all I've got.*

The children started to talk, so the teacher started to recite the nursery rhyme titled *I Love You*, so the children stopped talking and joined the teacher.

*I love you. You love me.  
We're a happy family.  
With a great big hug.  
And a kiss from me to you.  
Won't you say you love me too?*

## **Day 7**

The teacher started the roll call with the song *Where is...?*

*Where is (child's name)?  
Where is (child's name)?  
Please stand up,  
Please stand up  
Do a little waving,  
Do a little clapping  
Sit back down,  
Sit back down.*

After the roll call, the teacher asked a couple of questions to the youngest child in the group (age 4):

Teacher: "Kako se kaže plava?"

Child 1: "Blue."

Teacher: "Excellent."

Teacher: "Kako se kaže zelena?"

Child 1: "Green."

Teacher: "Kako se kaže tata?"

Child 1: "Dad."

It was amazing because the rest of the children supported Child 1 by clapping after every given answer.

Next, the teacher recited with the children the song *Little fish* and the rhyme *Number One, Touch Your Tongue*.

The children were yawning so the teacher asked them "Are you sleepy?"

Children: "Yes."

Teacher: "Još ćemo ponoviti *I Like*."

Child 2: "I like cookies."

Teacher: "Excellent."

They recited a poem called *I Like*.

*I like sunshine*

*I like snow*

*I like brown leaves*

*when they blow.*

*I like cookies.*

*I like cake.*

*I like waffles when I wake.*

*I like dogs, I like cats,*

*I like clowns in funny hats!*

*I like baseball. I like trains*

*I like sleeping when it rains!*

*I like stories at bedtime!*

*I like poems when they rhyme!*

There was a pause for a short while as the teacher left for a minute and the children suddenly, on their own, started to recite the nursery rhyme titled *I Love You*. Later, the teacher took flashcards, they practiced words and then the children recited *Brown bear, brown bear what do you see?*

### 3.4. Interviews

The interviews were conducted with 11 children. The first five questions were about children's names, age, whether or not they have siblings, their favorite color and who their best friend is. Most children answered correctly to all five questions. Child 2 did not answer correctly to one question. She said: "I have a little brother baby", when the correct form is I have a brother who is a baby. Child 5 did not answer correctly to one question. She said: "My best friend is G and everything friends is my all friends", when the correct form is I have a lot of friends, but only G is my best friend. Child 7 did not answer correctly to one question. He said: "My best friend M", when the correct form is My best friend is M.

The length of the interviews varied based on how the children reacted to the questions. In other words, some of the interviews were shorter because some children gave very short answers either because of their insufficient knowledge of the English language, or they just did not feel like talking.

The answers given by the children show that all children use the English language quite well. They know many words, and the observed mistakes are good feedback for teachers on what to pay attention to help the children and make it easier for them to learn and acquire the English language.

#### **Child 1 (boy, age 6)**

1. What do you like to do?

I love play games.

2. What is your favorite animal?

Monkey.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Car, pig, purple, blue, yellow, green, orange, black, flower, brown, dog, cat, elephant, monkey, tree, sun, rainbow, chair, and table.

4. Would you like to ask me one question?

Do you see the monkey?



5. How do you say some phrases you know in English?

I am hungry, I sleepy, I happy and you need to wash your hands.

6. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter M?

Monkey.

7. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter C?

Carrot.

8. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

Yellow and light. Skoro pa je svjetlo isto kao bijela boja na engleskom. Light je svjetlo, a white je bijela.

9. Can you tell me a song that you like?

Begging you.

10. Are you happy

No, I soo angry.

11. Can you tell me how you say *Ja sam velik, tvoj brat je malen, Ja sam manji od tebe?*

I big, My brother is small, I smaller than you.

12. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

Can you go to the supermarket eat the chocolate, please.

13. Can you tell me one story?

One day Matej are going to the grandpa and granny on the car. There is a spider, Matej je rekao (told) AAA loud. Spider go out the house.

Despite some language mistakes (e.g., incorrect use of some verb forms and tenses; the auxiliary verb *am* is missing in some phrases) and some use of the mother tongue, shows a fairly wide use of vocabulary and, more importantly, this child shows that he is thinking about the words and compares them, e.g., answer to question number 13, where the child compares the words *light* and *white*.

### **Child 2 (girl, age 6)**

1. What do you like to do?

I like to be with my mom, and I like to go in the park with my mom. I like dancing around.

2. When is your birthday?

Of the last day of summer.

3. Would you like to ask me one question?

Do you have brother or sister?

4. (In the hall there was a baby crying) Why do you think the child is crying?

Because the teacher is getting his clothes dry. (The teacher was changing the baby's diaper).

5. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter H?

Home.

6. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter K?

Kindergarten.

7. Can you tell me a song that you like?

It is LOL. I can sing it to you. (She did not sing the song).

8. Are you happy?

Yes.

9. Can you tell me one story in English?

I go actually with my boyfriend. I have something what we buy at the festival, the cat ears with the light. I have a doggie, his name is I, but he is with grandma and grandpa now because my mom has a baby, so she cannot take care of I anymore. Today I am going to my friend, maybe. I do not know. If I am not going, I will go to my dad house. The doctor took out my blood from my finger, because he need it for some work or something.

10. Can you tell me what you will do this weekend?

I will play with my brother. I will be with my mom, and my grandparents are coming.

11. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

I like to eat pizza.

12. What do Unicorns look like?

Unicorns have hair and horn. Three colors pink, hot pink and I do not know.

13. What is your favorite animal?

Pony and lions. I love cats, so it is easy to get them calmed down. You can just pet them.

Child 2 has a very rich vocabulary and most of the sentences are grammatically correct. There were only few minor mistakes, such as prepositions, possessive and articles, but overall, we can conclude that this child is quite fluent in her use of English.

**Child 3 (girl, age 6)**

1. What do you like to eat?

Spaghetti.

2. Are you ready for school?

Yes.

3. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter S?

Sister.

4. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?

Book.

5. (I pointed to the doll and asked the question) What is this?

A clown.

6. Are you happy?

Yes.

7. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

I love music.

Child 3 answered all the questions correctly, but we can observe that this child only gave very short, mostly one-word answers.

**Child 4 (boy, age 7)**

1. Can you count to 50?

Yes, one, two...fifty.

2. What do you like to do?

I like to play video games. I like to go outside. I like to see my grandpa.

3. Do you play any sport?

I play basketball.

4. Are you ready for school?

Yes, school starts in one hundred twenty- three days, starts for me.

5. Where did you learn how to speak English?

I learn by me.

6. What colors does the traffic light have?

Red, yellow, green.

7. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter T?

Toys.

8. (I pointed to the window and asked a question) What is this?

Weather. Outside are children playing with toys.

9. What is the weather like today?

Sunny.

10. Would you like to ask me one question?

What is ant?

11. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

This room is color yellow. I like to eat chicken nuggets.

12. Can you tell me one story?

One little bunny is coming to work, and we go sleep and wake up it the sunny day.

Child 4 did not speak too much, but has answered most questions correctly, with some grammar mistakes (e.g. I learn by me. What is ant?, ...we go sleep..., ...it the sunny day.)

### **Child 5 (girl, age 5)**

1. What do you like to eat?

Bananas, strawberry, blueberry, an apple.

2. Can you name some animals?

Elephant, dog and cat.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Crocodile, sad, angry, happy, soap, water, grandma, and grandpa.

4. How do you say *operi ruke*?

Wash your hands.

5. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter S?

Oh my gosh, this is really hard.

6. What do we have in the sky, it is bright and yellow?

Sun.

7. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

Tree.

8. Would you like to ask me one question?

Are you have grandma?

9. Are you thirsty or hungry?

No.

10. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

I like water.

Although we may notice that this child knows some expressions that are not very common (e.g. Oh my gosh, this is really hard) and has a fairly good command of the vocabulary, again we may observe some grammar mistakes (e.g. are you have grandma).

### **Child 6 (girl, age 6)**

1. What is your favorite animal?

My favorite animals panda.

2. What do you like to eat?

Spaghetti.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Cat, dog, bird, mouse, lion, fish, bear, ladybug, elephant, music, tree, brown, flower, house, green, red, yellow, black, pink, sunflower, sun, angry, sad, and purple

4. Are you happy?

Yes.

5. Can you tell me one story?

*Pa dobro ja nisam Englez!*

Child 6 has a fairly good knowledge of the basic vocabulary, but did not talk much and even refused to tell a story in English saying in her mother tongue that she was not English.

**Child 7 (boy, age 6)**

1. What do you like to eat?

Watermelon, pumpkin.

2. What is your favorite animal?

Dog.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Blue, orange, green, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, butterfly, car, sun, black, big, small, quiet, seed, grass, happy, poppy, and bread.

4. Would you like to ask me one question?

What is your name?

5. How do you say some phrases you know in English?

Wash your hands, have a nice meal.

6. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter N?

Net.

7. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?

Brush.

8. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter M?

Mom.

9. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter S?

Sun.

10. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

Green, blue and tree (*Kako može tree biti drvo, kada je three broj?*).

11. Are you happy?

Yes

12. Can you tell me a song that you like?

Sing a song of flowers.

13. How would you tell me *da si velik*?

Big *ali ja sam* small.

14. Can you tell me one story?

One big spider is car. Spider Marko happy. Blue, black and red.

Child 7 made an exceptional observation when he noticed a similarity between the words tree and three, which to this child sounded the same. Another interesting answer was when he was supposed to translate the phrase saying that he was big, which he did, but added that it was not true because he was actually small. In the task where the child was asked to tell the story, we can observe that although he knew a significant number of words in English, when asked to produce sentences, it was not as successful.

### **Child 8 (boy, age 7)**

1. What do you like to eat?

Apple.

2. What is your favorite animal?

Dog.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Tractor, dog, truck, blue, red, green, purple, sun, seed, yellow, sunflower, eyes, lips, ears, foot, ball, monkey, cat, tiger, big happy, and football.

4. Would you like to ask me one question?

What is your name?

5. How do you say some phrases you know in English?

Have a nice meal.

6. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?

Boat.

7. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter S?

Sunflower.

8. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter M?

Mother.

9. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter T?

Tiger.

10. (I pointed to the window and asked a question) What is this?

Car, tree.

11. Can you tell me a song that you like?

Sing a song of flowers.

12. Are you happy?

Yes.

13. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

Book is big.

14. Can you tell me one story?

I big and football. Happy. Apple.

Similar as in the previous example we can observe that although the child could list a significant number of words in English, when asked to produce sentences, it was not as successful (e.g. I big and football. Happy. Apple.)

### **Child 9 (boy, age 6)**

1. What do you like to do?

Play with brother.

2. What is your favorite animal?

Horse.

3. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Big, small, sun, car, bicycle, monkey, cat, flower, blue, black, green, purple, pink, orange, yellow, brown, grey, white, and sunflower.

4. Would you like to ask me one question?

What is your name?

5. How do you say some phrases you know in English?

Have a nice meal, wash your hands.



6. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter M?

Monkey.

7. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter D?

Dad.

8. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter G?

Green.

9. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?

Bicycle.

10. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

Sun, house, tree, car and sunflower.

11. Are you happy?

Yes.

12. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

I like bicycle.

13. Can you tell me one story?

No.

This child as also able to correctly list a number of words and even phrases in English, but refused to tell a story, which makes it hard to estimate the child's command of English more precisely.

### **Child 10 (boy, age 6)**

1. What is your favorite animal?

Elephant.

2. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Ice cream, mother, cheese, car, big, small, wolf, bear, dog, cat, pink, yellow, blue, red, black, purple, tree, sun, head, guitar, banana, and baby.

3. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

House.

4. Are you happy?

Yes.

Child 10 answered all the questions correctly, but the answers were rather short and the child was reluctant to speak, probably because of the insufficient knowledge of the English language.

**Child 11 (boy, age 6)**

1. What is your favorite animal?

Lion.

2. Can you name some things that you know in English?

Blue, orange, yellow, purple, green, sun, lion, dog, cat, monkey, flower, head, hands, house, black, and red.

3. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter B?

Banana.

4. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter M?

Mom.

5. Can you tell me a word that starts with the letter L?

Lion.

6. (I pointed to the window and asked the question) What is this?

House, sun.

7. Can you tell me a song that you like?

Red light.

8. Are you happy?

Yes.

9. Can you tell me one sentence in English?

My name is G.

10. Can you tell me one story?

No.

Finally, in this last interview, we may observe that the child has answered all the questions correctly, has listed a number of words in English when asked to do so, but the answers

were short and the child refused to tell a story. Again, we may assume it was because of the child's insufficient knowledge of the English language.

#### 4. Conclusion

Pre-primary EFL acquisition may improve learners' long-term outcomes. That is why it is beneficial to start learning the foreign language at an early age. Children frequently ask questions because that is one of the ways in which they learn. As proposed by many experts and even presented in this thesis, children also learn a lot by playing and singing songs and rhymes. Early foreign language learning should therefore be placed into contexts where the language is meaningful and useful, such as in everyday or playful circumstances, as play is a child's natural learning environment in the pre-primary years. Additionally, they are less self-conscious than older learners, which encourages them to use the language more frequently and confidently. Initially they learn by copying and repeating, followed by expanding on and imaginatively rearranging their existing knowledge. As the outdoor curriculum is learning that happens in nature, it has numerous cognitive, social/emotional, spiritual, and physical benefits. One of the most important advantages of spending time outdoors is that children are not limited by the usual borders; they can explore, create and develop self-confidence. The analysis presented in this research has shown that children who have been learning English for a few years can communicate with each other as well as their kindergarten teacher. This proves that their future foreign language development already has a good starting point. Secondly, after analyzing the interviews, it may be concluded that the children in this research have a rich vocabulary and they confidently use many words (e.g. words for different types of animals, colors, and adjectives, as well as words that begin with a specific letter) and phrases such as 'have a nice meal' and 'wash your hands'. They knew them because they used them every day. Naturally, some children knew significantly more than others. For example, in addition to the high frequency words such as cat, dog, tree, etc, some children knew words like sunflower, poppy, guitar, bicycle, tractor, brush, watermelon, pumpkin, ladybug, crocodile, soap, and rainbow. Those are the words that children are currently learning with new songs and rhymes. Finally, although this research has provided some insight into the EFL lessons and activities used and children's command of EFL, for a more detailed analysis and a deeper understanding of pre-primary language learning and acquisition, in addition to the observation and interviews, other research instruments may be appropriate.

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## **Izjava o izvornosti završnog rada**

Izjavljujem da je moj završni rad izvorni rezultat mojeg rada te da se u izradi istog nisam koristila drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.

Marta Samodol

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