



Picture cards and picture handbook
for learning English as a second language
in day-care

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The purpose of this activity-based thesis was to create a picture cards and picture handbook for learning English as a second language. The thesis was done in collaboration with Laugh and learn playschool located in Helsinki. The aim was for picture cards and picture handbook to be used as a method for developing English language learning for the children, was also aims to motivate the day-care staff to support the children's English language learning by using these pictures during different activities in Laugh and Learn Playschool. Furthermore, feedback from the teachers, was to enable me to design and plan better visual material for the improvement of children language learning in the future.

The theoretical framework of this thesis was to define the language development of a child, focusing more on ages between two to four years, and some theories related to children development. To discuss the early childhood education, using the National Curriculum on Early Childhood education and care, the early childhood education in Helsinki, Language Support in early childhood education and Bilingualism in early childhood. Finally, was to also analyse the use of pictures cards and picture handbooks as supportive educational tools as well as discuss the different types of picture cards and their uses and benefits.

The method used was called the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). This is a method where pictures are designed to represent words and concepts. The pictures were selected from twinkl.com and printest.com websites, they are colourful semantic pictures and action pictures with actual items which conveyed what was best for the day-care. The pictures were arranged based on the daily routine of the day-care and the surroundings. Also, the pictures that was used were suitable to my target group of 2-4 years old children at the day-care. All picture was printed, laminated and cut before use. The final product of picture cards and picture handbook was given to the day-care teachers to use during their activities with the children.

After two months feedback was collected from the teachers personally, I believe use of the picture cards and picture handbook serve their aims though learning using pictures is a gradual process. The full aim cannot be achieved within two months, so the teachers were encouraged to continue using the teaching material with the children.

Keywords: Language development, Bilingualism, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

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1 Introduction

In recent years, global migration is one of the most important issues in the world. It is also one of the major causes of children learning foreign or second language today. According to Eurostat (2016), foreign languages is taught in almost 100 percent of schools of EU Member states with English most popularly taught and used.

Finland is one of the EU member states where its authorities recognise the value of children learning other languages than Finnish or Swedish to native-speaker standard. Presently, English is the most common foreign language with 63%, Swedish being in second place with its status of official language (41%), while German comes in third place with 18%, being traditionally the most popular (Korhonen 2006). Almost 80 % of Finns keep to these three languages. Statistics have shown that language learning is becoming more centred on English language, because of the common belief that learning a foreign language other than English is no longer as beneficial as it might have been before (Inha & Kajasto n.d). The use of English being common is a result that Finland does a good job in training its teachers, and instruction appear to be effective across all levels in the Finnish society according to Haatainen (2005).

In Finland, children start learning foreign language after moving to the third grade, but the decision to lower the starting age for foreign language in schools and also introduce bilingualism into early childhood education is of great importance in the core curriculum of education in Finland. Since 2018, it has been seen that children start learning a foreign language already in the first grade in Helsinki city and some other municipalities (Teivainen 2018).

Teaching and learning are the important part in education. Hence teachers use different approaches in teaching their pupils. One of the methods is the use of different kinds of visual aids to make effective learning (Shabiralyani et al 2015). Teaching materials are crucial in teaching English in early childhood education and teachers rely on diverse range of visual material such as pictures, animation videos, objects etc. for teaching. The purpose of using visual aid in teaching is to assist the teacher with the presentation and transmission of educational content and to achieve the educational objectives, while it aids the pupils in acquiring knowledge and profiling different abilities and values. It also enhances the pupil's motivation, creativity, understanding, logical thinking, reasoning, communication and interaction (Bušljeta 2013). Visual aids are those sensory objects or pictures which initiate or stimulate and support learning. They are also any device which can be used to make the learning experience more real, more accurate and more active (Burton & James cited in Shabiralyani et al 2015). There are different types of teaching aids available these days. According to Shabiralyani et al (2015), the aids which use sense of vision, for example models, actual objects, charts, pictures, maps, flannel board, flash cards, bulletin board, chalkboard and slides can be classified as visual aids. This

thesis is focusing on creating pictures as part of the visual aid in supporting children learning English as their second language.

2 The background of the thesis

This thesis is focused on second language development in early childhood education in Finland. Early childhood education, also known as nursery education in some countries, can simply be defined as a form of education which includes both formal and informal teaching of young children up to approximately eight years of age. Early childhood education became a field of study during the Enlightenment Age in European countries with high literacy rates. In recent years, early childhood education was funded by the state or municipality due to its importance in child development. According to Education Finland, early childhood education is the universal right of every child regardless of their nationality; that is why it is subsidised by municipalities (Education Finland part of the Finnish National Agency for Education).

Further, some day-cares consider second language teaching as children develop in different areas of their lives. In such day-cares, there is need for visual material since it is more challenging for young children to learn without visual assistance. This visual material can be used within the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). This is a method where pictures are designed to represent words and concepts. This study will emphasise on the use of picture cards and picture handbook in second language development in day-care.

2.1 Activity based thesis

This thesis is an activity-based thesis, which is different from a research-based thesis. An activity-based thesis can be seen as an activity-based learning where the student is fully engaged in the learning process rather than been a passive listener. The student thinks of how to solve a problem while finding solutions to the problem. (Khan et al 2012).

The main objective of activity-based thesis is to look for a problem in an organisation and find a solution for it or develop something that an organisation may need for future enhancement and a final report is done on the process of the activity with relevant theoretical framework. Examples of activity-based thesis are creating of handbook, leaflet, guidebook, motor-sensory spaces, having developmental activities etc. The activity-based thesis does not always have a research question and research methodology, though, some do.

2.2 Aims and objectives

The objective of this thesis is to create picture cards and picture handbook cards for teaching English as a second language to children in Laugh and Learn Playschool. This is because the children attending the day-care are mainly of Finnish or other nationality and are learning English as a second language. The main objective is to encourage the use of picture cards and a picture handbook by day-care staff in teaching English language during different activities at

the day-care. The choice of the picture card and picture handbook method at the day-care is due to the difficulties faced by children in understanding and communicating with teachers in English during their daily routine. In most cases, this results in teachers resorting to the use of Finnish language for the purpose of communication with the children, instead of the English designed to be the second language of communication in the day-care. This was my experience during my work practice at the playschool.

The aim is for picture cards and picture handbook to be used as a method for developing English language learning for the children in Laugh and Learn Playschool. It also aims to motivate the day-care staff to support the children's English language learning by using these pictures during different activities. Furthermore, through the feedback from the teachers, this work can enable me to design and plan better visual material for the improvement of children language learning in the future.

2.3 Working-life partner - "Laugh and Learn Playschool"

My working-life partner is Laugh and Learn Playschool in Helsinki. It is a private English language playschool opened in August 2017. The playschool is open on Monday to Friday, from 7:00 to 17:30. The playschool has 400 square meters of indoor space. This include a room for each of the four groups. Shared space includes 5 bathrooms, a cloakroom, art studio, library, Lego areas, sensory area and dining area. All the rooms are set up to create the optimal learning environment that allows the children to easily access educational toys, material and books, enabling them to initiate and expand their activities. There are 46 children, 7 teachers (5 childminders and 2 kindergarten teachers) and one manager. The playschool children are divided into 4 groups. This includes the two to three-year-old "Brilliant Bunnies", four-year-old "Playful Penguins", five-year-old "Happy Hippos" and the pre-school group six-year-old "Laughing Lions". The pre-school children are prepared for school according to the Finnish law requirement (540/2018) and national guideline curriculum (2004). They are taught from 9:00 to 13:00 daily, from August to May (Laugh and learn playschool 2017)

According to Laugh and learn playschool curriculum program (2017). Children are not only learning what they would be learning at the public Finnish playschool, but they also are simultaneously learning a new language, English. The aim of the English program is to prepare children for entrance into Finnish, English or bilingual school. All teachings are done in English, but sometimes Finnish language can be used to help the children adapt to the new environment. The program is designed to actively engage each child in developmentally age-appropriate activities through fun and playful ways, prepares children socially and academically, as well as supports and encourages the development of independence, responsibility, and confidence which is essential for a child's ongoing success. The program also focuses on an individual child's social emotional, intellectual and physical development by offering concrete, hands-on activities for the child to explore and learn.

The children activities are not only done indoors, they also use the local park “Pohjois Haagan asukaspuisto” for outdoor play. The park is located down the hill from the playschool and is a walkable distance from the school. Other outdoor places which are used are nearby forests. To also change the learning environment teaching is also done outside in the school playground, where children can write on the sand using sticks to make learning fun instead of the traditional writing with pen and paper.

The values of the playschool are an historical and cultural way of action that is shaped by community interactions. The culture supports the goal of early childhood education to create favourable conditions for children's development, learning, inclusion, security, well-being and a sustainable lifestyle. This is done by listening to the children's interests and engaging the children in designing the learning environment. The children's artworks are used to decorate the walls of the playschool to make the children feel inclusive. The children can interact with each other freely and the room set up is altered regularly to encourage new interest.

The day-care claims to treat all children without partiality yet retaining the principle that this may not always mean treating everyone in the same way. Children are also taught to respect others. The playschool readily corrects acts of bullying, teasing or negative treatment of anybody (Laugh and learn playschool philosophy 2017). For example, when there are issues of a child being excluded from playing with other children, the teachers step in immediately and explain to the other children the importance of playing together and why everything is more fun when we have more friends joining in. In the case the children understand, the bullying stops.

The playschool respects every child's religion and they are not forced to accept anything that their parents do not agree on. For example, a child is not forced to eat meat at the day-care if their parents are vegetarians. In that case the playschool is not religiously affiliated in any way. They can have children from various religious and cultural backgrounds. They celebrate Finnish holidays, however rather than talking about the religious part of for example Easter, they talk about the spring. International holidays around the world are also celebrated, like the Chinese New Year where the children can learn about other cultures.

The well-being and safety of the children is also a major priority at the day-care. The playschool provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack. Each group has cooking classes at least once a month including practical skills such as buttering bread, as well as baking. Safety is of outmost importance, that's why safety, hygiene and emergency plans and procedures (e.g. in case of fire, accidents, etc.) are kept up to date and practiced regularly. (Laugh and learn playschool safety policy 2017)

3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of defining the language development of a child, focusing more on ages between two to four years, and some theories related to children's development. I will further discuss the early childhood education, using the National Curriculum on Early Childhood education and care, the early childhood education in Helsinki, Language Support in early childhood education and Bilingualism in early childhood. Finally, I will also analyse the use of pictures cards and picture handbooks as supportive educational tools as well as discuss the different types of picture cards and their uses and benefits.

3.1 Children's Language Development

In helping a child to learn and communicate effectively, it is important to know something about the term "language" and the theories that have been proposed to explain its development. "Language is the systematic and conventional use of sounds (or signs or written symbols) for the purpose of communication or self-expression" (Crystal, 1995 cited in Morgan, 2000). Language is a form of communication. It involves a planned system of signs or symbols which are used by a group of people to share meaning. The symbols can be in form of speech, text or, for people with very poor hearing or vision, hand movements or raised dots as in sign language and Braille, respectively (Bochner & Jones 2008, 3). From the definitions above, one can think of language development as the process of learning to communicate in the way that the adults in one social or cultural group do.

However, among the multiple skills that children must get or acquire during their first few years of life, language is one of the most important and essential skill. Most children learn to talk before the school year begins. However, few experience difficulties and this can sometimes lead to extreme frustration for both the children and their families (Bochner & Jones 2008, 9). The first five years in the life of a child are very important, as this is the era of language development because it is the best time for the brain to absorb language. It is during this phase that the children learn how to express their needs and feelings and communicate with others (Sullivan, 2011, 17). Children need to learn how to communicate, to express their feelings, convey ideas and interact socially with others. It is assumed that early language skills are developed through children's meaningful involvement with adults, particularly in situation that provide opportunities for children to observe their carers' face and listen to their voices during daily routine activities, games, and events in their environment (Bochner & Jones 2008,9). Children must be in an environment where they can be surrounded by language. Parents are the first teachers and provide enrichment in the lives of their children. They listen out for and announce their baby's first word, which is an important development milestone (Brock & Rankin 2008, 36). Parent communication with children affects not only how they interact with others, but how they approach the world, how they express themselves, learn, pick up social skills,

and achieve and exercise independence (Lathey & Blake 2014,10). Others are given by caregivers, early child-hood educators and peers. These language skills become the building blocks for literacy and numeracy immediately as they start schooling (Bochner & Jones 2008, 9).

In order to help children to acquire appropriate language skills, it is good to understand some of the processes involved in learning to talk. Different theories have been proposed on how language develops in children and they are based on two key aspects. First, the child's innate ability and second the child's environment - mainly those characteristics of the social environment that allow languages to be acquired (Brock & Rankin 2008, 5).

The different theorists have different views on how children pick up or learn a language. The behaviourist approach by Skinner in 1961 says that children's language development is dictated by the environment and the positive or negative reinforcement they receive from it. In other words, when a parent or carer shows interest for something a child tries to say or do, this should encourage the child to repeat the word or do the things (David et al 2003).

Skinner showed how positive and negative reinforcement worked by using a hungry rat placed in a box. For the positive reinforcement, the box contained a lever on one side. As the rat moved through the box, it accidentally pressed the lever. A bit of food fell into the small container next to the lever. The reward of getting the food if they pressed the lever ensured that they repeated the behaviour over and over. The rats immediately learned to go straight to the lever after being a few times in the box. This shows that positive reinforcement strengthens a behaviour by providing a situation that the individual considers rewarding (Theory of Behaviour and Operant Conditioning 2019).

In the case of negative reinforcement, the box has an unpleasant electrical current creating discomfort as the rat gets exposed to it. This time, the lever of the box caused the electric current to stop. As the rat learnt that when the lever is pressed, this stops the electric current, the rat constantly ensure that they press the lever whenever they are placed in the box or whenever they felt the electricity. Negative reinforcement strengthens behaviour by ending or eradicating an un-pleasant experience (Theory of Behaviour and Operant Conditioning 2019).

Even though reinforcement may help, this theory was criticised by the nativist approach led by Chomsky in 1955 for being too simple. The nativist approach says that children are born with a kind of hard-wired syntax that allows them to get hold of the basic working of language. The children then choose the specific syntax and linguistic of the environment from the available options in the brain. The capacity for language is a biological inheritance and languages are then stimulated mainly through the child's interaction with the native environment. It is just as if the children's brain is a CD player already set to "Play" language. When the CD for a certain language is inserted, that is the language the child learns. This Syntax is called language acquisition device (LAD) (Miskimon 2019).

Another theory on language development is the cognitive theory, which is led by Piaget in 1932. Piaget's cognitive view of language development is similar in many ways to that of the nativists by Chomsky. They both believed that language knowledge slowly becomes available to the child through heredity and maturation. However, emphasis was on significance of inborn "biological clock" in Chomsky language development, while Piaget placed emphasis on the contribution of maturation and in particular, knowledge of the language acquisition process (Bochner & Jones 2008,9).

Piaget's theory was based on the idea that children do not reason like adults and he describes the mental structures of children as they develop from infants to adults (Vickers 2019). The first two periods of the structures are also known as the sensorimotor period (from 0 to 2 years) and preoperational period (between 2 years to 7 years). Each period contains certain cognitive milestones that mark early childhood cognitive development. As children grow from infant to toddler to pre-schooler, some of these cognitive milestones may be recognized as they explore the world around them (Leigh 2019).

Piaget's concluded that through children's interactions with their environment, they actively develop their own understanding of the world. Its implication is that children's language reflects the development of their rational thinking and cognitive skills in periods, with each period having a specific name and age reference (Vickers 2019). One of the main limitations of Piaget's views of learning is that no consideration was given to the role of parents or carer who may encourage and facilitate children's development by provision of both developmentally appropriate knowledges and reassurance to assist in development from one period of cognitive development to the next (Bochner & Jones 2008,10). There are some proofs that children's cognitive development can be accelerated with appropriate instruction, though there is also proof that they encounter greater problems in achieving these gains when compared with children who are left to progress at their own pace (Beilin 1978 cited in Bochner & Jones 2008,11).

The role of parents and carers is to provide appropriate activities for children as a context for learning. The interactionist theory led by Bruner in 1957 believes that to nurture is vital in the process of language development, the language is acquired through social interaction in the environment rather than reinforcement (Mclean 2018.)

In the interactionist view, parents, carers, other adults, or older siblings can support or help children learn how to talk by spending time with them, creating opportunities for children to listen, watch, imitate and practise appropriate language skills (Bochner & Jones, 2008, 12). This theory offers a specific useful outline for developing an intervention program that is centred on parents, teachers, carers and other adults working as agents of change for children with language difficulties, by teaching them to identify children's present level of communicative

capabilities and context in which suitable opportunities may arise to introduce and practise new language skills (Bochner & Jones 2008, 12).

3.2 Two to three-year-old language development.

Children experience an amazing transformation in their initial years of life, from a helpless infant to a walking, talking toddler, and on to reading, critical thinking and progressive social interactions in a school setting. Understanding this period of early childhood brain development can help ensure that parents, carers, other adults and educators provide an effective environment for successful language, emotional, academic and reasoning development (Hill 2019). The Figure 1 below shows the appropriate developmental skills expected for each age group.

AGE-APPROPRIATE SKILLS TO LOOK FOR	4 - 5 months	9 - 12 months	18 - 23 months	3 years	4 years
Movement (physical development)	Does Baby do push-ups or bring hands and toys to his or her mouth?	Does child sit independently, crawl, creep or scoot forward?	Does child climb into chairs, walk forward, turn pages in a book?	Does child run easily, fall rarely, or kick a ball forward?	Does child run easily, or copy a circle and a square?
Thinking and Learning (cognitive development)	Does Baby listen to conversations or follow conversations with eyes?	Does child explore with hands and mouth or find hidden objects?	Does child put small toys into a cup, basket or box?	Can child tell his first name (or nickname) and last name?	Does child know the difference between boys and girls?
Communication (receptive and expressive language development)	Does Baby imitate some sounds you make (like a cough)?	Does child respond to own name (for example, look up when called)?	Does child point to objects or people to express a need?	Does child use words that describe things (like "It's icky" or "I'm hungry")?	Does child refer to self as "me" or "I" in addition to name?
The Senses: Vision, Hearing and Touch (sensory development)	Does Baby turn head or eyes toward a sound?	Does child enjoy or put up with different types of touch?	Does child respond when name is called?	Does child move to or hum along with music?	Is child mostly comfortable with change or going from one activity to another?
Relating to Self and Others (social and emotional development)	Does Baby usually quiet or calm down when talked to, held or rocked?	Does child enjoy watching (and may play) games like "peek-a-boo"?	Does child approach other children?	Does child take turns in games?	Does child enjoy humor (for example, laughs at silly faces or voices)?
Self Care (daily living skills)	Does Baby sleep regularly for three to four hours at a time?	Does child feed self with fingers?	Does child pull off simple clothes (such as socks)?	Does child wash his hands without help?	Does child brush his teeth by self or with help?

Figure 1. Appropriate developmental skills expected for each age group (www.nashvilleparent.com)

From the above Figure 1, there are six different skills that are appropriate for children to achieve as they are developing. It is also important for parents and caregivers to also watch out for those skills in their children. Those skills are movement, thinking and learning, communication, the senses (vision, hearing and touch), relating to self and others and selfcare. Among the age ranges reported on Figure 1, we are going to concentrate on the ages from two to four years by answering the questions on what developmental stage the children will attain by these ages. At around the age of two to three the children will begin to experience a development in which they start to create more concrete concepts, such as: hot, cold, clean, dirty, etc, as well

as develop their syntax in their mother tongue, and their memory (Lathey & Blake 2013, 189 cited in Viljanen & Ripatti 2014, 9). Children begin to put words together tentatively, often beginning by combining words they had already learned to say individually. For example, “more” and “milk” becomes “more milk”. Children also begin to repeat certain words they have heard often, like “go”, “bye-bye”, and “fix it” as large words rather than true combinations. (Bloom & Capatides 1993, 39).

The speaking skills of some children learning especially English language at age two and three includes the use of “k”, “g” and “f”. Some children also begin using “t”, “d” and “n” concurrently. Their speech is more easily understood by families and close friends. They begin to demand objects by name, begin to ask the dreaded question “Why?”. They may repeat words or parts of them (Laikko & Laikko 2016, 10-11). The children can use about 300 words including descriptive language, time, space and function, combine four to five words together like “my cup is dirty” and “I need more milk”. They can stammer or stutter when thinking of what to say. They develop understanding of simple concepts in plurals and prepositions like in/on/under, big/little. They understand simple “who”, “what” and “where” questions but not “why”. They have challenges using or saying speech sounds like “l”, “r”, “w”, “y”, “f”, “th”, “s”, “sh”, “ch”, “dz”, “j” (Stages of Speech and Language Development, Talking point UK).

With regards to the listening and social skills, children at the age of two and three understand a good variety of words. They follow two-step directions for example “Get the cup and give it to Daddy”. They also enjoy listening to stories for longer periods of time when supported with pictures (Laikko & Laikko 2016, 10-11). They begin to listen, to talk with interest but can easily be unfocussed. They listen to talk directed to them, but find it tough if prompts are not provided, e.g. use of statements such as “stop and listen”. They enjoy conversations but cannot stick to a certain topic, they jump from topic to topic. They can express their feelings towards adults and their peers using words, not just actions. They understand turn-taking as well as sharing with adults and peers. They initiate conversations and enjoy playing with peers (Stages of Speech and Language Development, 2019).

Concerning motor skill development, grasping both fine and gross motor skills are significant for children’s cognitive development, language development and independence that helps children explore the world around them. If not developed, they can have challenges with holding utensils (like pencils), moving things with their fingertips, and using utensils like scissors (Morin 2014). This can also in many ways affect language development.

Children of age two to three years can use clay in many variations for delightful activities like squeezing, crushing, and moulding (at this age clay is not used for creating any product). Also, finger paints and water play serve the same purpose. For example, squeezing and dipping sponges, pouring water from one container to another, blowing bubbles, sailing boats in the

bath tub etc. become highly enjoyable activities. They can independently walk up and down stairs, balance and walk on tippy-toe, self-feed using spoon and fork. They can play with parallel bar to hang on, wagons toy to pull around, toy lawn mower to push, pedal a ride-on toy like bike, outdoor blocks to drag around, toy that they can ride on, blocks in different shapes like rectangles, squares, triangle, but are more interested in manipulating and combining them in different ways than creating things with them. They can throw a ball in the intended direction, kick a ball with force, undress themselves and learn how to dress up. All these skills help children to develop strength and large muscle coordination as well as sensory exploration (Hughes 2010, 96).

3.3 Three to four years old language development.

From age three to four-year-old, children are more secure and self-confident. According to *Stages of Speech and Language Development Talking point UK* (2019), children begin to understand questions or directives with two parts: “get your shoes” and “stand by the door”, “it is time to put away your toys and go to the reading corner”. They understand the question “why” better, they are aware of time in relation to the past, present and future, e.g. “today is rainy, yesterday was cloudy” and “I wonder what the weather will be like tomorrow” (towards four years). They begin to understand words for some colours, numbers and shapes, for example “red” car, “two” buses and some vocabulary related to family like uncle, grandpa, aunty etc. They participate in conversation in which seven out of ten words are understandable (Laikko & Laikko 2016, 11).

Regarding speaking skills, children at age three to four years can use sentences of four to six words, for example “I want to play with cars”, “What’s that thingy called?”. They also use future and past tense. They no longer frequently repeat syllables or words. They include pronouns (I, you, me, she) and plurals (beds, cars). They answer simple questions and begins asking “when?” and “how?”. They speak and understand about 1,500 words or more (by age four). They are able to remember and talk about their experiences at friend’s houses, school etc. and enjoy telling long stories or singing songs. They are understood better when they talk to people outside their family. They may continue to have problems with irregular words, for example “run” for “ran”, “swim” for “swam”. They also have problems saying “r”, “j”, “th”, “ch”, and “sh” (Laikko & Laikko 2016, 11).

With respect to listening skills, they begin to hear when they are called from afar or from another side of the house, enjoys listening to stories and answering questions about a story book they have just read. They still find it hard to pay attention to more than one thing at a time, so they cannot easily listen to a person while doing another task otherwise they have to switch attention between the person speaking and their task (Laikko & Laikko 2016, 11).

Concerning social and emotional skills, they understand what turn-taking as well as sharing with adults and their peers mean. They can initiate or start a conversation. They enjoy playing with peers, they cooperate with other children, want to be like their friends and like playing “Mum” or “Dad” roles. They are able argue with adults or peers if they disagree by using words, not just actions. They can differentiate between fantasy and reality (towards age four) (Stages of Speech and Language Development, Talking point UK 2019).

According to Children’s Therapy and Family Resource Centre (2011), between the age of three to four years children develop gross motor skills such as begin able to throw a ball over their head, hop on a preferred foot, skip, leading with one leg, stand on one foot for 5-10 seconds or longer, run round an obstacle and walk on a line. They can ride a tricycle, walk up and down stairs with alternating feet without support and use a slide independently. The fine motor skills include building a tower of 9-10 small blocks. Within this age they incorporate blocks into imaginary play rather than simply assembling or positioning them in interesting combinations. They can create structures, such as building, street and tunnels that represent the adult world in miniature, which they will use to play imaginatively. They enjoy art materials like finger paints and clay for sensory appeal, but at this age they focus more on the results that their efforts produce from the painting and clay. Now there is happiness in achievement and an interest in showing off what they have created (Hughes 2010, 96-97).

Towards age four, children are able to engage in many activities which were hard and frustrating at the early age such as buttoning of large buttons in their shirt and even tie their shoelaces. They enjoy drawing for example drawing a small circle and drawing a person with features, they can cut things out of paper or across a piece of paper and cut along a straight line. They can start to hold crayon, pencil or paint brush with a mature grasp for colouring and painting. They enjoy wood working and imaginative block building with smaller blocks of different shape or Mega-blocks or Duplo. But the blocks building is more product oriented, the products are often unplanned in that they change as the project develop, but the plan may also change continuously as the play blocks change in appearance (Hughes 2010, 96-97).

4 Early Childhood Education

In Finland Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) includes both children’s day-care arrangements offered to families to fulfil the children’s care needs of parents and children under school age, as well as the goal-oriented early childhood education for children, with emphasis on pedagogy. The framework for the implementation of ECEC is provided by the Act and Decree on Children’s Day Care (1973), the Government Resolution Concerning the National Policy Definition on Early Childhood Education and Care (2002), the National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2003), the Basic Education Act (1998) and the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education (2000) (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2004).

The aim of the national curriculum guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care is to provide a national tool for guiding early childhood education and care. The aim is also to promote and ensure the provision of ECEC have equal terms all over Finland, to supervise the progress of the activity's contents, and to ensure that the developing quality of the activities are unchanging by introducing uniform principles for organising the activities. It also aims to increase the professional awareness of ECEC workers, multi-professional co-operation between different services providers supporting children and their families before the children start the compulsory education, as well as the engagement of parents in ECEC services. With core curricula for pre-school and basic education, it aims to form a national framework for promoting children's well-being, development and learning.

In Finland early childhood education is based on a national early childhood education plan that all municipalities, joint municipal authorities and private service providers must follow, called "the national core curriculum for early childhood education and care". Furthermore, each municipality - and often each day-care - planned their own early childhood education, which is targeted to the support of early childhood education in that specific municipality. What are mostly considered are the location and the environment of the day-care. The needs of the children are also taken into consideration when constructing the plan. The planning of activities is based on the information from the early childhood educational process at day-care. Each child has their own individual early child-hood education plan called VASU (varhaiskasvatussuunnitelma), which is usually updated annually. The purpose is to create support for children's development, with the benefit and needs of the children as priority (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018.)

According to the Act on early childhood education and care (540/2018) it "lays provision on the right of early childhood education and care, organisation of early childhood education and care, and the data repository for early childhood education and care". The aim of this Act is to promote the holistic growth, development, health and wellbeing of all children in regards to their age and development, create a positive learning environment for equality in education, for healthy and safe environment, positive interpersonal relationships between the children, workers and parents, to carry out versatile pedagogical activities based on children's physical activities, art and cultural heritage and play. The aim of the Act is also to provide support for children's individual needs involving multi-professional corporations where necessary, to create an opportunity for all children to have equal access to ECEC and to help children develop their understanding of culture heritage and each other's language, religion etc.

Also, all municipalities can largely organise or arrange their early childhood education and care to serve the need of families in an optimal way because municipalities vary decidedly from each other. Municipalities are also to ensure that children have the chance to participate in pre-school education that is compliant with the Basic Education Act (540/2018). The pre-school

is required to be arranged one year before the start of elementary school and is compulsory for all children to participate in it regardless of whether they attend early childhood education or not.

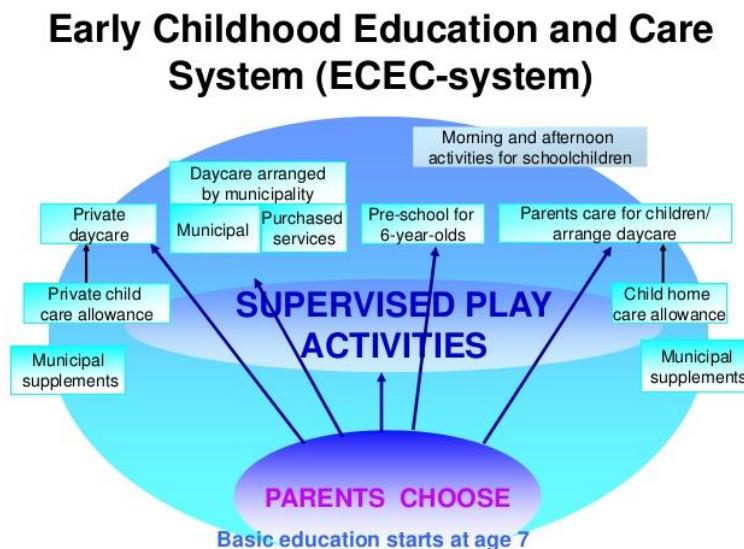


Figure 2. The ECEC system for children aged 0-6 in Finland (www.slideshare.net)

The Early Childhood Education and care system is illustrated in the Figure 2 above. The Figure depicts all options available for early childhood education, between ages 0 and 6, in Finland. For example, early childhood education can be carried out by the municipality as well as within a private setting. It is the right of the child for municipalities to provide early childhood education and care for 20 hours per week for those families whose maternity, parental allowance or partial parental allowance has ended and no longer receive allowance from Kela. Also, early childhood education should be organised for full time basis when both adults and custodians are working full-time, study or work as entrepreneurs. Early childhood education and care can be organised for children if it is necessary for their development, need of support or if it the best interest of the child (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland).

Finnish national core curriculums for ECEC is founded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child and Finnish Constitution. Both specify the principle of non-discrimination of a person's origin, language or religion and right to maintain "own language and culture" (Finland 1999,17; United Nations 1989, 8 &30). "One of the national core curriculums for early childhood education and care (ECEC) goals is support of mother tongue and culture" of all children residing in Finland regardless of their language and cultural background (Finland 1973).

According to the national core curriculums for early childhood and pre-school education, each municipality or private operator decides if they want to operate a bilingual early childhood

education and pre-school education. Bilingual early childhood and pre-school education in Finland are either operated lengthily or concisely in any language, often in the national languages - Finnish and Swedish. Other private day-cares operating bilingual early childhood education are called language immersion day-cares (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014; Finnish National Agency for Education 2018). The right of children from ethnic minorities to their language and culture, safe learning and development is specified in the National Curriculum Guidelines on ECEC (STAKES 2004, 13). The Finnish encouraging attitude towards languages of ethnic minorities has also scientific grounds. UNESCO in 2008 states that children who studied in their mother tongues, have better results in school, than children, who have not received mother tongue support (Ball 2014). The Finnish ECEC system and the concepts it covers are illustrated in the above Figure 2.

4.1 Language support in early childhood Education.

Language skills are of very importance for children's success later in life both as social beings and in pursuing an education. As discussed earlier, parents, carers, adult and teachers play an important role in language development of children by always conversing and talking to children as much as possible. Language supports the development of children's cognitive processes and allows meaningful communication. When children grow up, the purpose of language in supporting cognitive processes growth is important for problem solving, logical thinking and imagination. The aim of Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is to promote balanced growth, development and develop a positive disposition of learning for children that support language in early childhood (National Curriculum on Early Childhood education and care 2014). This aims provide an excellent place for children to develop their language.

To provide sufficient opportunities for language support in children at the day-care, teachers or educators need to be dedicated, sensitive and able to respond to the children's feelings and needs, create good environment, where children feel togetherness and foster the continuity of the children's friendships. They need to plan activities where the children's way of action and different content orientations are taken into account, because children learn in a holistic way. Encourage children to be independent by allowing them do things themselves and feel good about it and can get support when needed. Create positive and conducive learning environment which allow children to experiment, act and express themselves. Listen to the children and give them opportunity to make initiatives, decide on their activities, explore, draw conclusions and express their thought. Create a safe environment by taking into account the factors related to children's health and their well-being in general (National Curriculum on Early Childhood education and care 2014).

The teacher is to involve actively with what most concerns the children, and to support learning through these preoccupations. Have responsibility to bring out positive attitudes in children to both themselves and other people, and to put an end to negative ideas that children may have

gotten. The teacher should see the children's cultural and language legacy as the fundamental medium of learning. The children should be given equal opportunities to expand and develop and also to have equal access to good-quality provision. Good relationship with parent should be given top urgency as it is the most effective means of ensuring consistency and steadiness in children's experiences. (Hurst and Joseph cited in Whitehead 2009, 11).

Examples of various methods that can be use by teachers. This includes talking with the children always, gesturing, singing (action songs), dancing, clapping, creating opportunities for listening and quiet watching of other children and adult, animals, moving trees, etc. Looking out of windows, looking at pictures, finger rhymes, reading of storybooks, doing activities like food preparation, cleaning up and domestic chores, getting dressed, gardening, shopping, walks, visits to educational centres like library and museum, creating opportunities to play with soft toys and dolls, small collection of picture, poetry, alphabet books, collections of natural and manufactured objects presented in treasure basket (Whitehead, 2009, 12).

Play and fairy tales are also important for the children's language development. Language learning is always creative and personal process, where imitation plays a major role. Children make links between language and action when playing, which gives a greater emphasis to their own experiences, especially play, in the learning of language. They use language to give shape to the purpose of their play and to describe how it proceeds. (National Curriculum on Early Childhood education and care 2014).

4.2 Bilingualism in early childhood education.

Globalization has brought about various changes in our social contexts. The need and desire to become 'global citizens' sometimes dictates that we learn 'commonly' understood languages. The English language for example has become one such language that individuals need in order to easily communicate. Finland's education system has also taken English as one of the main subjects in its curriculum. Early childhood education curriculum, followed by preschools and day-cares, nowadays includes teaching in English entirely or partly. In some day-cares, English is learnt alongside the Finnish language. With this, children in Finland have also become quite 'international'. Global migration trends have led to an increase in intercultural marriages - in this case, marriages between Finnish and foreign individuals. There has also been an increase in the number of foreign couples moving to Finland over the last decade. This has all changed the outlook as well as the identity and environment of the Finnish society (Bashir-Ali 2006).

However, because of the importance of language as an aspect of culture, which forms one's identity (Bashir-Ali 2006), most individuals desire to maintain or develop their mother tongue. Even in cases where the 'learnt' language is more important and useful, one would still want to maintain their own mother tongue. Resultantly, bilingualism has become common among today's children.

Bilingualism can be referred to as two languages which are received colloquially before the age of three. Bilingualism is referred to in terms of categories and scales which are related to factors like function and proficiency. The expressions used are such as “passive” or “receptive” and “balanced” bilingualism. A passive bilingualism is said of a child who has no productive control over a language, but who is able to understand utterances in it. Balanced bilingualism is said of children who are being exposed to about the same amount of two languages beginning in early childhood (Nordlund, 2005). To have a balanced bilingualism there is no exact sum of exposure a person needs to get, but the rule of thumb says that a child should receive about the same amount of input in each language to achieve native-like proficiency in both (Fromkin et al 2003:375 cited in Nordlund, 2005). This was also supported by Nemeth (2012, 8-9), who stated that bilingualism can also be when a person can read and write in two different languages. The term used to describe this is called “Biliterate” and this is considered by some expert as someone who is fully bilingual.

Bilingualism has certain cognitive advantages. During the first three years of life, the basis of thinking, linguistic, vision, relationship ability and other characteristics are laid. The ability of bilingual children to concentrate, plan, multitask and memorize is better; they can also ignore distractions because their brains co-ordinate more strongly, which in a way increases their academic performance. Children who are fluent in two languages show better problem-solving skills, they demonstrate more in-depth imagination and are more tolerant towards others (Nemeth, 2012. 8,9). As children learn concurrently two languages, they mix words from the two languages they are acquiring. This is called code-mixing. Code-mixing may involve any aspect of the children’s language system such as phonetic, lexical, phrasal, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Also, studies have shown that in almost all cases bilingual children code-mix. Code-mixing enhances their language rather than causing a hindrance or delay since it enables them to distinguish between their two languages at early age (Sorace & Ladd, 2004; Essays UK 2018).

At the start of bilingualism, it may seem that there is no development in children’s vocabulary. Therefore, bilingualism is sometimes seen as a barrier in children’s language development and learning. However, this is not the case because for some children, if vocabulary seems limited in the new language “Finnish”, the children have a great knowledge of words and concepts in their home language and vice versa. Therefore, the children’s language vocabulary is more developed (Halme 2011, 89 cited in Törölä 2015).

According to Montrul (2008) bilingual learners can fluently communicate in the dominant language and are comfortable using it in formal settings due to their exposure to the language, particularly through formal education. A study by Polinsky and Kagan (2007) on languages heritage in the classroom found that ‘Some bilingual learners may lose some fluency in the first language after beginning formal education in the dominant language’. This is because most

heritage languages are spoken in one's family setting informally, and sometimes without formal training. This results in challenges in the acquirement of one's formal literacy skills and may limit the ability of one to practice the language in larger settings outside the family. Notwithstanding these challenges, the ability to develop bilingualism ultimately depends on the attitude of the learner. In a study on the attainment of German language skills, Dressler (2010) found that willingness and reluctance are two critical factors affecting the development of heritage languages. Language learners can easily acquire or maintain their language if they are willing to. The lack of enthusiasm can be a deterring factor.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, age also affects language acquisition and development. According to Montrul (2008), there are differences in the way individuals learn languages, according to their age. Individuals also differ in their ability to keep and grow their linguistic abilities. Montrul found that the loss of fluency is higher among younger children than older ones. She found that younger bilingual children are more susceptible to fluency loss. 'The older the child is when the dominant language is introduced, the less likely he/she is going to lose ability in using his/her first language. This is because the older the child is, the more exposure and knowledge of use the child will have had with the heritage language, and thus the heritage language will remain as their primary language' (Montrul, 2008).

The 'memory network' concept has also been used to explain an individual's ability to remember learnt languages. Au et al. (2008) in their study of one's ability to 'salvage' their infant language found that when memory networks are formed, it might be difficult for the mind to restructure information divergent to the information first learnt. This is because there is a sequence: the former information (heritage language in this case) was processed first. This is evident in the challenge's adults (particularly immigrant adults to Finland) are facing in their efforts to learn and absorb foreign languages (and even more, dynamic languages like Finnish). Montrul (2008) also adds that, as soon as individuals learn a language fluently, the grammatical rules of that language as well as its intonations affect their ability to fully learn the new language.

In conclusion, many factors are involved in the simultaneous learning of multiple languages, as pointed out by many researchers. However, parental input may well prove to contribute significantly to children heritage language development. Educational partnership with day-care worker or teachers is meant to assist parents in supporting their children as they learn two languages concurrently (Hämäläinen et al 2004, 34-35). However, there is a need to support children's heritage language also in day-care since bilingual children are not only learning languages but also learning to relate with two different cultures as well as to use the language in culturally appropriate ways. Early childhood education should aim for functional bilingualism, whereby bilingual children should be able to switch between languages when needed, even when these languages are not developed at the same level (Halme 2011, 92)

5 Pictures as supportive education tools

Individuals have long accepted the idea that a picture can replace a thousand words, and similarly, that a simple graph can replace a table full of numbers. Basic visualisation allows us to immediately comprehend a message by detecting notable patterns, trends, and outliers in the data (Lankow, Crooks & Ritchie 2012, 30).

Nowadays, picture cards are used by many professionals like teachers, speech therapists, psychologists, counsellors, crisis workers, business coaches, kindergarten teachers, managers, professional guidance counsellors and occupational therapists. To support or enhance communication between themselves and their client. Everyone can use it, because it has no limits when it comes to age, sex, language and cultural or educational differences (Eysenck 2012).

Play and storytelling can also support children language learning. However, the focus of this thesis is going to be the use of picture cards as a means for language learning in early childhood education. Currently, most children speak language other than English at home, and many children enter day-care as second language learners. In order to help these children learn those new words right away, for them to be able to communicate their needs, build trust and sense of safety they will need extra support. One of the major supports is the use of picture cards, to link the language the children previously have and the new language they are learning now. Visuals i.e. pictures with printed text can assist, as the child sees a picture and printed words at the same time. According to Rohman, (2016,13), picture is a description of something that allows one to form a mental picture or impression of it. Picture can play an important role in contextualizing the language children use by giving them a reference and helping children to be discipline their activity.

This picture method is called Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). The pictures are designed to represent words and concepts. They are created either by using a digital camera to take pictures of acquainted items or by using cartoons or other accessible pictures from the Internet. Laminating pictures and words can make these useful. It was developed in 1985 to teach children and adults to initiate communication, until a child can get his or her needs met or be able to communicate independently (Glennen & DeCoste 1997). PECS can also be visual representation such as object, photographs, realistic drawings, line drawings among others, and can be used in increasing understanding, communication, and social connectedness. The picture cards should always be used alongside with spoken language, gestures, non-verbal communication and facial expressions. It can take many forms depending on the environment (Case-Smith & Clifford O'Brien 2014). Example of a PECS is shown below.






















 I want		 I see		 thank you	
 drink	 biscuit	 apple	 cake	 crisps	 banana
 book	 sand	 bricks	 pens	 farm	 puzzle
 shoe	 jumper	 trousers	 coat	 sock	 hat

Figure 3. Example of a PECS (www.laholyangels.org)

With PECS, children at day-cares are taught to talk about their day by using pictures and showing it to his friends or parent. PECS generally start with pictures of favourite objects of the child such as food, places, people etc., and progresses to pictures with sentence strips like I want cookies and finally move from pictures to using words. Through the picture card the child is taught to ask and respond to questions. For example, a child can be asked what he wants, and he can respond by pointing or touching the picture depicting a glass of water. In doing this the communication process begins to develop. According Allen and Langford (2008) cited in Karen (2012) mention that communication skills are the range of learnt techniques that help professionals to communicate clearly, warmly with a wide range of people.

PECS has basically seven phases and work well with approaches that use behaviour analysis. It teaches any group using this method to initiate communication, to be persistent communicators, to be able to discriminate pictures by selecting the picture that represent their needs or wants, to help use sentence structure to make a request for example "I want...", teaches to respond to question for example, when ask "What do you want". It teaches to help comment about thing in the environment both spontaneously and in response to question, expands vocabulary, when simultaneously learning colours, shapes and sizes. (Deiner 2009). It also supports the communication between the families of the children and the day-care workers or teachers when there is no common language.

5.1 Different types of picture cards

Several types of cards exist for different purposes, such as for communication, playing games, teaching, therapeutic purposes etc. Majority of them has pictures, words, or a combination of

both. Good examples to mention here are associative metaphorical cards (OH-cards), PECS-cards, spectro cards, Walker Visuals, Alias kuva and Huomaa Hyvä! -cards. These card systems are commonly used to enhance children's communication and support their positive self-image. People use different names depending on the use, including communication cards, action cards, coping cards, emotion cards, feelings and needs cards, and stress management cards. These can be thought of as the "official" cards made for the therapeutic or communicative purpose, but in addition, we can use regular playing cards, postcards, and photographs in many ways. Examples of some pictures cards systems are:

Huomaa Hyvä! -cards: These are cards with different character strengths illustrated with crow cartoons. They are a good example of a positive psychology method which is a good tool for schools (Vuorinen n.d.).



Figure 4. "Huomaa Hyvä" game (www.taikasaappaat.blogspot.com)

As mentioned before, Huomaa Hyvä cards can be used in a multitude of ways, but the greatest benefits can be seen when using the strength-based approach. For example, for positive reinforcement, praise, encouragement and positive feedback for the well-being and self-esteem in children. The goal of Huomaa Hyvä cards is for the children to find a few strengths of character that define them, and with the help of the teacher and the class to explore and describe these strengths creating an empowered and happy child. (VIA Institute on Character n.d.).

Dixit game: An award-winning creative storytelling game Dixit is a board game for developing creativity and appreciation; one player tells a story based on a card, while the others try to guess which card the story is about (Libellund 2008).



Figure 5. “Dixit” game

It is a game, and hence a competition, but is a good tool for developing communication and self-expression. Slightly different example is More Than One Story -card game. This game was originally developed with the purpose of facilitating integration and inclusion by initiating conversations with questions cards related on experiences (not opinions), and so participants can practice active listening with the goal of reducing prejudice and fears (Wikenhed 2018).

French Photo Lange, North American Walker Visuals and Finnish Spectro cards are examples of associative phototherapeutic tools. They are pictures depicting different situations, mainly used by therapists to aid the expression of feelings and emotions by their clients. Phototherapy is a field of its own and often also includes taking photographs and recreating scenes from a client’s life. When using prefabricated picture cards, client and the therapist go deep into the feeling the client sub-consciously senses. Discussion topics can involve; “Would you like to be in this picture?” “What happened after taking this picture?” “If you could change the colour, what would you change it to?” (Halkola et al. 2009).

5.2 Benefits of picture cards and picture handbooks

As we know generally, picture cards inform us, they explain, clarify, elucidate and at times entertain and delight us. They are used as visual supports to assist children in terms of teaching and communication (Noviz 2012).

The benefit of using pictures or graphic, is that they are not transient in nature. A picture remains as long the learner or user needs it, unlike when we just use language. Research based

benefits shows that it facilitates acquisition of speech, it increases social approach during play, reduces behaviour management targets rates (even when not specifically addressed) and is easily understood by children (Noviz 2012).

Picture encouraged children to learn language. It gives stimulation which enable the learner to memorize new vocabularies when they look at pictures because learning new language means learning new vocabulary which is sometimes totally different to the learner native language. It is easy to understand and use by all age and can create peaceful and relaxing environment for children to enjoy. It makes children interested in the teaching and active in answering questions. Using pictures for teaching allows children to associate the pictures with meanings rather than meaningless memorization (Rohman 2016,15-16).

Pictures can help children to translate abstract ideas into more realistic forms, it supports children to understand more general context when used by the teachers at day-cares. Picture support children's creativity or help them to discover their creativity for the first time, reinforce and grow their personal uniqueness, improvement self-confidence and self-esteem through having opportunity to take control and make choices, to experience positive emotion and improve well-being and provide whole new arenas for communication (Lee & Adams 2011, 194).

6 Planning stage

The idea of this thesis came as a result of my work practice at Laugh and Learn Playschool, where I encountered a child with language difficulties in communicating which inspired me. Hence, I decided to work with the child based on my personal experience.

One of the methods I used was the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). PECS is one training approach that has been used successfully to promote symbolic communication with autistic individuals and it has been found effective also for others with cognitive, communication and physical disabilities, including pre-schoolers, adolescents and adults with little or no verbal ability (Glennen & DeCoste 1997).

For PECS to be effective, teachers have to be friendly and creative with the children, as well as establishing a trust connection, in order for them to feel free and receptive. Also, I gathered different pictures from Papunet and Printest, which were relevant to the different activities at home and at the day-care. Papunet and Printest are websites containing educational material for early childhood education. Papunet is mainly in Finnish, while Printest contains materials in English as well as Finnish. Further, the pictures can be glued to the notebook after the different activities. Finally, some of the pictures can also be laminated, cut apart and used for playing games. For example, one of the games could be the "Who" and "Doing what" game. This can be seen in Figure 6 below.

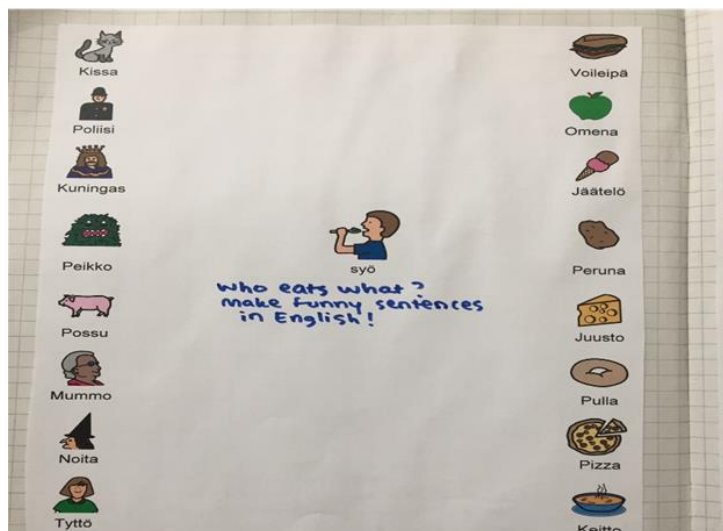


Figure 6. "Who" and "Doing what" game (www.papunet.net)

The idea of the game is to get children to communicate, not necessarily using the correct words. For example, the policeman and pizza cards can be put together and used to build a sentence like "Policeman eat Pizza". In this manner, children are encouraged to also pick their favourite cards and voice out their own description.

Other pictures were about day-care and songs as seen in Figure 7 below.

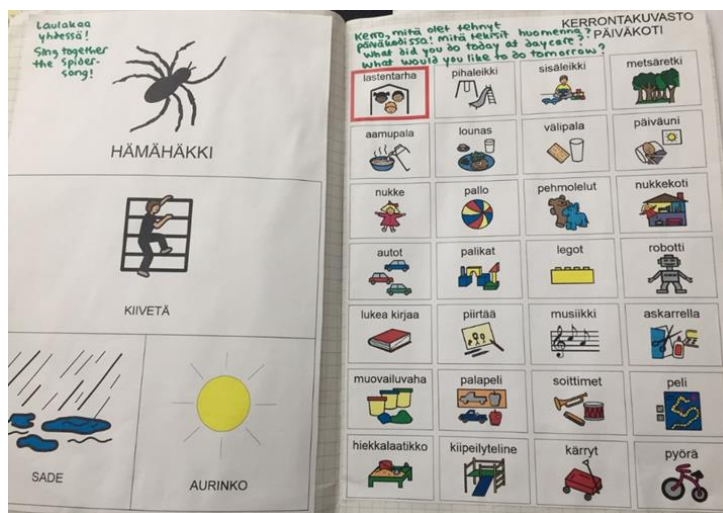


Figure 7. Day-care songs and routine (papunet.net)

Here, for example, children can point at the pictures randomly and identify the ones they know. Children can also try to pronounce the other words. This method revealed to be useful and got all the other children's and teachers' attention. Hence the idea of creating picture cards and picture card handbook for teaching English as a second language in the day-care.

The aim of this thesis is to create picture card handbook and picture cards for early childhood education. This is to enhance English language learning at the day-care. However, in considering the use of pictures to stimulate language learning, communication and creativity, one is struck with the fact that the power of pictures is still currently underexploited. Pictures are not only used as visual support for learning, but their use also renders the finished product like picture cards and picture card handbook more attractive and hence more marketable.

However, picking a picture randomly and simply using it to teach children will not help them to develop visual literacy (Kieran & Daniel 2017, 2). In order to become aware of the different meaning conveyed by pictures, Bamford in 2003 cited in Kieran & Daniel (2017), proposes an approach to visual literacy as combining the understanding of the “syntax” and the “semantics” of an image. Syntax is identifying the graphic composition, describing shapes, colours, shadows, lines; identifying viewer’s perspective and position of objects; describing the relation between text and image and inferring the intention of graphic choices (colours, emphasis, shadows, lights). Semantic is understanding the relation between the image and the external world; identifying the underlying assumptions, values and ideas that influence the interpretation of an image; identifying the cultural bias that influences the interpretation of an image perspective; being aware of how the image relates to issues and cultural values to gain meaning. He went further to analyse it as shown in the Table 1 below.

Syntactical analysis	Semantic analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the elements of the image arranged? • What is the most important element? Why? • How was the camera placed? • How does this influence the way we see the elements that compose the image? • What does the colour palette say about this image? Why were these hues chosen? What do they communicate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who created the image? • Who is the intended audience of the image? • In what context do we see the image? • Has anything been omitted, altered or included? • What does this image say about our culture? • What are the underlying values and assumption present in this image?

Table 1. Analysis of syntax and semantic in pictures (Kieran & Daniel 2017)

Also, according to a study, semantic context does not only help people bring known concepts to mind, but it also teaches people new concepts. The study also shows that semantic context increases the feeling of learning and promotes positive evaluation. For example, when a bottle of wine is displayed with colourful and attractive pictures, it will get more positive attention from people than when there are no pictures. In fact, some people will recognise the wine with just the picture (Cardwell et al 2016).

Hence, all the pictures that will be used for this thesis work are going to be based on the Syntax and Semantic analysis shown in Table 1. This will enable me to create a picture card and picture handbook card that the children can easily learn with.

7 Implementation stage

At the beginning, I had a meeting with the day-care teachers where the idea of creating picture cards and picture card handbook was discussed. This is because there were no pictures in use at the day-care, especially in places like the toilet and library doors. So, I observed the day-care's daily activities in order to know the right pictures that will be suitable.

Below is the daily routine at the day-care for children between 2-4 years (Bunnies and Penguins) which was the group that I supervised during my work practice and that I am going to focus on in this thesis.

DAILY ROUTINE AT THE PLAYSCHOOL. 2-4 years (Bunnies and Penguins)

- 7:00 am: the playschool opens. The children that come early have a free play either with toys or read books at the library
- 8:00 am: Breakfast time. The breakfast is served till 8:30am and free play till 9:00 am
- 9:00 am: Morning circle
- 9:30 am: Different learning activities in little groups of 4 to 5 children depending on the number of children present
- 10:00 am: Preparing to go out for play.
- 10:15 am: Outdoor play
- 11:10 am: Inside and undressed
- 11:20 am: Lunch
- 11:45 am: Quiet reading and story
- 12:00-13:30 pm: Nap
- 14:00-14:30 pm: Snack
- 14:45-17:30pm: Outdoor

After the discussion and consideration of the day-care daily routine, I proposed to the manager the possibility of taking pictures from the day-care surroundings for creating the cards and

handbook so that the material would be as recognizable to the children as possible. Unfortunately, the proposal was not accepted due to the day-care policy. Therefore, I decided to search for pictures that could help children learning English as a second language as well as to develop their language, understanding and communication skills.

The pictures I used were taken from Twinkl.com and Pinterest.com since these two websites have teaching and learning resources for teachers, professionals and parents to support effective understanding and communication in English. Also, these resources complement early childhood education. The pictures from these websites are colourful semantic pictures and action pictures with actual items. According to Kimberley (2016), action pictures cards in a day-care environment are pictures showing children and adults doing everyday activities (drawing, painting, singing, climbing). When during different activities, these pictures in their actual form are used as visual aids, it enables children to gain better understanding of what is being said and they respond better. Children will be able to differentiate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or manmade, that they encounter in their environment. Through the creative use of these skills, children will be able to communicate with others, comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication (Kieran & Daniel 2017, 15). However, although pictures are taken from genuine sources to reflect the real-life situation that encourage language, these images are still largely made up of archive photos. Such images not only lack originality, but more often do not promote an affluent and self-improving lifestyle for the children (Kieran & Daniel 2017, 2). For example, some children with autism will communicate better when real pictures from their own environment are used for communication rather than semantic pictures. This can improve their lifestyle as they succeed in communicating with others.

7.1 The selection and arrangement of picture cards and picture handbook

I selected the pictures that conveyed what seemed to be best for the day-care and the surroundings based on the analysis in the Table 1 above. For example, all the pictures that I used were suitable to my target group of 2-4 years old children at the day-care. They reflect the identity or background of the children at the day-care. According to Kristina (2019) early childhood is the best time to integrate other cultures into children because it is the time children accept and appreciate other people. At this stage, children's brain has an extraordinary capacity to absorb information. All pictures were selected ensuring that copyrights were not infringed. Before use, the printed pictures were laminated and cut before using them.

The pictures were arranged based on the daily routine of the day-care. The context of the pictures explained the different activities for which they can be used. For example, I started with pictures that will be used in the day-care surroundings, like the toilet, library, art room and different toy pictures. This is because the children can easily identify those places at the

day-care with the help of the pictures even if they initially do not know the words in English. The pictures also make the environment friendly to the children which is instrumental as children learn easily from their surroundings. This is based on the nativist approach led by Chomsky in 1955 discussed earlier in my thesis, that children can choose the specific syntax and linguistic of the environment from the available options in their brain and the brain is stimulated mainly through the child's interaction with the native environment. This syntax is called language acquisition device (LAD). Also, it will make it easier for the teachers to direct the children without having to resort to Finnish language. On the other hand, the use of the first language alongside has not been found to be detrimental for the learning process of a second language (Bergroth 2015, 1-20).

The pictures used show a close representation of what is being done. They were actual pictures of the different activities that take place at the day-care and in some cases, like in drawing, they also depict the action. For example, when at drawing time the teacher shows the picture depicting the action of drawing to the children, the children will immediately understand because they find a relationship between the image in the picture and what they are being told. This applies to all other daily activities at the day-care. The advantage of this method is based on the fact that pictures with semantic context show understanding and the relation between the image and the external world, identify the underlying assumptions, values and ideas that influence the interpretation of an image, as discussed in page 26.

Examples of the pictures that were placed at the surrounding are shown in Figure 8 below.

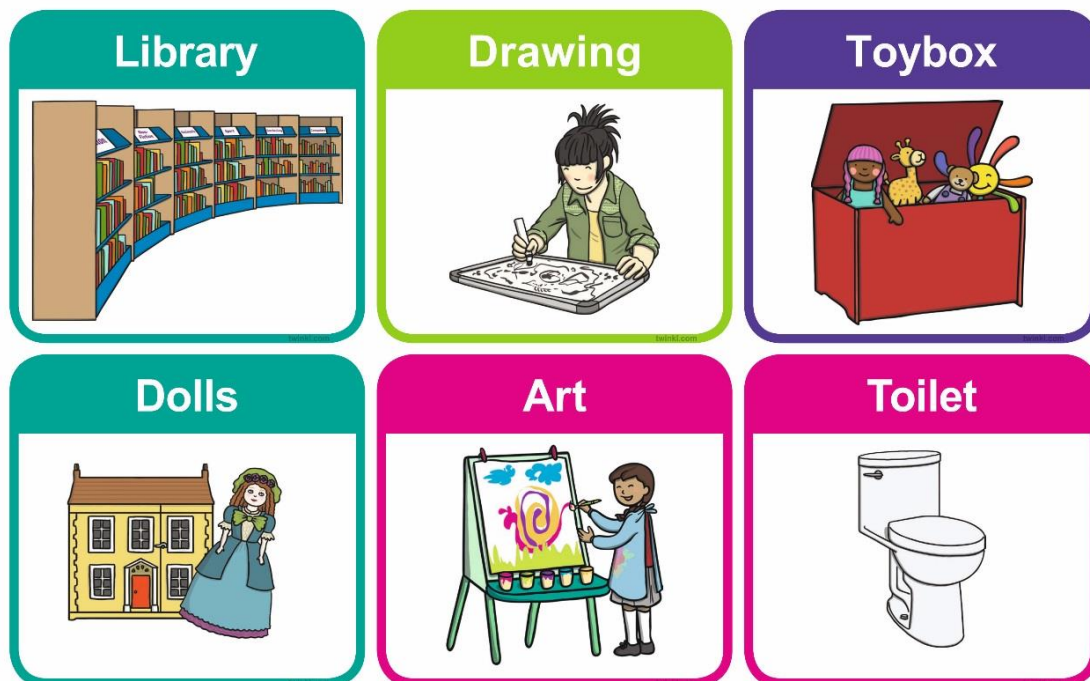


Figure 8. Pictures of the day-care surroundings (www.twinkl.com)

Further, pictures to be used during the morning circles were put together, as morning circle is an important part of the daily routine and the place where developmental activities start at the day-care. During morning circle, the children sit in a circle with the teachers as they learn to say “Good Morning” to one another, learn songs in English like “ ABC song”, “The rainbow” etc., days of the week and sometimes dates and the weather(e.g. sunny, cloudy or raining). Fridays are toy days for the children, they are expected to come to the playschool with their favorite toys. During morning circle each child will discuss the toy, and they are asked questions like “what is the color of the toy?”, “what is the name of the toy?”, “what does it eat?” etc. For the above activities, I came up with pictures of the days of the week using fruits in order to make it fun for the children to learn and better understand, as they are familiar with the different fruits. According to Ostroff (2012, 96) when using familiar context in teaching, it has been established that it is very supportive in children’s learning process. The pictures of the fruits with days of the week are seen below in Figure 9.

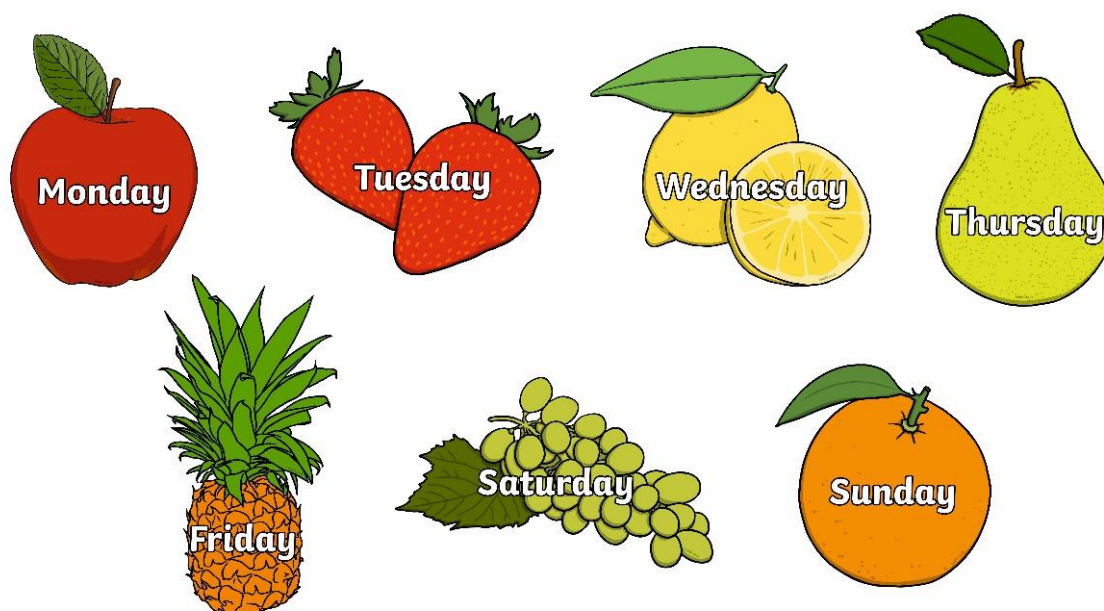


Figure 9. Pictures of the days of the week with different fruits (www.twinkl.com)

So, when the children see an apple, they can easily know it is Monday. A better association would have been with fruits whose names have same rhyme as the weekdays. However, this was not possible in all cases. Moreover, the day-care teachers also prefer this because the children can at the same time learn about different fruits.

The other picture was the pictures of weather, which will help the children in identifying the weather of the day, even if they cannot say the name but they can point to it when asked. Example of the weather pictures are seen in Figure 10 below.

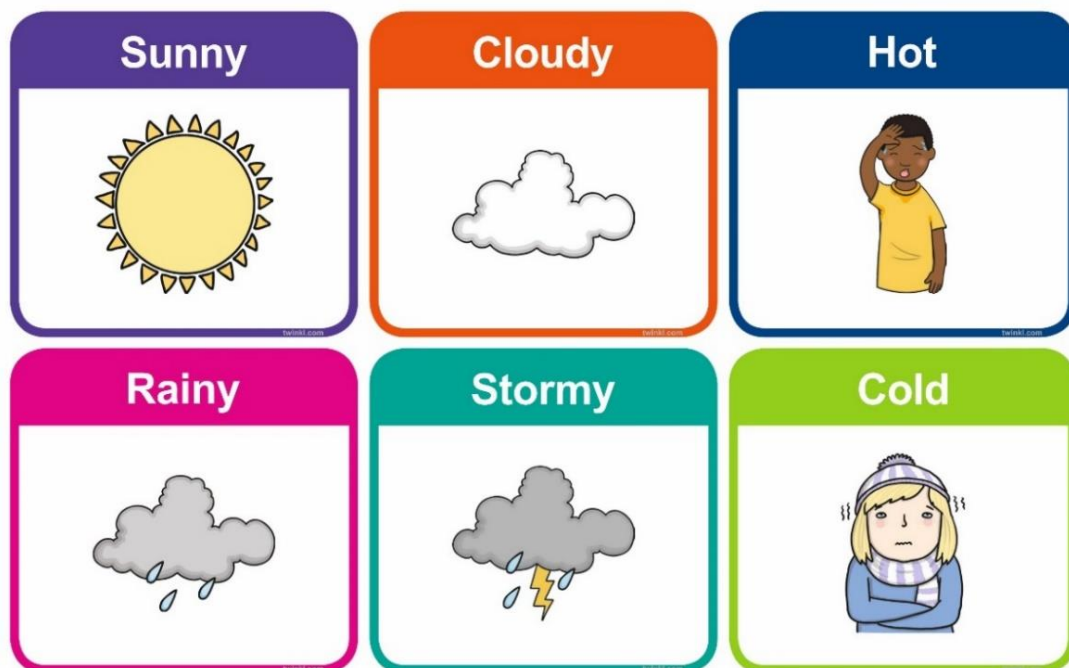


Figure 10. Different weather pictures (www.twinkl.com)

After the morning circle, the children are divided into three groups for their subject studies which are Mathematics, Science, Art and Craft. The group's activities are from Monday to Wednesday. The children are expected to go through the three different learning processes for the week. Thursdays are music days and Fridays are show days or free play time.

In the Mathematics activities, the children learn counting by using different objects where there are animals, cars, etc. Some of the children can count the numbers from 1 to 10 while others can count only to five and some cannot count due to their inability to communicate in the second language. The number counting is done according to the age and development stage of the children. In Art and Craft, the children do lots of drawings, paintings and other creative arts. In Science they learn parts of the body and hygiene.

In order to teach the children using pictures in this domain, I came up with pictures relating to what they learn. Examples are pictures of different colors in Figure 11.

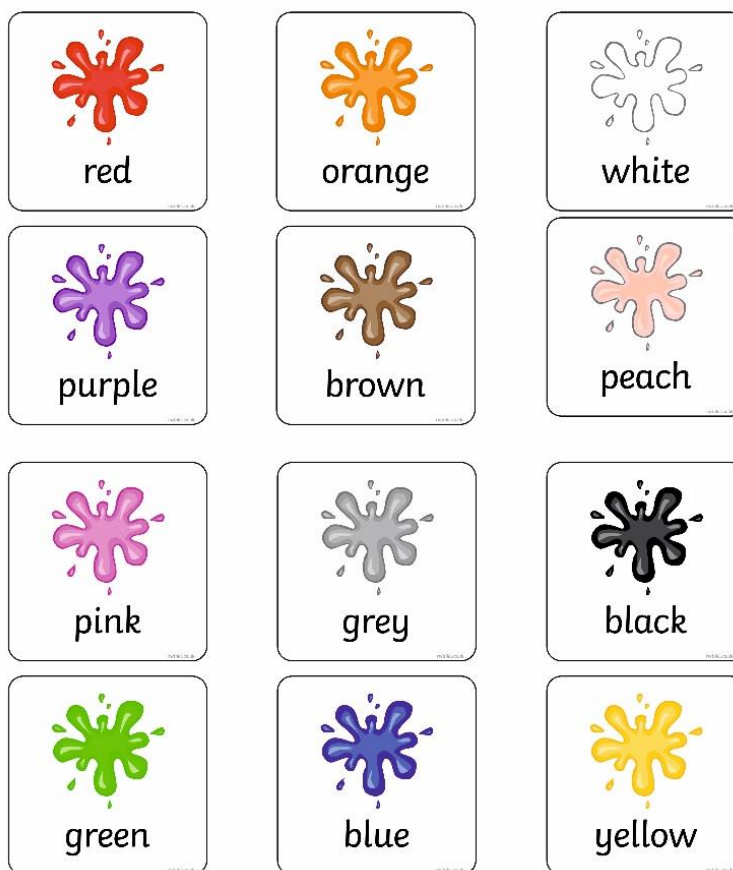


Figure 11. Pictures of different colours (www.twinkl.com)

In almost all the activities at the day-care, knowing the different colors is important. They use the color names when coloring, counting, drawing and in other activities at the day-care. The colors pictures were easy to identify especially for the 4 years old children. Also, there were pictures to enable the children learn parts of the body. I choose these pictures because they represent the different parts of the body, except for the genitals which were not included based on the feedback from the day-care which considers problematic the teaching on private body parts as these are called with different names in different homes and is willing to teach these aspects only when necessary. Further discussion about the pictures on genitals will be discussed in the reflection's session. Examples of some of the pictures of part of the body be seen in Figure 12 below.

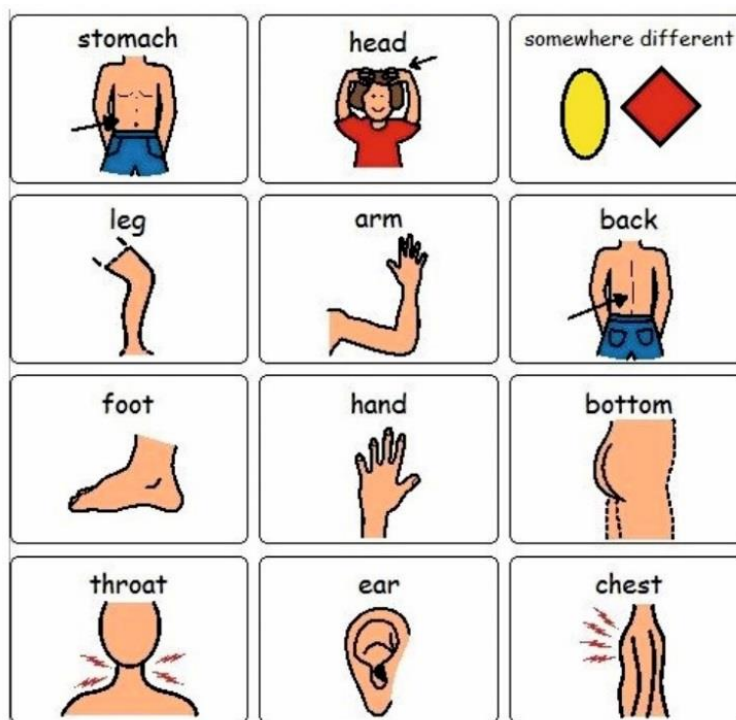


Figure 12. Pictures for the parts of the body (www.printest.com)

Pictures that can be used by teachers to instruct or guide the children were also created. For example, the teacher can use the pictures of “Get dressed” and “Put on your shoes” for instructing the children when going out to play. Also “Breakfast” for food time and “bedtime” for nap”.



Figure 13. Pictures for daily instructions (www.twinkl.com)

There are also pictures to be used during different seasons, like sunglasses, water bottle, sun cream, bicycle for summer, rubber boot and raincoat if raining, hat, gloves and scarf during winter or cold periods in Finland. As seen below in Figure 14.

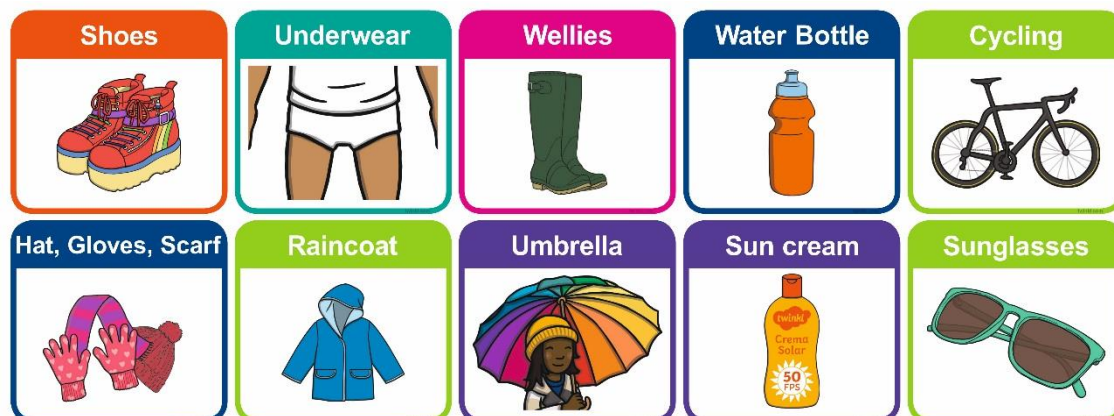


Figure 14. Pictures of things used during different seasons (www.twinkl.com)

Pictures of different activities in the playground were also included. These pictures can be seen in Figure 15 below.



Figure 15. Pictures of playgrounds (www.twinkl.com)

From the above picture cards and explanations, there was a need for a picture card handbook since the children have library hour where they go and read books. The picture card handbook may serve as a better way of learning English as their second language individually or with the

help of the teachers. Hence, the picture cards above can be combined with other pictures of different sports activities, hobbies, food, vegetables and treats to form a picture card handbook. Below are some of the pictures included in the picture card handbook.



Figure 16. Pictures of different sports (www.printest.com)

These sport pictures were added because some of the activities they can do either at the day-care or as their hobbies for example, skating, skiing.

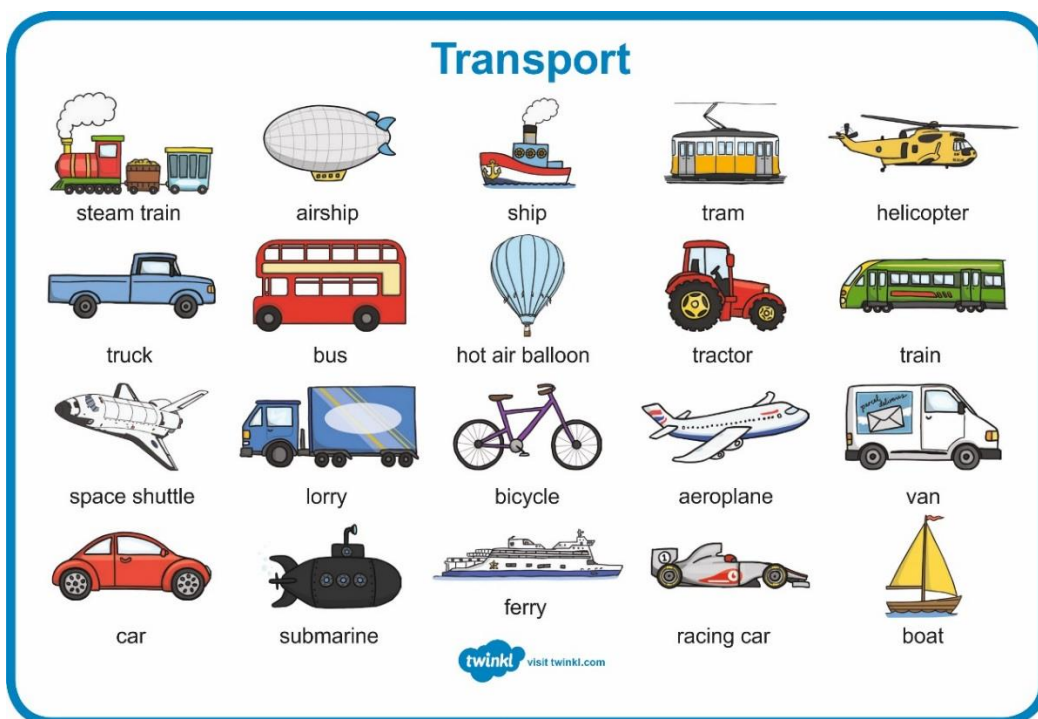


Figure 17. Pictures of different means of transportation (www.printest.com)

The children can be familiar with different means of transportation. They already have some as toys at the day-care, there are a lot of these in children's books and most of the children come to day-care with cars and bicycles. Learning others will be very nice for them.

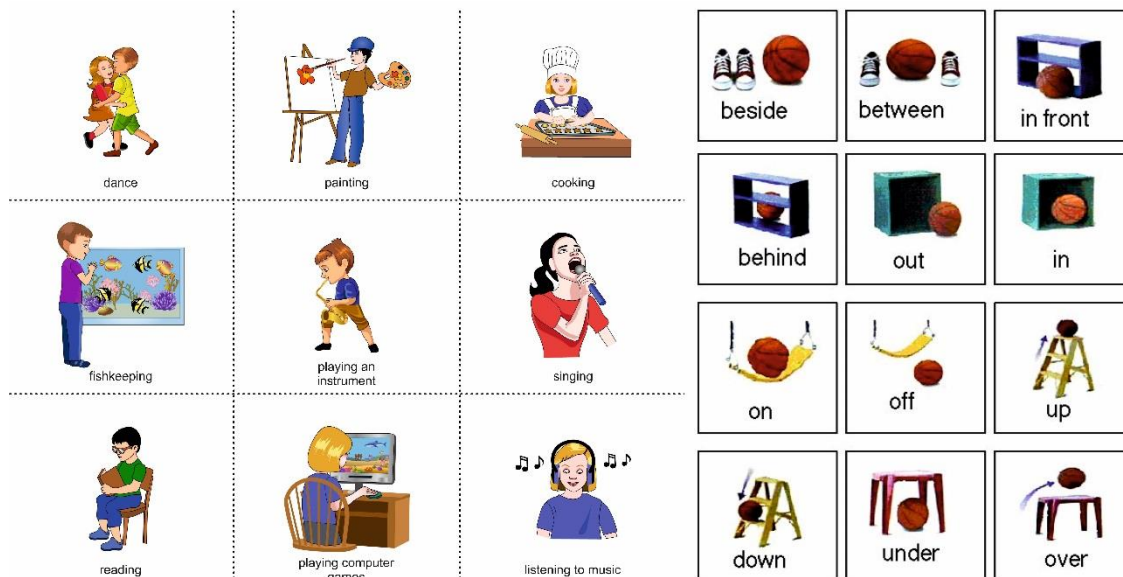


Figure 18. Pictures of different hobbies (www.printest.com & www.twinkl.com)

At the day-care the children paint, bake, listen to music, read at the library as part of their daily language activities. This different hobbies pictures will make them understand better when it is time for the activities. The picture of different position will help children learn about object position. The use of ball will make it easy and fun to learn because they are familiar with it.

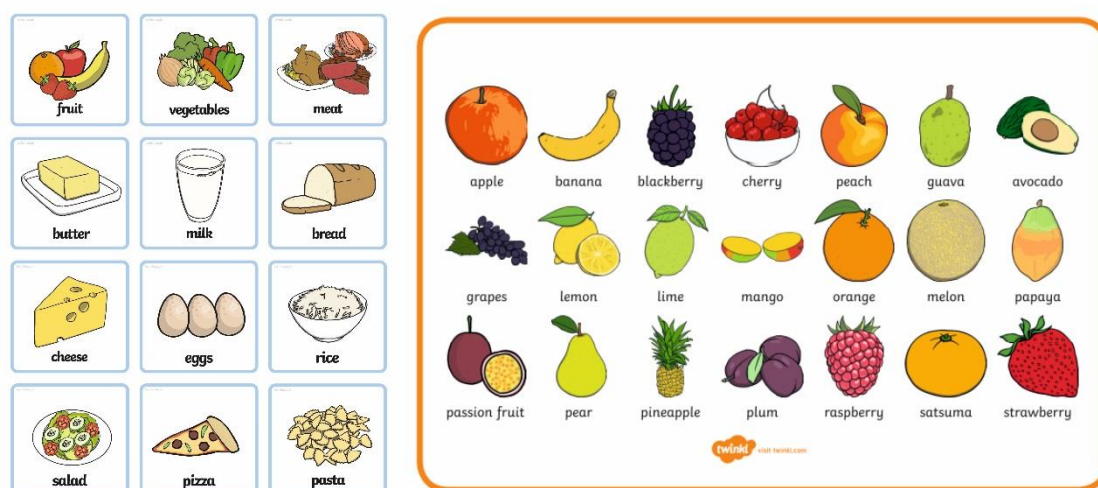


Figure 19. Pictures of different foods (www.printest.com & www.twinkl.com)

These are pictures of some food and fruits the children are familiar with at the day-care and at home.



Figure 20. Picture cards final product (www.twinkl.com)

8 Feedback

The picture cards and picture handbook were used at the day-care for two months. During the period, I visited the day-care twice to see how it was being used and received feedback from the teachers. Most of the feedback was positive, with some few constructive feedbacks for further work on the picture cards.

According to the teachers, the pictures were a good teaching aid. The picture cards support the teachers whenever they are using hand gestures/sounds/pointing etc. to emphasize a point. For example, while pointing at the sun in the sky, they also could indicate the sun shown on the picture. The children were interested in looking at the pictures as they were being used for instruction or direction at the day-care, since they were colorful and attractive.

The teachers also stated that the visual material I prepared was of a good range for a day-care environment and it covered most situations, though they knew it was impossible to have a picture for every situation. The children recognized the pictures easily because of the actions depicted in them. The pictures were easy to use when talking in Finnish with the children. For example, the pre-school teacher said that he used the pictures depicting the different shapes to teach Finnish to his group since these children were more fluent in English. According to the teacher, the children understood better when the pictures were used.

The teachers felt that the visual material not only enhanced their communication with the children but also encouraged the children to engage and inquire the names of the items represented in the pictures by showing the handbook to the teachers.

Most of the children who already spoke English to a certain level recognized majority of the pictures and benefited from them for building their vocabulary. Also, they stated that the pictures were nicely arranged according to day-care routine and that the pictures that were used for the surroundings clearly made the children know the right places where to go to, especially in the case of those that had started the day-care only recently. In addition, after the same idea, the teachers themselves also created more pictures, for example of the surroundings like the Exercise and the Dinosaurs rooms.

Finally, the teachers stated that the picture cards supported the children's language learning and development through the constant repetition of the words and display of the pictures in the surroundings and classrooms.

With regards to the cultural aspect, as the pictures did not promote any specific culture or religion, they were considered suitable to the day-care policies which do not encourage the celebration of religious holidays (e.g. Christmas) but rather refer to secular notions of e.g. snowmen and Easter bunnies.

The constructive feedback was mainly on the size of some of the pictures in the Handbook, which were found to be too small. The teacher stated that some of the names in the pictures were unfamiliar, though the children could still use the pictures without knowing the text written on them. One example was the "wellies" that had been used instead of the more familiar name "rubber boots" or "rain boots". The teachers also proposed the creation of additional pictures of feelings, expressions and songs that are usually sung in the day-care, such as a shark picture for the "baby shark" song, and a spider picture for the "itsy bitsy spider" song so that children could select through the pictures the song that they would like to sing.

The feedback from the day-care teachers was rather encouraging. The constructive feedback will guide me in improving further the material in future as I will use this method professionally. Also, from the feedback the learning through the use of pictures is a gradual process. The full aim cannot be achieved within two months, so the teachers were encouraged to continue using the teaching material with the children. The only challenge I had was in the process of arranging the pictures for printing, since my image-processing skills were limited. The arrangement of the pictures was done in collaboration with my friends Erika Gucciardo and Paul Mangam after I had collected all the pictures that I needed for the thesis work.

9 Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to create picture cards and a picture handbook that teachers at Laugh and Learn Playschool will use in teaching children English as their second language. My initial plan was to create pictures of the day-care premises in order for the children to have an actual picture from their surroundings. But after discussing with the day-care manager, I found out that this was against their policy, and the pictures might turn out not be useful if the day-care decides to change the appearance/arrangement of the premise or relocate. So, we concluded that it was important to use pictures that can be used at any day-care settings.

The final product was created with the need and wishes of the playschool, taking into consideration the pictures that will be useful in their daily activities. The goal was to make the pictures simple and as attractive as possible so that the children would understand them without any difficulty. The goal was also to help the children to develop their language skills which will help them communicating and expressing themselves. According to Edwards (2004) language plays a significant part in the development process of children's identity just as the choice of one's language defines one's identity. Also, Evans (2014) says that an individual's language capability is an endorsement for any person to identify with his group where the language is in use. Therefore, helping children develop their language skills is very important.

This final product has been made such that it can be used in different ways by the teachers, for example, for instructing, directing, playing games, teaching during morning circles etc. In addition, since the picture handbook used by the teachers is placed in the library, the children can also use it to create their own stories during play time. The picture handbook can also be used by older children groups, as some pictures relevant for their age were also included, such as pictures of different occupations.

The feedback from the day-care teachers on the use of the final product was that children learn better when their learning process is supported with picture cards. Picture cards should always be used alongside spoken language, gestures, non-verbal communication and facial expressions, depending on the environment (Case-Smith & Clifford O'Brien 2014), though achieving the result will depend on the constant use of the picture cards until the children's second language is developed. The process of language development varies among children; that was why it was important to discuss about the language development in children of the target age 2-4 years. From the teachers' feedback, the different developmental process of the children was also a relevant aspect.

In addition, the feedback validates the claim that Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) enhances communication skills in children. Through the picture cards the child is taught

to ask and respond to questions. In doing this, the communication process begins to develop. It also supports the communication between the families of the children and the day-care workers or teachers when there is no common language. Allen and Langford (2008) mentioned in Karen (2012) that communication skills are the range of learnt techniques that help professionals to communicate clearly, warmly with a wide range of people.

During the process of this thesis, I worked closely with my working -life partner “Laugh and Learn Playschool” in an ethically sound framework, as this is an important part of my thesis. I always listened to their wishes and made appropriate suggestions. I worked along with the day-care policies on values such as confidentiality and sensitivity. For example, listening to the children’s need, working together with other teachers, respecting the rights of the children as well as the choices and decisions made at the day-care, keeping information from the day-care secret and informing on my visits in advance. These are also the basic components of ethics in my field of study as a social service student.

In the writing process, I used reliable sources for my theoretical framework, theories based on picture selection. In choosing the pictures for this thesis, I ensured to respect the right to copyright and registered with those sites. I selected my pictures based on the age and developmental level of my target group. and checked other theses in Theseus for better understanding of my school thesis format.

Since I am training to become kindergarten teacher, getting familiar with the early childhood education curriculum in Finland and learning about the language development of children and related theories in early childhood education will help me to work with children professionally. Also, the process of selecting pictures was extremely fun and educative because I had knowledge about it before. However, I learnt a new approach for choosing the right pictures by taking into consideration their syntax and semantics. I learnt how to create picture cards with the focus of language development in children learning new language. I also learnt how to educate other kindergarten teachers concerning the use of pictures for language learning. Finally, I learnt how important it is to educate children on their body parts including the genitals. Due to the globalization, English language has become one of the means of communication in the world today and Finland’s education system has taken English as one of the main subjects in school curriculum. In Finland, early childhood education is well taken care of at national and municipalities level, and Finnish educators and policymakers constantly create rooms to develop child language learning and early bilingualism.

10 Future perspectives/reflections

For further development, the constructive feedback from the day-care will be put into consideration. In addition, in the next set of picture cards I aim to include pictures of the genitals

instead of representing them with shapes like triangle and oval (see Figure 12) and call them with their proper names in the same manner as done for the other body parts. For example, the hand is not called “hang-hang” or the foot is not called “walkie-walkie”. Professionals find it difficult to teach on private body parts because they think the topic sounds too clinical, obscene or uncomfortable for children to mention or talk about it. They feel it is the responsibility of the parent to teach these matters at home. They also do not want the children to go about using the names of the private parts publicly since they feel the children do not know how private this matter is for their age. In my opinion, children need to know parts of their body well because knowing them forms an important part of their developing language skills. According to Matthews (2017), when children are taught, they know and become comfortable in using the standard names for private body parts - penis, scrotum, clitoris, vagina - and they are also one step ahead in being protected against sexual abuse because they know the correct names and are able to talk about them openly. Also, using made-up names for private body parts can get children confused when they grow up and need to get their facts right. For example, they are more likely to feel embarrassed about asking questions concerning their private body parts, and they are less likely to tell when someone is touching them inappropriately.

I see the use of pictures not just limited to day-cares, but useful also at homes with children having learning difficulties. The next set of picture cards can be modified to suit both groups so that the teachers and parents can own same individual copies for better follow-up of the children. The picture card and picture handbook can also be useful for communication between the day-care teachers and parents who do not understand the language used at the day-care. For example, when giving parents feedback about how the day went at the day-care. The Picture cards can be use by children when there is birthday time at day-care or home and can be used for playing games. Hopefully, I will keep developing the picture cards for use in my future profession taking into consideration the syntax and semantic of the pictures more in detail.

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