

LEARN ENGLISH THROUGH SIGNS

Handbook



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Introduction

This handbook is aimed at those who are interested in methods of teaching and learning English as a second language for children between the ages of two and six. It is aimed at child care professionals, language teachers across Europe who are interested in introducing English language learning to their young learners and at parents who would like to know more about how to help their child to learn a language other than his or her mother tongue. It is also aimed at early years teachers in England where there may be children in the classroom who do not speak English as a first language and at early years teachers with children who do not speak English as their first language in international schools.

This LETS (Learn English Through Signs) handbook has been created by early years teachers, childcare professionals and researchers within the Erasmus plus “Learn English through Signs” project. The partners in the UK, Slovenia and Poland work with young children who are learning English as a second language at an early age in very different circumstances. For example, in nurseries where children start to learn English as a second language at a very early age (at the age of 2 in Slovenia), in international kindergartens in Poland where English is the language of instruction and in England in classes with children who do not speak English as their mother tongue (migrants, refugees). More information about the project and access to the learning materials can be found at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>.



Learning a language is a complex process which starts well before the spoken language. In the early years, young learners of English as a second language are likely to progress through the following stages (Clarke 1996, Tabors 1997): Firstly there is the continued use of the home language in the new language context, then there can be periods of silence for some learners, followed by the use of repetition and language play, then the beginning of the use of single words, formulas and routines, and then comes the development of productive language and metalinguistic awareness.

Each child has a unique journey through the stages of learning a different language and how they deal with encountering unfamiliar words and phrases. When a young child arrives at nursery you can start to notice their individuality and personality. If you do not share a common language with the child your speech sounds may be strange initially, but children are able to tune in quickly to other languages. The gestures, expressions and tone of voice will reassure and comfort. Young children often begin to use non-verbal gestures themselves as a response to a question. This can be later also accompanied by a single word. Likewise, toddlers and older children who may already have well-developed skills in their home languages and their body language, gesture, expressions and tone of voice will convey important messages and be a key part of your shared communications.

The LETS approach is built upon this ability and has developed a method of how to introduce spoken words supported by signs to make it easier for children to understand and to be understood in their first attempts to express themselves in a language other than their mother tongue.

The activities in our project were developed following the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. The partners were seeking to promote and value the children's first languages, their home culture and to build networks between home, nurseries and local communities. We hope that our project will influence the attitudes of teachers, parents and children beyond our project and will inspire also the teachers of other nurseries and colleges to continue the work started under this project.

This approach aims to encourage speech wherever possible and develop an understanding of language via visual signs. The system introduces spoken words supported by signs related to early years learning goals, the children's daily routines and concepts relevant to learning in the early years curriculum. It has proved positive for language learning and also in engaging with children, redirecting their behaviour, establishing routines, easing transitions and addressing different learning styles.

The handbook is structured into three parts:

- The framework of LETS approach with the models of delivery and examples of activities.
- Recommendations for parents.
- Case studies with the examples of implementation of LETS in early years settings.



The Model

The LETS programme is based on the use of signs, symbols and the spoken word as a pedagogic tool to support the development of speech for young children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) or learning English as a foreign language at a very early age. The Learn English through Signs programme is designed to develop English language learning by using signs and symbols to help with speech and language development.

When we use gestures, we increase the ability of someone to understand the spoken word because we add a visual cue and we also we slow our speech down and we use simpler language. These extra clues are especially important when we are using o

r teaching a language which is not the child's mother tongue. It can help children to understand what we are saying as it gives them an additional cue.

Once the children start to use the signs, it helps the teachers to understand what they are saying to us as well. As their first attempts to use the words in the language which is not their mother tongue can often result in words not pronounced clearly the extra visual clues are very important and useful. This means that his or her communication attempts will be more successful, which in turn will improve children's motivation and confidence to communicate with us.

The programme with the suggested activities will promote the development of communication, language and literacy skills as well as the personal, social and emotional development of the children.

skills

The activities are therefore also aimed at teaching early communication

e.g. taking turns, paying attention, listening, understanding of language, developing expressive language and vocabulary, confidence and self-esteem building.



The benefits of Learning English through Signs can be summarised as follows:

- Using signs while introducing children to a new language deepens the understanding of the words the children are learning.
- Sign supported speaking slows down the teachers rate of speech. If teachers are signing at the same time which gives children more time to process new words and phrases.
- Sign supported second language learning is inclusive and helps all children to participate in learning English regardless of their ability to say a particular word. Therefore the children of all abilities can join in.
- The children can communicate their needs and thoughts through signs effectively and help them interact with the teachers and other children before their knowledge of English spoken language allows them to do so.
- Sign supported language learning supports children's attention and listening skills which are very important when learning any language. It gives the children a visual focus whilst also using their listening skills.
- When learning English through signs, the children are practising and developing a range of fine and motor skills. Some hand signs may be similar to another and will require the child to position their fingers or hands in a particular way to differentiate the signs. This can be tricky at first but with plenty of practise, children are able to sign very well!
- For the children who do not speak English and join the setting where English is the main language It can be very difficult not to be understood and not be able to communicate. Even a few gestures can change this. Being able to express themselves and communicate their thoughts and feelings and being understood by others leads to less tantrums and less aggressive behaviour.
- Learning English through signs is most of all a lot of fun. The activities, songs, stories with signs engage children in a very different way and most of the children love it.

Who are the target groups?

Although we have designed the LETS approach to be used in nursery settings with a high percentage of pupils who are learning English as an additional language the model can benefit all children in the nursery classroom. The method can also improve contact with children who have hearing problems as well as with children with different impairments (developmental or emotional disorders such as learning disabilities, Down's Syndrome, Autism, Aphasia, cerebral palsy, difficulties with learning or producing spoken language, etc.). The common topic of the LETS model is that it offers additional clues for children to learn a second language and this is essential also for other groups of children with special needs. It is therefore possible that the approach of signing with children can complement with special education approaches. There are many children with special needs who have problems with socialisation in kindergarten and transitions within daily routine. They can find it difficult to organise themselves, express themselves or they can have speech or language delays or disorders or emotional difficulties. Our approach can therefore also be used also with these children. However using LETS in early years settings is primarily designed for encouraging learning English as a second language. If working with special needs children some additional adjustments to the teaching can be recommended, depending on the target group. Our case studies however show that the practitioners have used the method with children with additional needs with great success.

How can the method be used?

An additional aspect of sign supported language learning is helping parents to understand and therefore also further develop the links with the child care professionals to support the child's development. For example, the activities support the Early years framework in England including topics such as: A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments and Learning and Development. We use the so-called key word signing approach, where the most frequent words from the child's every day routine are signed.

The words have been identified through the observation of experts at work in the kindergartens and relate to the topics of meal time, dressing up, hygiene, play time, the important others (family and other) and feelings. Further words have been identified through the review of books and songs which are most commonly used in the first three years of child's development. We have come up with the recommended list of signs to start with when introducing sign supported English language into childcare playrooms. We promote the approach using standardised signs based on the British sign language. There are several advantages of this approach, for example it includes many iconic signs from the child's cultural environment which are therefore easier to learn. They can be used in childcare and other educational settings because they are standardised. When forgotten they can be looked up again, they can be used by anyone, in childcare and other educational settings, and furthermore they can provide an introduction to a second language.

Therefore the signs on drawings which are attached in the lesson plan all belong to British Sign Language used by the deaf and those with hearing difficulties people in Britain.

Teaching English through signs is based on auditory and oral communication. One of the rules is to always say a word as well whilst using key signs. By speaking and signing the key word at the same moment, this enables the child to distinguish the most important words and structures in a sentence. It can help a child to start a process of being able to have more auditory experiences listening to songs and simple stories.

Playful activities are the main part during a course and laughing, giggling, singing, and playful silly noises and gestures offer good auditory stimuli to the early developing mind. This can be very useful in developing the parts of the brain that make connections with sounds and that produce sounds.



How to start

If you are considering using LETs with the children you are teaching, first find out whether using gestures supported teaching would suit you and whether it is appropriate for the children you teach. You may also start with using only a few basic signs and see how it goes.

Our LETS website and eLearning platform contains lots of useful resources and information about where to find training materials and how to start. The signs are relatively easy to learn and can be picked up quickly.

At the start pick a few signs that will be motivating for your children and that they can use in everyday life and start using them. Don't expect the children to sign back to you straight away; it may take a while for them to start using them, but you might as well be surprised as some of them will start to copy you straight away and will be happy that they too can now join in 'talking' to you.

Learn English through signs supports the early years curriculum. The development and use of speech, language and communication are at the heart of every young child's learning. Children's later achievements are dependent on being able to communicate effectively. The LETS programme helps children work towards achieving all four themes but it will in particular support children achieve within the 'Learning and Development' theme and more specifically within the area of 'Communication Language and Literacy'. Early Years curriculums show that from birth onwards children should be helped to develop: Language for communication and Language for thinking and the linking of sounds and letters to reading and writing. In order to progress to become competent readers and writers, children need to have developed good speech, language and communication skills and children need to have well developed vocabularies.

Some tips before you start:

- *Practice using the LETS model first, lots of practice will make you confident in using the signs and make the method easier.*
- *Eye contact: make sure the children are facing you to make sure they can see you signing. If they don't sign along, make sure you watch closely, your attention is their reward.*
- *Facial expressions: be expressive and show a range of emotions and actions while using sign supported English, e.g. happiness, falling down, disappointment*
- *Memorise the signs used in nursery rhymes to make it easier for you to sign. Make learning the signs a game with children,*
- *Engage: lead by example participate by signing and signing as often as you can.*
- *Praise: Don't put pressure on the children to sign. Give them lots of praise if they join in. It doesn't matter if their signing isn't accurate in the early stages.*
- *And most of all have fun: Enjoy using sign supported language and make sure it's always fun.*

Cooperation with parents

Parents are the most important people in children's lives and every child's first educators. They therefore are very important in supporting children in learning English as a second language. The process is also in most cases the result of their decision. Parents however do sometimes have very limited knowledge about the stages of the second language learning, they also have different attitudes and expectations from the educational programmes. For example, we have seen that in some cases parents prefer that children do not speak their home language at the nursery at all and also prefer the nursery to take over the responsibility to teach the children English.

For every child care professional or early years teacher is important to find out about the language experiences of the child and talk to parents about how you can mutually support the child to develop their language skills (in their mother tongue as well as English), both at home and in your care. Parents' views must be respected and their decisions made in light of sound information about language development and the benefits of bilingualism as well as second language learning.

It is useful to start using signs supported language with a child new to the classroom or nursery

'My daughter is learning English as an additional language. I love the idea that sign language is implemented and used with children throughout the day within the pre-school. She uses signs alongside singing. Can't wait to see her performance on Graduation Day'.

-Ella's mum

from the start. Also use pictures, labels, objects, and real events to link the language the child knows to the language he or she is learning. This literacy and vocabulary-building strategy benefits every child. It is also useful to prepare a signing library with bags with words, signs, stories and props which children can take home. In this way you can encourage parents to learn sign supported English language too. Invite the child and his or her family to share their home language and culture in your classroom. Songs, books, and family holiday traditions are wonderful ways to connect all children with the wider world. Finally, remember that culture and language are closely linked.

It's important to be aware that every culture has variations in the way it uses language. Nonverbal expectations like eye-contact, deference to adults, and what kinds of information are considered private, also vary.

Teachers play an important role in the language development of children in early childhood classrooms. Your efforts in building a relationship where communication is valued can last a lifetime. Involving parents in this process is even more rewarding. Within the LETS project we have also organised workshops for parents to teach them the basis of the LETS model and to introduce them to signing.

'I feel that I have learnt lots of signs, my child has been using the signs at home. I am able to sign and sing nursery rhymes with my child and use signs throughout the day for everyday actions. The course was friendly, engaging and well structured.'

-Justin's dad

Methods of delivery within childcare settings

Evaluative and qualitative research by the partners with the nurseries and also between the childcare professionals during the transnational partner meetings has outlined the methods that the LETS model can be delivered.

The following are therefore suggestions for introducing the LETS model to children. Please note that the materials and songs are available from our website and eLearning resource.

More information from <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>

A structured language group approach

Groups could be carried out once or twice a week for a set number of weeks e.g. half termly using the lesson plans developed within the LETS model. Sessions would usually last between 30 to 45 minutes depending on the age and attention levels of the children. Any child can participate and would benefit. The group could be delivered as a rolling programme within the setting, changing the children taking part in each block of sessions. Several groups could be run within the same half term to allow more children to benefit – each group could work towards a different focus depending on the needs/abilities.

These groups can have a structured topic based focus and can be run by either an external teacher or the child care professional responsible for the group. The teachers do need to speak English to a proficient level. The latter will probably make use of areas of provision in the setting and adapt existing activities. Either will have to make use of a range of approaches to meet children's needs and provide sufficient flexibility. They will need to follow children's interests, respond to their ideas for developing play activities, and provide structured activities (which can also be playful) to teach specific knowledge and skills. Each group could work towards a different focus depending on the needs and ability levels of the group or the same session plans and resources could be used to target different children.



At the beginning of the block of sessions:

- 1 Consider choosing a topic from the list proposed or build upon a current theme in your setting to be used throughout the sessions.*
- 2. Gather together real objects, toys, small world objects, pictures, photos, puppets, books, inset puzzles etc, relating to this topic / theme (e.g. store them all together in a 'language box').*
- 3. Choose a quiet area to work in.*
- 4. Before each session: Select one Attention and Listening activity and one or two language activities (you can find the ideas at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>)*
- 5. Complete a Planning and Progress Record Sheet – choose a whole group or individual child record sheet. Gather resources and prepare for the session.*
- 6. After the session, complete the Planning and Progress Record Sheet and plan for the next session. Also fill in a parent follow up ideas for home sheet*

Example

Topic: Body parts and clothes

The aim:

- To support children's communication and language skills through signs
- To teach children the signs for the body parts in English and to be able to use them in communication
- To teach children singing and signing
- Continuously help children to learn new ways of communication and to develop their skills

Activities:

The practitioners will sit with children in a group and will introduce them to Signing Sam (or a similar puppet). The practitioner will sing 'Time to sit and sign with me' and 'Shh be quiet' songs before we start the activity. The song is available at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>

The practitioner will remind children of the names of body parts and clothes. Then children will be asked what they can wear on each body part. The practitioner will introduce the signs as the children say what they can wear in each area of the body.

The practitioner will model and will dress up the Signing Sam (or other puppet or toy) with different clothes and accessories. Children will be encouraged to sign these objects.

At the end of the session the practitioners will update the parents about where to find the song and the resources and how to use the LETS website, so they are able to practice what they have learnt.

Resources: Head, shoulders, knees and toes song, Signing Sam (or similar puppet), Cards with signs, Spare clothes and accessories

Vocabulary (spoken and signed)

Head, shoulders, knees, toes, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, time, sit, sign, floor, sing, play, learn, way, quiet, please, listen, hat, t-shirt, jumper, coat, vest, glasses, dress, skirt, shorts, trousers, nappy, cardigan, clothes, get dressed, shirt, how do you feel

Informal approach

LETS can also be delivered through more informal approaches through activities which regularly take place in the nursery, such as carpet time.

For example, the activities could be carried out within your group or carpet time several times a week. Larger groups of children could be split into smaller groups according to practitioners available. The toys/games could be ones not usually used in the setting to capture the children's interests. 'Language boxes' could be made up containing real objects, toys, small world objects, pictures, photos, puppets, books, inset puzzles, story sacks, games, etc. These could be focussed around one theme/topic or could reflect current setting's targets e.g. increasing attention and listening levels.



Other opportunities within the areas of provision

LETS can be added to all of the activities in the early years provision, especially to the activities aimed at attention/listening and language skills. For example, if a practitioner is supporting children within water play, they can encourage relevant vocabulary and model language for children; including actions such as pouring, splashing, washing and wet/dry, on/under, boat/fish etc.

Practitioners can set up activities and spend time interacting with the children in a variety of role play areas. Initially these should be based on familiar places such as the home corner, a shop or hairdressers. For older children, be more adventurous and link activities to real-life experiences such as trips, stories and other activities e.g. a post office, police station, travel agents. It is also really important to take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to



quietly

promote and sign supported language and join children in their play to extend their talk and enrich their vocabulary.

Attention and Listening activities

Attention and listening are vital skills in the development of language, speech sound and literacy development. The signs can be used to reinforce the understanding of what a good listener does, such as keep quiet, have ears and eyes ready (using signs for quiet, ears and eyes ready) and other gestures such as finger to the lips, a hand cupping an ear alongside spoken language.

These activity ideas can be used flexibly in any area of provision as well as during group sessions. All activities will help children work towards achieving the early learning goals such as sustaining attentive listening. To work towards these goals practice maintaining attention and sitting quietly when appropriate. Use action songs and stories: rhyming and rhythmic activities, listening to the stories, rhyming bags, stories, animal antics, hear the beat and others.

Example

Topic: On the farm

Estimated time of delivery: 30 minutes

The aim:

- To recognize and name farm animals with the sounds, to be able to distinguish between different animal sounds
- (aimed at the children between the age of 4 and 5)
- To name farm animals words and signs.

Activities:

Introductory songs: Time to sit and sing with me.

Introducing the topics: the poster of a farm with farm animals: a chicken, a horse, a cow, a pig and discuss it.



A recording with the animal sounds, children can listen and try to guess which animal noise they can hear. Do the signs as you present the animal sound

The song: 'Old Macdonald had a farm'. Sing the song with only four animals you introduce today and use signs.

Hand out pointers to the children (one for each child) and ask them to point the right animal while you are signing the 'Old Macdonald had a farm' song.

Collect the pointers. Ask several children to point out one farm animal in the poster and ask the rest of the class to sign chosen farm animal.

Movement fun: children are walking on the carpet, they stop when they hear the signal (a whistle). Show a picture the cards with a farm animal: a chicken, a horse, a cow, a pig and ask children to name and sign the chosen animal.

We all sign the 'Old Macdonald had a farm' song with the signs.

Make a circle and give out the stickers of farm animal: a chicken, a horse, a cow, a pig. Children stick them in a big poster of a farm as they want if they name and sign the farm animal properly.

Bye, bye song which can be 'I'm glad you came today' (the happy song).

Resources:

a big poster of a farm (a chicken, a horse, a cow, a pig), whistle, pointers (one for each child), pictures to represent sign: a chicken, a horse, a cow, a pig, music for 'Old Macdonald had a farm' song, stickers of farm animals, music for 'I'm glad you came today' song

Vocabulary (spoken and signed)

Head, shoulders Vocabulary:

I have, he has, animals on the farm:
chicken, horse, cow, pig, sheep, cat,
dog, fish, ducks, wool, butterfly,
donkey, goat, guinea pig, hamster,
lamb, owl, squirrel, tortoise, snail.

Suggestions for Language activities:

Using signs and gestures alongside the spoken work helps build a child's receptive as well as expressive language skills.

The useful activities to Learn English as a second language through signs are: reading stories, acting out a story, aiding to understand the structure (using signs such as: once upon a time, next, after, the end), songs and rhymes, pretend play, and others.

Example

Topic: Goldilocks and Three Bears

The aim:

Language skills such as using adjectives, word recognition and simple language for pretend play.

Introduce the opposites to children: Fill a basket with object of opposite (toys such as small bed, bigger bed, big teddy, small teddy, big bowl, small bowl, watch how the children use their senses to differentiate the opposite and comment, using gestures for the objects as well as different sizes.

Introduce the first numbers to children: The number 3 is mentioned repeatedly throughout the story- 3 bears, 3 beds, 3 chairs and 3 bowls. Use the number chart to children to visually understand comparison of quantities for each number and concepts such as “more” or “less”. Use the signs for more and less as you say the word.

Act out the story to the children through role-play using for example, magnetic characters: Put magnetic strips behind the characters and the props and act out the story to the children.



bear

Activity: Going on a Bear Hunt

Get the children busy searching for different sized bears around the nursery room. Encourage the children to sign and say the word when they find a bear.

Activity: Readers' Theatre

Dramatise the story with a group of children! Make the masks for the main characters and let children join in with signing and repeating the main words of the book while you read. For example: What did her blue eyes see? Big, small, tiny.

Vocabulary (spoken and signed) :

Bear, chair, doll, bed, bowl, house, see, small, big, tiny, 1, 2, 3, wood, trees, hungry, tired, scared, door, blue, eyes, next, after, the end.s, nappy, cardigan, clothes, get dressed, shirt, how do you feel

Resources:

Story sack, Goldilocks and three bears, the teddy bears, laminated characters from the story with magnetics stripes and magnetic board, masks.

Goldilocks and Three Bears book.



happy

Understanding feelings:

Signs can be used to support children's growing ability to express a wide range of feelings orally and talk about their own experiences. Use the story bags, connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next. The resources are under development.

Example

Topic: How do I feel?

The aim: Help children to understand different emotions and to use signs to express their emotions /emotional needs. The second aim is also to communicate the state of illness through signs.

Introductory song:

I am glad you came today. (the happy song)

Introducing the topics:

the bag with emojis: each child takes one of the emoji character out and we show the sign, ask the children how the emoji character feels and discuss about it.

Story:

Wibbly pig feels happy (from the Wibbly pig books series): we read and sign the story and ask children to sign every time there is an emotion expressed in the story.

We can sign the song "If we are happy" adapted to emotions .

We move on to the signs for not being well. We act out the story of how the teddy bear or a dolly does not feel well. One of the children can be the doctor and one can be the parent or carer.

We explain the signs for ill, temperature, medicine, doctor, nurse, hospital, doctors.

We sign the song: Mrs. Polly had a Dolly who was sick and recap the signs.

Bye, bye song which can be the "bubble song".

Resources:

Puppet Signing Sam, emojis, other puppets (a doctor), dolls, musical instruments and I player, toys / pictures / photos of children expressing different feelings, story books , pictures with signs, rhyme bag – objects / pictures to represent songs, echo microphones.

Stories and books:

Stories and books constitute a vital part of worldwide cultural and linguistic heritage. The well-planned use of stories, read and told, traditional and new, contributes greatly to children's understanding and developing use of their mother tongue as well as the second language.

Story sessions bring pleasure and enjoyment, develop the imagination and help children to explore a range of ideas and feelings; they help organise their thoughts and link ideas to knowledge. Illustrated sequences, photographs, puppetry and wordless picture sequences give children the opportunity to formulate ideas in their home language which can then be translated into English with appropriate support.

Opportunities to experience story telling in home languages greatly advantage children learning EAL. Familiarity with the language and structure of stories is transferable to a second language and prior knowledge of stories greatly enhances and facilitates learning. Dual text stories can be a good resource where home languages have a written text and parents are literate in that language. Planned stories can be an excellent medium for language learning. Choose stories with a clear story line, written or told in simple direct language. Sign the key words. Those with repetitive texts are particularly useful as they give children the opportunity to hear language sequences and see words being signed and told and they can tune into and rehearse. Clear illustrations and other visual support, artefacts and props should be used. Story sacks can be a wonderful resource. The books made in the nursery, particularly about familiar settings or objects are a very valuable resource and give hours of pleasure to young children who delight in the familiarity of the pictures, especially where they, and other people they know, are in them.

Telling and signing rather than reading, stories enables practitioners to more closely adapt them to individual needs. Dolls and toys can be a particularly powerful story-telling medium which can be a vehicle for learning on many levels and can be particularly effective for supporting cultural identity. Careful consideration should be given to the choice of story, particularly in illustrated books, to ensure positive images of diverse cultures and an avoidance of negative stereotyping.

Topics, words and phrases

The evaluative and qualitative research by the partners with the nurseries and also between the childcare professionals during the transnational partner meetings has identified the most important topics, words and phrases to introduce the LETS model. This is a list of the first words\phrases which are supported by graphic materials/flash cards and were used throughout the project, more words are added in the dictionary which is available at our web page and at our eLearning platform. More details are available at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>.

It is preferable to use one topic/theme regularly e.g. per half term so the children become familiar with and retain the vocabulary. Try and share targets/vocabulary with parents for them to practise at home. You could use the follow up ideas for home sheet/adapt it to your setting.

These topics were selected based on the research by all four partners in the project. The partners had to identify the topics relevant for early years children and prepare the vocabulary which is most commonly used. We came with the following selection of topics:

Basic vocabulary:

hello, goodbye, thank you, more, gone, read, again, ball, book, care, baby, drink, eat, water, mummy, daddy/care giver, teddy.

Daily routines:

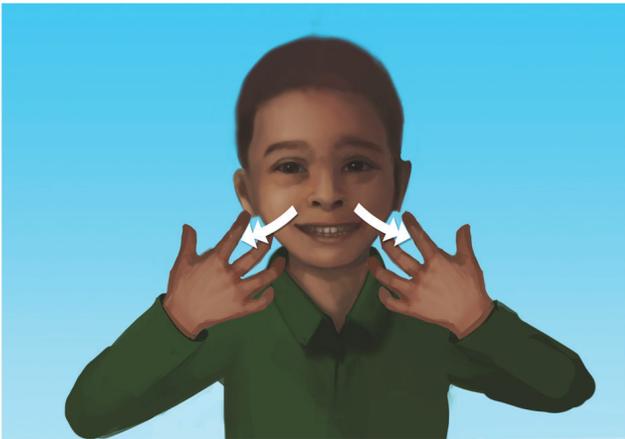
breakfast time, lunch time, tea time, getting washed (wash hands, wash face), dressed, coming to nursery, nappy time, messy play, circle time, reading time, signing time, play outside, painting, home time.

My family:

family, mother, father, man, woman, girl, boy, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, cousin, uncle, aunt, baby, child, children, friend, lady, sir, daughter, son, grandson, granddaughter, teacher.



hi



cat

Animals:

Farm animals/domestic animals: cat, dog, bird, duck, fish, cow, horse, pig, rabbit sheep, bee, mouse, chicken, fish, frog, butterfly, donkey, goat, goldfish, guinea pig, hamster, lamb, owl, squirrel, tortoise, snail.

Zoo animals:

snake, tiger, parrot, dolphin, elephant, lion, penguin, wolf, bat, monkey, bear, giraffe, camel, crocodile, deer, eagle, fox, kangaroo, lizard, octopus, rhino, shark, toad, tortoise, turtle, whale, zebra.

Body parts/clothes:

simpler words first: nose, eyes, hair, tummy, socks, hat, coat, shoes; move on to harder words: knees, shoulders, jumper, trousers, pyjamas .

Feelings:

happy, sad, angry, upset, lonely, cheerful, tired, scared, surprised, joyful, relaxed, pleased, stressed out, bored, hungry, thirsty, afraid, excited.

Transport/construction area:

Car, bus, tractor, bike, plane, helicopter and noises such as brm brm, beep beep, choo choo.

Food and drink/snack time:

biscuit, apple, banana, cake, juice, milk, spoon, cup, plate, pizza, dinner, blueberry, tea, cherries. chocolate, enjoy your meal (bon appetit), dummy, food, eat, frankfurter, pear, apple, egg, soup, coffee, carrots, glass, bread, cook, hungry, watermelon, milk, pancake, drink, divide, sandwich, be full, ice cream, cake, water, thirsty, bow, plate, fork, spoon.

Home:

house, bath, bed, chair, table, cup, spoon, TV, door, telephone, key, book .

Vocabulary from role play area in nursery:

Shops, doctors, hairdressers, garage, post office, holiday.

Outdoors:

Flower, tree, gate, road, grass, sun, stars, moon, swing, rain, bus, car. garden, park, slide, park, zoo, trees, flowers, slides, swings, benches, seeds, pots.

Clothes:

shirt, T shirt, trousers, shorts, dress, hat, scarf, coat, boots, shoes, skirt, pyjamas, vest, socks, jacket.

Weather:

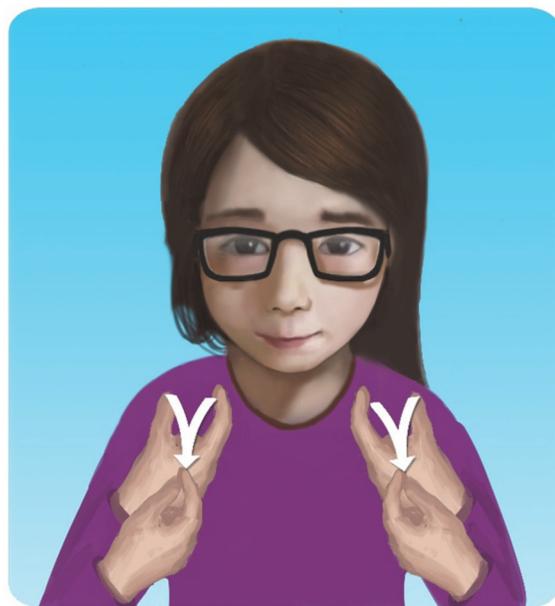
sun, rain, fog, cloudy, stormy, rainbow, water, snow.

Action words:

These are words to be encouraged in addition to the object words from the lists above and are needed for children to be able to begin linking words together: jumping, brushing, eating, drinking, sleeping, washing, crying, reading, playing, splashing.

Concepts and size:

big, little/small position: in, on, under.



shirt

Shapes:

circle, square, triangle; colours: red, blue, green, yellow, purple, orange, pink; numbers: 1–5, 5–10; adjectives: dirty, clean, hot, cold, wet, dry.

Classroom management:

hello, good morning, goodbye, thank you, please, what is your name, my name is.

good listening, good sitting, kind hands, good work, take turn, please say sorry; I am sorry, share, well done, this is kind, put up your try.

Special occasions:

Happy Birthday, cake, party, balloons, candles, Christmas, Father Christmas, elf, presents, Christmas tree, reindeer.

Please visit our website and eLearning platform for the additional resources.
<http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>

This includes

Flash cards and signs can be downloaded to support the activities and aid the topics: eg animals, family, feelings, clothes, activities, weather, colours

Posters to support learning language through signs to be displayed in the nurseries

Songs to support the language development (18 nursery rhymes with the traditional English music and lyrics adopted to the selected topics and accompanied with signs: the videos)

Lesson plans and activities for each of the topics.

Further resources which can be used within the childcare setting to assist in delivery:

- Photos of objects, actions and opposites (commercial products are available e.g. Winslow Pocket Colour cards) • Postbox / boxes / bags
- Puppets / familiar characters / teddies / dolls
- Musical instruments e.g. shakers, drums
- Home corner toys e.g. tea sets, pretend food, clothes, small sized furniture • Small world toys e.g. animals
- Sets of large and small objects / toys / pictures / photos
- Story / rhyme books
- Simple vocabulary / first word books
- Bubbles / balloons • Bricks / beanbags
- Balls
- Jigsaws / inset puzzles
- Music CDs e.g. action rhymes • Sound Lottos
- Rhyme bag – objects / pictures to represent songs e.g. toy bus for the wheels on the bus • echo microphones



Learn English Through Signs for Parents

The Learning English Through Signs method uses signs and natural gestures to support communication and language development of children who are learning English as a second language between the ages of 2 and 6. This can be at nursery or school and or at home. Signs are used for key and important words in the message and are not used to sign every single word. For example, if someone said, “are you hungry?” the key word that would be signed would be ‘hungry’. The method uses a core vocabulary of specifically selected words containing concepts and ideas. Each word or concept is matched to a hand sign\gesture. Since the goal of our programme is to introduce children to English, we are using signs from British Sign Language.

There are many benefits to use gestures and signs with your child. For example, signing promotes the ability to express important needs and wants regardless of how developed the child’s speech in a particular language is. It also generally promotes the development of language and literacy skills and reduces frustrations from not being able to express one’s needs. This accelerates the development of spatial reasoning and creates the feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment as well as increasing creative thinking. But most of all, signing is engaging and a lot of fun for you and your child.

Through using the Learn English Through Signs methods, your child will therefore learn important basic English words and phrases at an early age, giving them the confidence to take their language skills further within their education.

How to use LETs at home with your child

There are several ways in which you can introduce English as a second language to children through using signs/gestures from BSL. Some of you will decide to introduce the gestures with your mother tongue first. If you are yourself bilingual and are using English on a regular basis you might decide to use the basic gestures with both languages from the start. Whichever your preferred choice, here are some tips which might be useful when you first start using gestures:

It is important to point out that using gestures generally with babies and young children has many positive benefits. Within the LETS method we are developing signing so that it can additionally be used as a way of learning first words and phrases in English.

You can however decide to introduce gestures with your mother tongue with babies as young as 6 months. At this point, they are able to begin reading and processing the concept of using gestures and may even be able to start copying the signs you are making.

Look for signs your baby is already making. Chances are, your baby has learned a sign without your intentionally teaching it – most commonly, waving hello or goodbye to people is something babies simply pick up. If this is occurring, take it as a sign your baby will be especially receptive to learn more.

Always say a word when you sign. Gesture the key word in the sentence.

Pick a limited number of signs to learn first. Before you begin attempting to teach your child to use gestures/sign, make a list of the words and phrases you would like to teach. Shorten this list by choosing only the words or ideas that would be the most useful to be able to mutually convey to one another. These can be the basic and most important signs, for example, 'eat' and 'drink' sleep, milk, water and of course 'more' 😊

Use signs in immediate proximity to an associated action. Practice signs yourself. Be sure you know a sign and are able to execute it clearly before using it with your child. Once you are ready, start using the sign in front of your child. Initially, the goal is simply conveying the concept that certain hand signs indicate certain things.

Watch for signs of increased interest by your child. Lots of children will begin showing interest in regular things you do. For instance, if they start to coo or wave their arms around whenever you start running the bathwater, recognize that they are excited by the action and are trying to communicate. Know that babies will also want to sign about things they are excited about, in addition to their more basic needs.

Stick to simple signs at first. You'll start with the most basic and common parts of your child's life, most likely having to do with eating. Expect to incorporate new signs slowly and keep new signs simple too. Include fun signs and signs for important humans too.

We have provided plenty of materials which you can use with your child, such as images with objects and signs and songs with lyrics and videos, which you can download from our Learn English through Signs webpage or you can also visit our eLearning platform:

When you are familiar with using of signs/gestures while communicating with your baby in your mother tongue you may decide to introduce the English language to your child. This can be as early the child is 18 months old, it can also start later.

Here are some suggestions:

Try to make language learning part of your regular routine; even a few minutes every day can have a big effect. For example: If you and your child are going to the supermarket together you can use English and sign the key words when you are shopping, the first time you would emphasize the names of the food you are buying in your mother tongue supported by gestures. Later, you could do the same activity and express the same words in the English language. You can do the same at bath time, bed time, meal times, if you are preparing food together, or when you are going on a regular walk. Try to use English with signs through the phrases you use through the day: For example food and drink 'would you like an APPLE 'Would you like a glass of WATER', When they need some help, or with manners: like PLEASE, THANK YOU, TIDY UP, SNACK time.

Create a casual learning environment at home, something like a language corner with books, puppets, songs and stories in the new language.

You can first read and sign a book in your mother tongue (sign the Key words) then you can repeat the same process in English.

Sign the key words from you or your child's comments when describing the pictures and/or answering the question, get your child to answer questions using signs. For example: where is THE DOG? The DOG is on the couch. Give your child plenty of time to observe and comment.

Try and read the books in your language and English and sign the key words in both languages. You can help yourself with the selection of the best childrens' books for different age groups, for example the selection below, most of which are translated also to other languages. For example tThe very hungry caterpillar, by Eric Carle, so there is a good chance you will find them in your own language too.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/may/12/best-childrens-books-two-four-years>

Sing and sign the key words within the song from the Learn English Through Signs website (e.g. star in 'Twinkle Twinkle', the different animals in 'Old Macdonald'). The songs on the website are slowed down in order to place a greater emphasis on the key words. Start with the songs that are easy, such as Twinkle Twinkle. Some of the familiar songs are translated into other languages.

This can provide a very good starting point for children and adults. Try and find them in your language on you tube.

Use the key signs regularly. Mixing sound with kinaesthetic tasks helps children to learn the specific vocabulary.

With longer, more complicated songs, try using props to involve children in a task linked to the music.

Build up positive associations with the language by singing, dancing to songs and generally having fun!

Other suggestions:

- Make labels and signs or use our signs with your children in the target language and place these around the house
- Use different languages when playing games, for example, when playing hide and seek, count to 10 in your target language.
- Find television shows, restaurants, and other means of exposing your child to the second language on a regular, frequent basis.
- Visit a community where the language is spoken.
- Get others on board with Learning English through signs: if your child is learning English also in the nursery present to the child care professionals/teachers what you are doing.

- Show some signs also to other important others in your circle, such as siblings, grandparents or other relatives.

And most importantly Make it fun! Whether you choose to read books, play music, or travel to another country, keeping children engaged is the key to keeping them interested in learning. If a child has positive experiences, he or she can become quite receptive to learning about another language.



Learn English Through Signs: case studies

The case studies were prepared based on questionnaires and observations during the implementation of the LETS method by childcare practitioners and language teachers in early years settings. They were prepared by early years teachers, trainers and child care professionals in twenty different preschool settings including language schools from three different European countries, with five from Slovenia and Poland and ten from the Yorkshire region United Kingdom. The aim of the questionnaires was to map the experiences and impact from implementing early English learning through signs in nursery classrooms following the training delivered as part of the LETs project. The case studies have therefore been produced through the Erasmus plus project LETS: Learn English Through Signs. Twenty case studies have been produced from the childcare settings whose staff received the LETs Training in 2018, either at an international training event in Leeds in October 2018 or additional national training events. There has been a variety of practices introduced by the settings, depending on their own educational provision. They have implemented the techniques while working with both children and parents. The childcare professionals therefore observed the use of different approaches with the children across during the 8 month testing phase within

For the purpose of this handbook we have chosen the case studies from 3 settings from each of the participating countries.

More information is available at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>

Implementation in Slovenia

Vrtec (Nursery) Peter Pan

About the nursery:

The children attending the nursery are from 1 to 6 years old. There are 6 groups in the nursery. The nursery provides funded early education for all children whose parents apply for it. The children are divided into heterogeneous, homogeneous and combined groups based on age. Currently, there are 114 children attending the nursery, 86 of them are three to six years old. We included two groups into the project, which makes all together 48 children and two childcare professionals, one teacher from each group.

Peter Pan nursery has been trying to implement the elements of Montessori pedagogy, therefore the activities that we carried out have been adapted to our methods.

Activities in the project:

In the last 6 months the project has been carried out in two groups of three to six year old children. One group consisted of five to six year old children who are leaving the kindergarten and going to school in September. The children in the other group were younger, from four to five years old. Getting to know English was mostly done through singing and using pictures. The child care practitioners made their own didactic materials according to the Montessori approach, which mainly means that all of the games, cards and materials were always available to children and the children decide on their own what to do and what to learn. Children were able to check themselves as the materials are rounded in a whole. We used the newly learned words in our daily routine, activities and when we went out for a walk.

The child care professionals noticed that the children were really enthusiastic about singing the songs. In the future we would need more materials, but most of all we believe that we would learn most from more training. The child care professionals who noticed how successful learning through signs is decided to learn more about it and also undergo training in learn through signs approach.

Impact on children:

The children happily cooperated in singing and signing. They were also attracted by new didactic toys, made for the project itself. They started using new English words on a daily basis. The parents also reported that children use new words at home during playtime or just spontaneously at everyday activities.

Partnership with parents:

Parents involvement was good regarding the fact that the project started later in the school year. Most parents were excited about it, saying they have revised and learned some new English vocabulary themselves. What they liked the most was seeing their children singing English songs at their end of year performance for parents. The notice board was used for informing parents about the activities, some links and materials have been sent to the parents by email.



Vrtec Trzin (Trzin Nursery)

About the nursery:

Trzin Nursery was registered in 2002 and is situated in Trzin, Slovenia. The nursery operates in two locations. In ŽABICA, Ploščad dr. Tineta Zajca 1, there are five rooms of children from 11 months to three years of age (14 children per room), and 5 rooms of children from three to six years (19- 24 children per room). In PALČICA, Mengeška c. 7/b, there are three rooms of three to six year olds. (19- 24 children per room). At the moment there are 310 children being taken care of by 29 members of childcare staff. The staff hold appropriate qualifications with thirteen staff with qualified teacher status.

The nursery provides funded early education for all children included in the nursery whose parents apply for it. The centre for social work decides how much the price for each individual is based on the family's income and assets all according to an income scale therefore parents would pay as a maximum 77% of the price. Children in foster care get 100% funding as well as every second, third, or fourth child from the same family.

Three staff from the nursery took part in the training. They have used the methods in different rooms (1-2 year olds, 3-6 year olds and 4- 6 year olds) in the nursery.

Activities in the project:

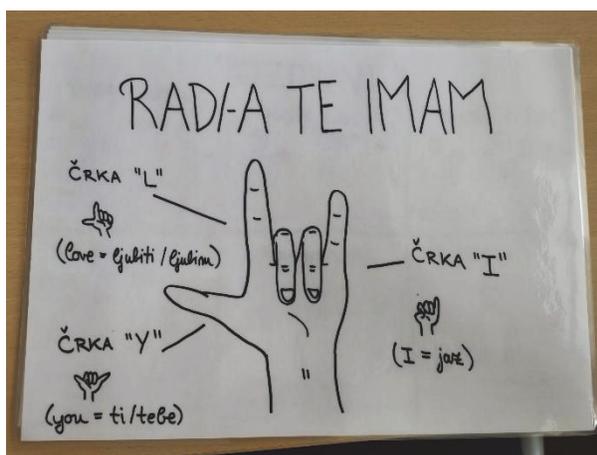
The child care practitioners who took part in the national LETS training in Kamnik started implementing the Learn through Signs approach in their groups. At the same time they also started working with Mrs. Iza Pomlad, a speech therapist dealing with children with hearing problems in the kindergarten. She has been working with some children on issues such as integration and inclusion. The teachers decided to teach children how to communicate with each other better using the methods developed in the project.

They planned and carried out bilingual activities at first, also producing materials for the parents. They focused on everyday language and greetings at first and then went on to singing and signing simple songs. The childcare professionals say that everything they did was well accepted. The children and their parents have accepted the sign language and therefore the childcare professionals have decided to include signing into our daily routine and to dedicate more time to signing in the future.



Impact on children:

The child care professionals have reported only good things about the learn through signs approach. Children started using signs spontaneously in everyday communication and they started communicating more with the child who is deaf on a more personal, one-to-one level. Everybody felt excited about the signs and they all got involved making them feel satisfied with their newly gained knowledge and skills.



Partnership with parents:

The child care professionals provided parents with posters and graphics in both English and Slovene, mostly to help the parents get familiar with the signs their children started using. The posters were displayed, and the signs were shown to parents at the parent teacher meetings.

The parents could see every day what their children were doing in the kindergarten because everything was displayed on the walls of the setting. The childcare professionals also provided photographs through eAssistant platform. (which parents use to learn more about their children's progress)

Vrtec (Nursery) Zarja:

About the nursery:

Zarja is a private nursery with public funding. It implements the national early years curriculum.

The children attending the nursery are from 1 to 6 years old. The nursery has 10 classrooms 12 to 15 children, a gym, an additional playroom for children from 0 to 3 and 3 to 6, a special room for individual work with children, a kitchen and a big playground equipped for different age groups.

Activities in the project:

Our first goal when implementing the LETs project was to spread LETS across the nursery and to involve as many children as possible. Therefore we invited all of the child care professionals to learn and try using LETs. In November we included 8 groups into the project as well as our entire choir, which consists of 70 children. We showed them the videos of using English through signs and demonstrated it and encouraged them to learn English through signs in different groups. We started with the activities in November 2018. We spent the whole month of November learning the children's song Twinkle, Twinkle. There were 8 groups participating in the project, 4 younger and 4 older groups which means 140 children all together. They had many performances in the local community and they also sang and signed the song Twinkle, twinkle in the run up to Christmas and New Year. In January we continued with the other activities and introduced other songs, new words, especially on the topic of pets, farm animals and zoo animals, when learning numeracy and concepts and through reading books. We have used several materials which were created in the project: flashcards of different animals, a surprise bag, <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>, downloading flashcards and signs, copies of English rhyming songs, audio or speakers for the songs to be heard.

Impact on children:

LETS project was carried out in several groups. We noticed that children do not need many different activities. What they need more is the time for each activity. In that way they can develop language use continually and they work on the quality of the language and not on the quantity of acquired words. A child therefore becomes more self-confident and understands the language better. The child is given a choice of using the words or just the intonation of the words or the signs. According to happy children's faces the implementation is great. Children are happy singing English songs and signing at the same time. They get even more excited when they are asked about a certain word or a sign.

Parents:

We organised a workshop for parents to introduce the project but also for them to learn signs. The parents followed the prepared activities nicely. Just like with the children, we presented the activities step by step. Gradually we were moving on to the harder segments.

The atmosphere at the workshop was very relaxing and there was a lot of laughter involved. However, some parents felt a bit embarrassed but managed to finish the workshop.

Next time when we organize such a workshop we need to invite another teacher because 17 parents were hard to handle by only two people even though they were put into two groups. The biggest advantage of the workshop was the connecting of the parents, making new friendships and trusting the childcare professionals even more.

Final remarks:

We believe the implementation went very well. The childcare professionals started communicating with each other more, they helped each other and by every month they have become more and more self-confident while teaching English. We definitely want to proceed with the project. Learning English through signs is a project we believe in. We like the fact that it can be done any time by the childcare professionals spontaneously, without having to organize special English lessons, especially in the afternoons. Parents do not need to pay extra for an extra-curricular activity and worry about children spending even more time in the setting in the afternoon. The childcare professionals who have taken the training see the benefits of such an approach and will definitely encourage other teachers to take part in it. The project will be presented at the kindergarten council meeting as well and we will implement the activities on a regular basis next year.

Implementation in Poland

Nursery in Rokiciny in Poland

About the nursery:

Nursery "Leśnych Skrzatów" in Rokiciny was founded in 1963. Currently, the facility is located at Sienkiewicza Street 2 and has been in operation for over 56 years. The kindergarten provides funded early education for three- to six-year-old children. The teaching staff consists of nine people. All teachers are of Polish descent. They all have specialist professional education. The nursery currently has 125 children and they are divided into 5 groups. At the end of 2012 we started to implement the pedagogy of the Daltonian plan in didactic and educational work. One person from the nursery took part in the LETS training. She used the methods in different rooms in the nursery during classes in English.

Activities in the project:

The LETS method proved to be very useful in learning songs and poems, but also in everyday activities. Children remembered the command in English better if it was supported by a gesture, a sign. Until now, English classes start with the song "I'm glad you came today". We presented our skills during pre-school celebrations.

Impact on children:

The children in every age group were happy to pick up signs. In addition to the songs, they liked puzzles such as "what does this gesture mean? How to show ...? In conversations with children and parents, it has been observed that children are happy to communicate the English signs and words they have learned at home. During the classes with LETS it was noticed that shy children, with speech disorders were more active and self-confident.

Partnership with parents:

The parents were notified about the project during the meeting and during the family festival. They gladly used materials taken by children to their home and practiced together through play. They took pictures of posters and materials on the board in the corridor where the currently entered characters were place

Public Kindergarten Number 99 in Lodz

About the nursery:

Public Nursery Number 99 in Lodz is situated in the central part of the city. It employs 13 teachers and other members of staff and administration. The teachers, staff and administration are very well qualified. The nursery provides early education for children at the age of 3 to 6 years old. The kindergarten currently takes care for 170 children in seven groups. One teacher from the kindergarten took part in the international training in Leeds, UK. The teacher has used the methods in her group and has implemented the methods during English classes with all of the children in the kindergarten.

Activities in the project:

During the 8 months of the implementation period of the project the teacher aimed to improve the language skills of children (teaching English). She has planned and carried out the following activities: general sign supported conversation with children, she used signing with simple games, action rhymes and songs on every occasion, she was also using signing while teaching English (English classes), while story time, free time and during all meetings with family members. Signs were used during all performances and general activities.



The teacher finds signing very useful in teaching English.

Impact on children:

All of the children have used the signs and joined in, especially during games and songs. They were also observed using them on a one-to-one basis and in small groups during free time activities. It helped children to learn the English vocabulary and structures. It also helped the children to show their English skills during special occasions and meetings with family members (performances, open classes).

Partnership with parents:

The posters, a set of cards with dictionary and graphics were displayed on the information board. During open classes groups were showing signs and children were signing for parents to see. Signs were also used during performances for parents. Some of the parents (volunteers) have read books for very young learners in English with signing. The teacher was keeping the parents informed of what she is doing with the children.

The parents were interested in the methods and were able to take part in the special workshop prepared by the teacher who took part in the training in Leeds, UK.



International Primary School of Innovative Education in Lodz

About the school:

The International Primary School of Innovative Education was registered in 2005 and is situated in the centre of Lodz. The school employs 20 teachers. All the teachers are highly qualified. The reception class currently has 10 or 15 pupils with 2 teachers. Some children are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The school focuses on innovative education and internationalisation and actively participates in European cooperation projects.



Activities in the project:

During the whole project many innovative activities were implemented in the class with children. The story reading with gestures and signs were the most funny activities. All the songs had a huge impact on improving children's communication skills in English. Signs supported children in using English as second language. Puppets with signs were very innovative form of capturing the children's attention. Using signs was very helpful in communication in English with children.



Impact on children:

Children were more eager to learn English and a lot of vocabulary faster and easier using learning through signs. They were more active during the activities and happy to play. They were satisfied in understanding a new vocabulary especially singing songs. They cooperated with the teacher and they had a lot of fun in singing, playing with signs. Children were more engaged in the process of learning English as a second language. The teacher could observe children's speech development and children's involvement. The child care professionals observed a lot of positive aspects in using this method because in a very easy way children tried to pick up a lot of new words in English. They don't hesitate to ask about the new words. They wanted to repeat often more words with signs during the lesson.



Partnership with the parents:

The parents were informed about the project about the method -Learning Through Signs during the parents' meetings and during the school's festivals. All the techniques were displayed, and copies of materials were shared with the parents to practice with children at home. Parents have seen their children singing with signs. All the photos were gathered on the Facebook and school's websites. In the class parents could see the posters and graphics of the signs on the wall. Parents were very happy and proud of their children's communication development in English.



Implementation in the UK

A total of 10 childcare settings implemented the LETS method. Trainers witnessed staff signing with the children in several settings, during the 8 months of testing.

Overall children were engaged in the learning, whether signing or attempting to sign. They were happy to sign and enthusiastic. All settings reported that they were still able to utilise the techniques learnt during training and would plan to carry on using the methods after the end of the project.

Context

The aim of the project was to provide the training and materials for the project and to learn from each other by developing lesson plans. However the actual method of implementation was decided upon by the staff in each setting. The following were therefore different methods used in the nurseries.

- Circle time
- General Conversation
- With children with SEN
- Action Rhymes and Songs
- Manners
- Story Time/Sacks
- Lunchtime
- Positive Reinforcement
- To support turn taking skills, listening, engagement and joining
- Throughout the day
- 1-2-1 with children with additional needs
- Music time with small groups

Positive Impacts

Positive impacts were reported and described as 'universal' with all children picking up the signs and joining in, especially when used with songs. They were also observed using them on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. It helps SEN/EAL/younger children to communicate, aiding speech development. As well as enabling them to feel involved, settled and happy. Although it was reported by all settings that the techniques were used with ALL children and were inclusive.

We were told that it helps peers communicate with SEN children. In one setting it was reported that 3 SEN children in particular were communicating better in group situations. The children have been better able to express their needs and increased eye contact with one child with additional needs.

Children with English as an additional language

žThe specific benefits for EAL children are 'bringing on their communication, listening skills and joining in'. A positive difference has been observed demonstrating an understanding of various signs for nursery routines, rhymes/songs and instructions. But especially understanding and retelling of stories.



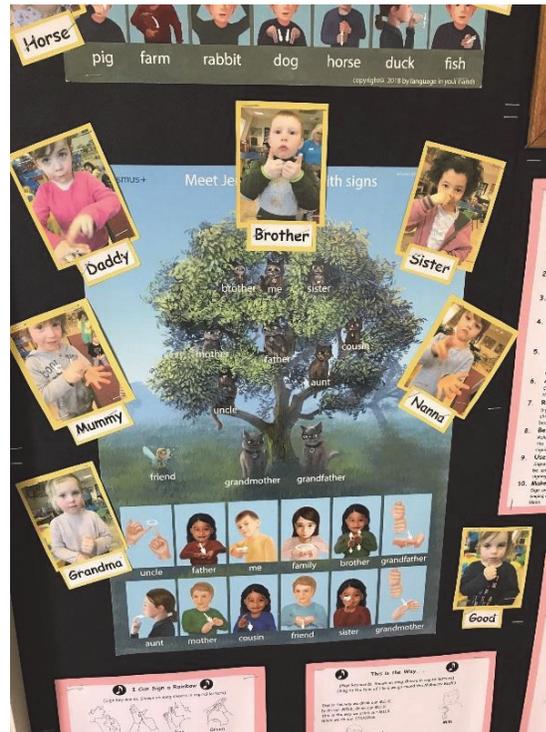
Parental Involvement

Settings were provided with themed colour posters (example on right), not only were these displayed but 2 of the settings also made displays showing signs and children signing for parents to see (see next page).

It was reported that settings were keeping the parents informed of what they are doing with the children and were able to share techniques with parents through displaying posters, wall displays and photographs of the children on the walls. Also uploading observations, photographs and videos on children's learning journals. Use during performances for parents and particularly shared with parents of children with SEN.



Some settings also distributed sheets to parents, such as the attached, to enable them to continue signing with children at home. Some have given the basic signs. This has helped with continuity, especially for those children who are/were pre-verbal.



ž

Two of the settings also organised special training sessions for parents.

Parents commented that children use signs particularly when they sing songs at home and when saying please and thank you. As well as spontaneously singing and signing 'Sssh be quiet please sit down'. The parent of one of the children with SEN has noticed signs being used.

Anecdotal evidence from parents making comments to the trainer and other staff highlight that children did sign and sing all the words to certain songs at home. This sparked an interest by parents who ask staff what certain signs mean. Ideally there should be more parental workshop either delivered by the Trainer or staff from the setting.

Examples of how the techniques have benefitted individual children

In one setting one child who has recently been diagnosed with autism has become calmer, makes more eye contact and as sessions have progressed attention span has increased significantly.

Why settings and staff have used the techniques

One setting stated that they would try anything to enhance the children's linguistic skills in the setting. It encourages children to participate in something fun and interesting, as well as promoting listening and attention skills. It helps children understand routine, boundaries, as well as developing social skills and express emotions. It helps children be more integrated and less isolated. As well as supporting their communication and language skills in all the areas.

Improving consistency of using the techniques

For both staff and parents to do so, settings suggested refresher courses for staff periodically and further workshops and possibly more sessions in nursery. It would help for all staff to fully understand the techniques and be confident.

Further comments made by the settings:

"Another course for nursery staff would be fantastic."

"A valuable tool"

"The children really enjoy the sessions. They are engaged and it works for both the younger and pre-school children doing it together."

Domi Domingo Nursery:

About the nursery:

Domi Domingo was registered in 2014, (November) and since then has undergone two OFSTED inspections, with the latter one taking place in March 2019. The nursery was rated as Outstanding in this inspection, and the Erasmus + project was considered during the inspection. The signing activities contributed to positive comments on the development of literacy and communication skills.

Domi Domingo is a very diverse multicultural Nursery, which a large percentage of children speaking EAL, and some staff speaking the home languages of these children. The children also enjoy a range of additional activities in Nursery such as Spanish, Diddidance, football and baking, and the sign language project therefore fitted well into this area.

Activities in the project:

LETs modelling and practice is done in our toddler room and preschool room on a daily basis. It is included in our daily routine, for example during morning and afternoon register. It is also used to support positive behaviour, (something that OFSTED particularly praised). LETs has also been used in our celebrations, for example Christmas Nativity, and in our graduation party.

We learn Nursery rhymes and other songs using sign supported language. Parents can access our LETs language sacks to reinforce this learning at home.

We also do sign of the week, and displays are present in the room for parents to see. These are updated weekly so parents are aware what we are teaching the children.

We ran a very successful parental signing workshop which was led by the pre-school and the toddler room leaders. This will be relaunched, advertising to different parents and families in September 2020. The evaluations from the first group showed that parents enjoyed the activities and they continued them at home. They found the classes very informative, and the learning continued at home. Parents received a goodie bag with resources in on the completion of the course.

Impact on children:

There has been a positive impact on all of our children, but particularly for our SEN children and those with EAL. An example of this is that two of our EAL children who moved through from the toddler room to the pre school are using signs to express their emotions, likes/dislikes. Their expressive language is very limited so this is an effective way for them to communicate with staff.

For a child with SEN, using sign impacted greatly on his behaviour. One of his outcomes was to manage feelings and behaviours. When sign was used he could understand it as it was visual. Previously he was very physical however since using sign he was able to express himself verbally as well as using sign.

Another child with EAL and SEN who is a visual learner has picked up the signs quickly and is using the signs alongside the words in new songs.

Partnership with parents:

As discussed we ran a parent workshop. This ran for a total of 12 hours over six sessions. Parents booked onto this and completion rate was very high. Feedback was positive and parents stated that they used their new knowledge regarding signing at home to reinforce learning from the Nursery. Additional ways that we reached out to parents include for example taking 'Signing Sam' home with resources, 'sign of the week,' 'home library' 'term topic stories.' We have also posted on Facebook, and given verbal updates to our parents and shared the website.

Ducklings Nursery:

Description of the setting:

Ducklings at St Margaret's is a voluntary, non-profit making, committee-run pre-school. It operates from a purpose-built property within St Margaret's Primary School in Horsforth, near Leeds. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The pre-school serves the immediate locality and also the surrounding areas. Children are cared for in one main indoor room and have access to an enclosed outdoor play area and sensory garden. There are currently 95 children on roll in the early years age range. 11 of them are from linguistically and culturally diverse background. The nursery receives funding for the provision of free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery also supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pre-school receives support from the local authority and has successfully achieved the Leeds Quality Assurance Framework Award.

Activities in the project:

The methods were used in the setting on a daily basis. All of the child care professionals who attended the training started to use sign supported language immediately. They used up to 100 signs and have incorporated them in teaching all 7 learning areas. For example: in the morning when the children arrived at the nursery they were greeted by "good morning" with the sign as well as spoken word. It was explained to them what was going to happen in the day through the signs, visual clues and words. On every occasion the child care professionals are now using signs and words: for example: where the children are going out, when they are preparing for lunchtime, when they go to the toilet.

Signing is then further supported through specifically targeted learning experiences. This means that children can consolidate and deepen their knowledge and understanding. For example, the child care professionals take turns in delivering circle time where they deliver an exciting, challenging and highly stimulating sessions with the children covering particular topic. Children are animated as they engage in music, signing and social interaction as part of the sessions.

The use of the visual materials:

They have used the visual materials distributed to them at the training and these now form an integral part of the learning in Ducklings.



Impact on children:

Sign supported language use has improved the quality of teaching for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and it is in the opinion of the staff worth dissemination. It has supported all children to develop their personal, social and emotional development. Children were supported to practice their communication and negotiation skills through using the signs and they were also further supported to use their independence in all aspects of their learning, particularly when problem-solving, as they can communicate and express themselves better. It is assessed that their needs can be met sooner as they give the practitioners more clues about what they need, wish and want.

Partnership with parents:

The partnership with parents is at the core of the practice at Ducklings. Most of the parents regularly participate in activities. The aim of the involvement of parents was to increase the achievements of children in the area of language in literacy, children who do not speak English as their first language. This was done through purposeful engagement of parents and through offering them the knowledge and skills to support their children better. Parents were fully involved in developing the plans made for their children and in sharing all the achievements made. The parents had daily contacts with staff and have contributed to the planning by adding experiences from home to the 'parents sharing board'. The main activity was the development of story books with signs for children to take home. They also had the microphone each.

The parents were first introduced to the story books library through a leaflet and email through the invitation to the evening session with early years teacher and speech and language therapist. They were then thought of how to use the story bags and the signs. The children were then taking bags at home on a regular basis. The parents were doing activities together with children, they were doing observations and their own assessment. They have also recorded some of the activities. They very much enjoyed the activities and would like to carry on doing them. The thing is that so far there are 10 story books prepared the nursery would like to have more of them. They would also like to have more funds for frequent involvement of language therapist. In addition they would also like to send all of the staff on the training in the future. It has been agreed with Language in your Hands that the second training will be launched in November, 2019.

Cliffe house Nursery

Description of the setting:

Cliff House Day Nursery Featherbank was registered in 2003 and is situated in Horsforth, Leeds. The nursery employs 27 members of childcare staff. The staff hold appropriate qualifications with three staff with qualified teacher status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery currently has 125 children on role. 12% are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Two staff from the nursery took part at the training. They have used the methods in both classrooms, especially with pre-schoolers.

Activities in the project:

During the 8 months of implementation period of the project the childcare practitioners aimed to improve the communication skills of children. They planned and carried out the following activities: general sign supported conversation with children speaking English as an additional language, they used signing with simple action rhymes and songs on every occasion, they are also using signing when teaching manners, story time and during all snacks.

The childcare professionals expressed that they find signing very useful. They would like to send other practitioners to the course in the future.

Impact on children:

Positive impacts were reported and described as 'universal' with all children picking up the signs and joining in, especially when used with songs. They were also observed using them on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. It helped English as a second language younger children to communicate, aiding speech development. As well as enabling them to feel involved, settled and happy. Although it was reported by the setting that the techniques were used with ALL children and were inclusive.

Partnership with parents:

The setting provided parents with pictures with , not only were these displayed but 2 of the settings also made displays showing signs and children signing for parents to see (see next page).

It was reported that settings were keeping the parents informed of what they are doing with the children and were able to share techniques with parents through displaying posters, wall displays and photographs of the children on the walls. Also uploading observations, photographs and videos on children's learning journals. Use during performances for parents and particularly shared with parents of children with SEN/EAL.

Some comments from childcare professionals and early years teachers

Testimonies:

‘Our childcare professionals would be happy to attend more trainings since we want to continue with the project of learning through signs. The parents are enthusiastic about the project as well and they complimented us on it.

The project will be presented at parent teacher meetings, at the staff conferences and we will try to persuade as many new teachers to start using this approach as possible’.

Špela, Early Years Teacher, Slovenia

‘As a key-person of a child with SEN, I find that using sign supported language is easier for him to understand when it comes to basic every day things, for example, verbal instructions such as ‘stop’, ‘please’, ‘thank you’. It is easier for him to communicate as he is non-verbal, although, at the moment, I am encouraging him more and more to use simple signs.

Ellie, Deputy Toddler Room Leader also Pre-school Room Practitioner, key-person of a child with SEN, United Kingdom

Within the setting, sign supported language is particularly useful in the toddler room. The toddlers have a very good understanding of signs, especially at the ‘bucket time’ activities or when they want more food at meal times.

As the practitioner I will continue practising and using LETS with our children, especially with those who are SEN and EAL’.

Olivia, Pre-school Room Practitioner, United Kingdom

‘Egle has supported me and taught me a lot about sign language. LETS have been very resourceful and have supplied us with a lot of signs that we use in daily nursery life. The signs are very helpful when it comes to children with limited speech or are EAL. As I use these signs as a way to communicate with them. Learning the signs was easy and fun for me and the children within the pre-school’.

Rebecca, Toddler Room Practitioner, United Kingdom

‘Sign supported language is useful for me as a practitioner because it teaches children another language / form of communication. It also teaches children how to use important every day key-words, such as, ‘please, thank you’ when developing verbal speech. LETS has helped me communicate with children who have limited verbal speech’.

Rebecca, Toddler Room Practitioner, United Kingdom

Participation in the project had positive impact on children. Children became more open and willingly to learning English. BSL signs showed them another alternative to how they can communicate with another people. Frequent work with hands for showing a signs improved their motor-coordination skills. During practicing of signing, children learned through many ways like listening, observation, speaking and movement, which developed their process of learning.

Dorota, Early Years Teacher, Poland

Positive impacts were reported and described as ‘universal’ with all children picking up the signs and joining in, especially when used with songs. It helped younger children with English as a second language to communicate, aiding speech development. It also helped the children to feel involved.

Kasia, Early Years Teacher, Poland

This handbook is aimed at those who are interested in methods of teaching and learning English as a second language for children between the ages of two and six. It is aimed at child care professionals, language teachers across Europe who are interested in introducing English language learning to their young learners and at parents who would like to know more about how to help their child to learn a language other than his or her mother tongue. It is also aimed at early years teachers in England where there may be children in the classroom who do not speak English as a first language and at early years teachers with children who do not speak English as their first language in international schools.

This LETS (Learn English Through Signs) handbook has been created by early years teachers, child care professionals and researchers within the Erasmus plus “Learn English through Signs” project. The partners in the UK, Slovenia and Poland work with young children who are learning English as a second language at an early age in very different circumstances. For example, in nurseries where children start to learn English as a second language at a very early age (at the age of 2 in Slovenia), in international kindergartens in Poland where English is the language of instruction and in England in classes with children who do not speak English as their mother tongue (migrants, refugees). More information about the project and access to the learning materials can be found at <http://www.lets-erasmusplus.com>.



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