

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Acknowledgement	4
Abstract in Chinese	5
I. Preface	6
II. Scope of the study	13
III. Methodological background of the study	15
IV. Necessity of bilingual education in the early childhood	18
V. Description of case study bilingual Montessori and non-Montessori kindergartens	49
VI. Process of learning and teaching English: evaluation of educational materials and their implementation into classroom activities.....	63
1. Montessori English class.....	64
a. Phonics Books	64
b. Sound Boxes	74
c. Sandpaper Letters.....	78
d. Movable Alphabet and Writing Practice	80
2. Non-Montessori English class	86
3. English Reading Class: Storytelling with picture books...89	
4. Supplementary Vocabulary Exercises.....	105

a. Scrabble Game	107
b. Picture-Card Matching Game	107
c. Vocabulary Cards.....	108
d. Phonics Sound Cards	111
5. Morphological changes	118
6. Oxford Very First Dictionary	121
7. Features of Montessori and non-Montessori approach	130
VII. Literacy development	139
1. Experiment: My English name	148
VIII. Implementation of Games and Songs	155
1. Games.....	155
a. <i>What's missing?</i>	158
b. <i>Quick Shot</i>	159
c. <i>Guess Word</i>	159
d. <i>Back-to-Back</i>	160
e. <i>Touch the Word</i>	161
f. <i>Go, Touch, and Run</i>	161
g. <i>Simon says</i>	162
2. Songs.....	164
IX. Guidelines of English class for Preschoolers	174
1. English Vocabulary	174
2. English Grammar	176
3. Story Reading.....	176

4. Development of Literacy	177
5. Games & Songs	178
6. Class Management.....	180
X. Conclusion.....	182
Bibliography.....	184
Appendices.....	191
Pictures.....	195

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摘要

透過蒙特梭利及非蒙特梭利方式:台灣學齡前英語課程」作為第一個主要提出長期(超過六年)的對比分析研究關於在台灣雙語幼兒園常用的蒙特梭利和非蒙特梭利英語學習方法。在許多雙語幼兒園的課程中,英語是不可或缺的部分。先學習第二外語(SLL)能建立孩童聽說讀寫四種技能以外語口語表達及識字等,有益於孩童一開始的發展。這本書提供了四種有用的英語發展技能的指標,包含蒙特梭利式寫作和讀書活動、有趣及合適的故事閱讀,及遊戲和歌曲讓英語學習更有趣。這項研究主要是以語言學為基礎,應用教學和心理學假設。全書共分十章,主要呈現、評估在雙語幼兒園英語課使用蒙特梭利和非蒙特梭利的研究。第 IV 章列出雙語教育在幼兒園的必要性和利與弊,顯現出對非常年輕的學習者主要 SLL 的優勢,也提到本地和外籍老師英語教學的優點及缺點。第 V 章解釋蒙特梭利教育法的基本原則。第 VI 章注重在蒙特梭利有效的教材,如拼音、音節、砂紙字母和句子分析,也提供有效的單字學習:透過故事閱讀及使用生字卡和視覺輔助教材。第 VII 章介紹以有效的活動建立早期學字前及學字時的技能。此研究不僅提倡語言表達能力(聽、說)的推廣,還有在學齡前教育的識字前和識字後(讀、寫)的技能,有助於成功地實施蒙特梭利的方法。為了此目的,在此研究中仔細描述及評估實行不同的蒙特梭利教材和識字發展,此外,遊戲和歌曲的重要性對學齡前教育受到研究人員高度重視和分析。因此,第 VIII 章展示了年輕學習者流行的遊戲和歌曲,並提供有用的指導。包括競爭因素、激勵機制和遊戲規則。第 IX 章總結了這研究可被用於雙語幼兒園指標的重要意義。使用蒙特梭利和非蒙特梭利的英語課程會加以說明及總結。這個教學研究吸引了第二語言學習(SLL 而不是 SLA),意旨英文。與所有四個技能學齡前孩童往往注重語言學(但不是在 SLA)。因此,這本書提供了英語幼兒園教師在非自然的環境下有效的指導。

I. Preface

This research into bilingual education within a monolingual society is dictated by several factors:

1. Foreign languages are the passion and profession of the researcher. Therefore, past research was mainly focused on foreign languages comparing them from linguistic, didactic, and cultural perspectives.
2. The researcher was exposed to foreign languages since primary school and personally underwent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Second Language Learning (SLL) processes. The researcher can speak several languages, such as English, German, Russian, basic Spanish, and Chinese.
3. Besides being an insider of foreign language acquisition, the researcher has been closely observing this process as it occurs with her two sons who are now eleven and three years old and are growing in a multilingual environment with Chinese, English, Russian, and German.
4. Furthermore, a longitudinal study was conducted on bilingual education in Taiwan based mostly on observations gathered from Montessori bilingual kindergartens and from other bilingual kindergartens located in Kaohsiung area of southern Taiwan. This project spanned for more than six years and is ongoing research where the researcher plays the role of the foreign teacher for the kindergarten children and the role of an observer of a bilingual kindergarten education in Taiwan.

So, accumulating her own experience of being a foreign language learner,

foreign language teacher, and foreign language researcher, the researcher completed extensive research on bilingual education on very young learners in Taiwan and some of the study results, including theoretical implications, will be shared in this book.

The researcher was interested in instructed Second Language Learning (SLL) as was primarily dictated through her desire to research the Montessori method and because some kindergarten teachers in Taiwan had expressed an interest in how they could apply the Montessori English learning method. They were familiar with the Montessori method, but they didn't know that this method could also be applied to English learning. Since this approach appeared to be effective for English learning, as the kindergarten children¹ have demonstrated through their extensive vocabulary and reading ability at the age of 5-6 years², it was highly interesting to elaborate on their learning process and discover the methodological mechanism of this approach. Later, the research interest was extended to non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan, which provide English programs that are different from Montessori English class, to expand the study.

¹ Hereafter, the kindergartners will be referred to as “very young learners” with the age span from 3 to 6 years old.

² Many children in Taiwan start to read English only at the age of 9-10 years old.

It should also be noted that there are only a few studies on Montessori English learning process in early childhood written by linguists, i.e. from the linguistic point of view. Research on bilingualism, in general, is mostly conducted by educators, psychologists, and sociologists from pedagogical, psychological, and social perspectives, respectively, most likely because linguists do not elucidate enough on the foreign language learning process by small children at pre-school age in **non**-English speaking countries. The existing literature doesn't provide an in-depth exploration of SLL by early childhood learners since linguistic research often begins its focus on children no earlier than primary school. However, the fundamentals of this process in the early stage are highly important to further success in a child's language learning.

It is worth mentioning that the Montessori English learning method as applied in Taiwan and described in this research may significantly differ from the Montessori method applied in English-speaking countries because the former method refers to the acquisition of English as a foreign language and the latter to the acquisition of English as a native language. The Montessori English learning method as applied in a non-English speaking country is often modified and added to through other non-Montessori activities to intensify and enhance the learning process of non-native speakers.

According to Krashen (1981) it is rational from the beginning to distinguish between **Second Language Acquisition (SLA)** that occurred in a natural way without a teacher's guidance and **Second Language Learning (SLL)** that occurred in a classroom setting led by a teacher. The SLA and the SLL referred here to the setting, naturalistic vs. non-authentic, and/or age, e.g. kindergartners vs. adults, respectively. Consequently, the non-/Montessori English learning method belongs to SLL guided by teacher during a class sometimes featuring some elements of SLA when the teacher speaks spontaneously to the children in English, not in the English class, with an indirect purpose of English learning. Therefore, English learning in bilingual kindergarten with a greater focus on pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition was implemented by different activities (e.g. plays, songs, games, and story reading) without an instructional explanation of grammar – on contrary to the instructed English teaching in the primary and secondary schools. Therefore, it can sometimes be considered as a mixed approach of instructed and naturalistic methods, i.e. a combination of subconscious SLA and conscious SLL. Based on Krashen's SLA theory (1987), the kindergartners focus on the meaning of the language and not or less on its form. Unconscious language learning is typical for children aged 3-7 years old whereas grammar and syntax cannot be learned consciously. This is, however, disproved of by the English Montessori method as demonstrated later in this book. In general,

very young learners use the “holistic approach to language, which means that the children understand meaningful messages but cannot analyze language yet” (Pinter 2006, p.66). In general, this study will further apply Krashen’s term of SLL in his understanding where the English learning process is guided by the teacher in non-authentic situations vs. the acquisition process of a child occurring in a naturalistic environment and with a different pace.

Referring back to the study, another important note is the fact that the researcher, who has personally been intensively engaged in this approach through observation and partial teaching, didn’t take part in any Montessori training and has neutrally described the Montessori English learning method applied in the Taiwan’s early childhood education as professional foreign language teaching, i.e. from the linguistic-didactic point of view. This study is a rare combination of primarily applied and secondarily theoretical research as the author, as a linguistic researcher, based her analysis on her own personal practical involvement as teacher into the bilingual English education in Taiwan. Such a combination of insider-as-teacher who could experiment extensively and simultaneously in the English class and outsider-as-researcher’s observation is optimal for conducting a fruitful study.

The case study described below will introduce how the Montessori and non-Montessori methods have been applied in some English learning class settings in Taiwan’s bilingual kindergartens. The focal point of this research

will be salencies of the Montessori method in comparison to other approaches of English teaching. In particular, this study aims to scrutinize some of the Montessori educational materials in terms of English learning effectiveness. In the opinion of the researcher, it is important to analyze the demonstrated effectiveness of the Montessori method and its effective educational materials (e.g. *phonics books* complementary to the *movable alphabet*, perceptible visual educational materials classified into the *alphabetic letters*, the sensor *sandpaper letters* divided into consonants and vowels, *theme classified flashcards*, *sentence pattern signs*) taking into account such social factors as the environment and the teacher-child relationship. In general, the Montessori-materials stimulate the child's self-development through her/his self-dependence, which corresponds to her/his own individuality. It occurs through her/his own control over mistakes and correction of mistakes made by the child (ref. Tannikova 2007, p.10). Also, the term 'educational materials' is deliberately used instead of 'teaching materials' since the learning process by the child is predominant over the passive teaching process by the teacher in the Montessori concept. In general, the bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan, as in many other countries, use "extra-linguistic support in the form of life related objects", e.g. posters, flashcards, picture books, as they facilitate the children's comprehensive processing of the foreign language. Such

educational teaching materials and techniques (e.g. flashcards, story books, games and songs) will also be investigated in the research.

In addition, the researcher will study the compatibility of the Montessori method and other techniques for developing the English literacy of the Taiwanese children in early childhood. For this purpose, the English reading class with storytelling, learning of the alphabet and corresponding phonics, writing and reading exercises as well as other approaches for literacy skills will be elucidated in the study. Previous and current experiences in collaboration with different bilingual educational preschool institutions in Taiwan have conveyed to the researcher new impulses and new understanding of some effective and ineffective English learning methods of literacy applied to Taiwan's very young learners. Therefore, there is a strong desire to share the original observations, implications, and ideas with Taiwan's community.

To sum up, this study will in general be closely interwoven with some aspects of second language learning, like its external (e.g. environment) and internal (e.g. child's temper) factors, the teaching methods, and others. The ideas may repeatedly be emphasized in different parts of the study due to their interconnectedness. In general, this study was designed to elucidate on bilingual early childhood education in Taiwan.

II. Scope of the study

This study is created 1) to discuss the necessity of bilingual education in early childhood; 2) to analyze the Montessori and secondary non-Montessori methods commonly adopted in some of Taiwan's bilingual kindergartens for English learning; 3) to assess the working procedure with the educational materials and their effectiveness; and 4) to analyze the development of English literacy in Taiwan's bilingual preschool education.

In the beginning, the research aimed to discuss the necessity of bilingual education in the Taiwan's kindergartens based on the survey's results received from the kindergartners' parents. The succession and frequency of the English learning will also undergo a detailed analysis in the current study. The merits and flaws of the Montessori and non-Montessori approach applied in Taiwan in terms of the children's English learning process will be discussed in this research as well.

In addition to the fact that the Montessori method is considered as a child-centered alternative educational method based on theories of child development, and is characterized by an emphasis on self-directed activity on the part of the child, it also stresses the importance of adapting the child's learning environment to her/his developmental level. Such an individualized approach of the Montessori method will be described in this work later on.

Regarding the English language, preliminary observations and teaching experience revealed that the children aged of 3-6 years, who are acquiring

English through the Montessori method, succeed in their English ability, including all four basic skills in their language work progression. Besides, in many situations, they have better intuition in understanding spoken English. Therefore, one of the tasks is to describe the advantages of the Montessori approach applied to basic English learning and to determine which educational materials are the most effective for SLL.

III. Methodological background of the study

In this section, the research approach of the study will be explained in detail. This study will be carried out in line with the research methodology and principles. The research should serve to demonstrate the principles and features of the Montessori and non-Montessori approaches applied to some Taiwanese preschool-aged children for English learning. According to J. Brown (1988), this study predominantly uses *primary research*, i.e. it derives from the primary sources of information (very young learners of English, teachers, and parents). The primary research is partially supported by *secondary research*, including literature sources related to the study object. This researcher's primary research presents a longitudinal case study with some elements of statistical data, such as the questionnaire on the Montessori English learning method carried out with the support of the Teachers' Association of Montessori Method in Taiwan. Its results in terms of the attitudes, opinions, and/or characteristics regarding the Montessori method will be evaluated and summarized in the research (see Appendix III). Also, non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens participated in the survey, which results will be presented and evaluated in the study as well (see Appendix I & II). Subjects of the research (parents, teachers and children) have been matched according to ethnicity (almost all Taiwanese), socio-economic background (middle social class of parents), and children's

age (3-6 years old). The sample size (number of students in a group) was also comparable between Montessori and non-Montessori kindergartens in order to carry out reliable generalizations. To be neutral and objective about the Montessori English learning method and other approaches applied for SLL in Taiwan, the triangulated multiple perspective was chosen for representing the Taiwanese non-/Montessori teachers' opinion, the children's opinion about their English class received through talks, and the opinion of the scholar of this study as a long-term observer. Such a triad offers more accuracy for the evaluation because of the different perspectives. Therefore, the results of the study can be helpful and productive for the second language teaching.

However, this study will be based mostly on the scholar's own English teaching experiences and observations gathered in Montessori kindergartens and non-Montessori kindergartens. Therefore, the observational approach will be predominantly inductive, i.e. using observations to study and make broad statements about the aspects that were examined over a long period of time. In general, some results of the observational approach can cause doubt depending on the duration, intensity, and depth of the study. As this study underwent a long and intensive observational methodology, the implied results can be considered reliable. In addition, the teachers' perspectives on the students' learning process, non-/Montessori English learning methods and the features of the SLL in the

early childhood, especially with focusing on Taiwan, will be presented through the action research, which consists of goals, actions, observations, and reflections (ref. van Lier, 2008). It is the opinion of the researcher that such a method is helpful for a rigorous evaluation and in drawing the appropriate conclusions.

In sum, this study will primarily be conducted by a qualitative analysis, in which valid and reliable results achieved through long-term observations and personal experience will be presented descriptively with consideration and by presenting the opinion of immediate constituents (teachers and children) in the educational process. The research will carry more of an applied character with the support of some theoretical postulates assessed from the linguistic-pedagogical perspective.

IV. Necessity of bilingual education in the early childhood

The emergence of bilingual kindergartens in many countries has been dictated through the increasing role of English as an international language. Because of Taiwan's strong historical, political, economic, and cultural ties to the United States, English has gained a high status in the region, and exposure to this language, especially through TV, film, and radio (e.g. English speaking radio station in Taiwan, ICRT), is wide spread. Young and middle-aged people in Taiwan with higher educational backgrounds often have a basic or higher command of English that facilitates communication with foreigners.

English is the number one ranked foreign language in Taiwan and is compulsory from grade 1 or 2 to 9 or 12 in the public school. The onset age was lowered from Grade 4 (age 9) to Grade 1 or 2 (age 6) about ten years ago. The new Grade 1-9 Curriculum Frameworks for Elementary Schools and Junior High Schools were first published in 2003 and revised twice in 2006 emphasizing primarily oracy and then literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The current English instruction follows the curriculum frameworks revised and published in 2008. In elementary schools, the English curriculum is based on phonics. In the introductory stages, two years of the third and fourth grades, English instruction focuses on listening and speaking skills so as to establish children's basic communicative ability

through abundant listening and speaking practice. In the years of fifth and sixth grades, simple reading and writing practice is properly merged in the curricula to develop literacy in the primary EFL classroom. English teaching materials for kindergarten and elementary school students are designed to be lively, practical, interesting, and gradual, so that they will be easily absorbed by students, motivating them to learn. Regarding speaking and listening skills, elementary school students will be expected to answer and ask questions, introduce themselves, know polite words and useful words for classroom or daily life. Elementary school students are required to know 200 English words listed by the Taiwan MOE (Ministry of Education) and to use only 80 words out of 200 words by practicing writing them and reading with phonics approach (see chapter VII). The selection of the vocabulary is based on different categories related to students' daily life such as family, school, food, time, weather, animals, manners, places, hobbies, etc. Those topics have already been covered in kindergarten. So, students who had English in the kindergarten will review some vocabulary and also extend the related words, as well they will also start to practice writing those words. As can be seen, reading and writing seem to be practiced to a far lesser extent at the primary level (starting from the kindergarten). Consequently, there is considerable room for improving the quality of English education in terms of literacy in Taiwan. Therefore, it would be useful to prove that an earlier

emphasis on literacy in EFL teaching will have positive effects on pupils' later literacy and language growth in English.

The parents' motivation for English and the competition factor have led to a vast number of English teaching kindergartens in Taiwan. To begin a discussion on the necessity of bilingual kindergartens, it may be helpful to first define the term 'bilingual education'. There are many different definitions stating that bilingual education assumes a minimum ability in second language (Macnamara 1967) or reversely a complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic processes (Jim & Merrill 1986). Bilingual education is an acquisition process of four skills of a second and/or foreign language with the purpose of achieving a solid command of the target language. Distinguishing between absolute bilingualism and partial bilingualism shows that the former assumes the high proficiency in four skills and the latter refers to the lower level proficiency in less than four skills or the high proficiency in less than three skills. In conjunction with this issue, most of Taiwan's kindergartens provide only the partial bilingual education with focus mostly on speaking and listening (in non-Montessori kindergartens) or rarely the teaching of the four skills (in Montessori kindergartens). It is logical to infer that only partial bilingual education exists at early ages, because it is the beginning of a long learning process.

Whether it is reasonable to learn a foreign language at a very early age is a controversial issue. In SLA, much research has been done in terms of the **Critical Period Hypothesis**³ (CPH) where some researchers think that “the older = the better”, and others support the idea of “the younger = the better” (Archibald 2005, Birdsong 2006, Carroll 1963, Ekstrand 1982, Elis 2008, Jia & Fuse 2007, Krashen 1979, Larsen-Freeman 2008, Lightbown & Spada 2008, Mayberry & Lock 2003, Oyama 1976, Patkowski 1982, Richards & Schmidt 2002, Schleppegrell 2008, Singleton 1989). According to CPH, the SLL or SLA will meanwhile be hampered by maturational factors. Jia and Fuse (2007) pointed out in their study that CPH has only long-term advantages that can be imperceptible at the beginning stages of SLL or SLA. According to McLaughlin (1987), in childhood, CPH is set at the age of three years old as a “cut-off point” whereby a child before three years of age acquires a second language simultaneously and after three years of age successively (or sequentially, according to McLaughlin 1984, 1995), i.e. gradual learning is influenced by different factors. Another researcher, De Houwer (1995), even proposed to set a “cut-off point” at the age of six months after birth dividing into BFLA (bilingual first language acquisition) or BSLA (bilingual second language acquisition), respectively to the pre- or post-period of six months. The “cut-off point” in bilingual

³ Critical Period Hypothesis is the extent to which the ability to acquire language is biologically linked to age. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_period_hypothesis).

education in Taiwan will usually be set at the age of three when the children start to attend bilingual kindergarten and can still acquire the language naturally and with ease. English is considered to be a more syntactical language with different morphemes and Chinese as an analytical language having a completely different linguistic systems. “The bigger the differences between languages, the greater the difficulties will be” (Wilkins 1972, 198). Therefore, the early age of Chinese learners of English might be of a great help in this case to facilitate their natural foreign language learning process.

Tabors and Snow (1994) divided the sequential SLA into four stages. Some of them are also applicable to the English Language Learning occurring in Taiwan’s bilingual kindergartens:

1. *Home Language Use*. The child continues to speak his home language in the setting where foreign language is practiced. The child persists in speaking his home language (Chinese) even if the foreign teacher doesn’t understand her/him. In the researcher’s opinion, even if the teacher understands Chinese, s/he should pretend full or partial non-understanding in order to force the child to express herself/himself in the target language. It could be observed that usually after several months some children started to speak in English under such conditions because they certainly want to be understood by the foreign teacher.

2. *Nonverbal Period.* A few children don't speak English with the foreign teacher, but they communicate nonverbally through pointing or showing objects. The child usually understands the teacher's requests or responses, but such passive SLL can last a long time in a non-authentic situation, i.e. where target language is not prevalent, in contrast to the adults who can pass such period more quickly. Continuous observations showed that such a silent period – the term proposed by S. Krashen – can be interrupted by reserved children sometimes through their brief talking or singing in English when they feel very excited about a certain issue and want to participate in the activity. Many researchers (Asher, de la Torre, Krashen, Kusudo, etc.) advise to allow the silent period and to not force early language production. Additionally, G. Cook (2000) reported that the reticent children are certainly engaged in language by acquiring it passively in “rapt silence” as an “onlooker”, which can be seen from their concentrated facial expressions.
3. *Telegraphic and Formulaic Speech.* It is a very common phase of Taiwanese learners of English where they use only simple words or phrases to express their thoughts often omitting the verb (e.g. [*I like*] *yellow banana*) that is often hard to understand. However, the combination of the nonverbal period through pointing with

formulaic speech facilitates the communication process.

4. *Productive Language*. This stage is seldom common amid Taiwanese kindergartners. Usually they use only simple grammatical and syntactical sentence pattern practiced in the classroom (e.g. *it's rainy today*). Phonological (e.g. deletion and substitution) and grammatical (e.g. dropping final *-s*) errors often occur during this period. Reproduction of new sentences seldom happens by the child her/himself.

This is the progressive way of a child's SLL which develops faster in the SLA where the target language exists in naturalistic situations.

It is logical to assume that the adults acquire a second language analytically due to their maturity, and the very young and young learners⁴ naturally or imitatively in the L1 or L2 environment, respectively. But the younger the child is, the shorter her/his skills of L2 will be retained, or it will be stored as passive knowledge in the periphery of vocabulary and grammar. Conversely, adults can usually remember vocabulary and grammar for a longer retention period. On the other hand, the SLL process of adults can often be impeded by their inhibitions caused by lack of vocabulary, their accent, and other factors (cf. Madrid 1995, p.71). Some researchers could also prove that younger learners have an advantage

⁴ The age of puberty is considered as a turning point in SLA dramatically changing the learning process.

in acquiring a seemingly native accent in the target language due to their sensitivity to the sounds and the rhythm of new language and their ability of copying it (Dunkel & Pillet 1989, Fathman and Precup 1989, Pinter 2006, etc.). But in the researcher's opinion, it usually occurs in the natural exposure to second language. Through a thorough literature study related to the age factor in SLA, Bista (2008) concluded that some researchers (e.g. Singleton, Yamanda *et al.*, Carroll *et al.*, and Patkowski) support the idea "the younger = the better" because of the learner's potentiality, and the other (e.g. Johnson and Newport, Dekeyser, Asher and Price, Politzer and Weiss, Olson and Samuel) support "the older = the better" because of the learner's maturity. This long-standing debate continues to be a popular discussion topic in many other studies.

Also, such a contrary opinion exists among the Taiwan community where the Ministry of Education (MOE) clearly stipulated that the bilingual educational preschools, including nurseries and kindergartens, cannot teach English and/or hire foreign teachers of English (ref. "Employment service act" 1992.05.08 (announced), 2009.05.13 (modified), article 46). The government promotes the learning of the mother tongue first (e.g. Taiwanese), then the native language (e.g. Mandarin Chinese), and then English as the foreign language from the first or second grade of primary school. The MOE advances an argument that children learn a foreign language fast as well as

“forget” fast. The officials base their position on the grounds of building up a fundamental ability in native language first will be helpful for foreign language learning later on. Another reason they explain is that a “no Chinese” environment in bilingual kindergartens makes children learn their native language only partially, which might not reach the depth of learning required in their native language and results in communicational difficulty, distorted values, cultural identity problems and affects the development of their Chinese language skills. This indicates that the primary acquisition of native language is the prerequisite for the later learning of a foreign language. According to the “Preschool Education Law” from November 6, 1971, later amended on April 13, 2011, and the “Regulation of Kindergarten Courses Standard” from January 23, 1977, those kindergartens or cram schools, which put “No Chinese” as a slogan or use illegal names, such as “International English Kindergarten,” will be punished. However, there is a loophole in the law since the Ministry of Interior pronounced that nurseries and cram schools are allowed to teach English. Consequently, some preschools change in order to also be a nursery or a cram school and continue teaching English. The fact cannot be denied that there are many bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan that attract parents through their different English programs.

Hence, the ongoing dialog between Taiwan’s authorities on the one side

and educators together with linguistic scholars on the other side should be urgently facilitated to discuss, weigh the pros and cons of the situation, and accordingly elaborate the effective SLL policy in Taiwan's early childhood education. From the researcher's standpoint, the policy of Taiwan's government on bilingual education in early childhood needs to be unified and revised considering the world's trend of bi-/multilingualism and the great benefits of children's ability for second language learning demonstrated in this study. Some countries of the European Union (e.g. the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries) could be taken as good examples in promoting bilingual education starting from preschool and continuing into primary school (cf. Jago 1999, p.164). Based on the results of different research (e.g. Bialystok 2001; Genesee 2004; Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez 1992; Harding and Riley 1986) and on the researcher's own experience as a mother of multilingual children from infancy, who, as many other bilingual children in the world, have no sign of language delays or disorders, these observations ascertain that bilingualism is a definite advantage for a child and has a beneficial effect on learning other languages (cf. De Houwer 1999). Also in the (Taiwan) environment "where the second language is added as enrichment to the native language and not at the expense of the native language," SLL contributes to the "cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness, concept formation, and creativity" (Hakuta &

Garcia 1989, 375). Currently, since bilingualism is considered as an innate ability of humankind, children about three years old can start to use different languages in an appropriate way. The mixing of languages is not the evidence of children's confusion, but it is a convenient and quick approach due to the lack of vocabulary or the non-existence of appropriate vocabulary in the used language in order to express themselves clearly, which occurs even in adults; furthermore, such code-mixing or code-switching declines with age (ref. Genesee 2001, 155). Nowadays, more researchers support the Differentiation Hypothesis or Separate Development Hypothesis (e.g. Genesee 1989, 1999; de Houwer 1990, 2002) instead of the Fusion Hypothesis (Volterra and Taeschner 1978). The James Fallows' (1986) metaphor comparing co-existence of two languages like having two children rather than having two wives indicates the parallel, non-competitive nature of bilingualism. Many researchers including McLaughlin (1987) and Cummins (1984) profess that FLA (= SLL) and SLA supplement each other instead of hindering each other. Recent research more and more supports the idea of the child's faculty of a "bilingual" or even "multilingual" mind instead of the "monolingual mind" (Genesee 2001, 164). According to the Separate Systems Hypothesis, bilingual children separate grammatical systems for each of the target languages involved (ref. Meisel 1989, De Houwer 1995, Paradis & Genesee 1997, Berger-Morales &

Salustri & Gilkerson 2003). Since over the years, no negative effect of bilingualism could be determined with children from the countries mentioned above, it might be unreasonable to prohibit bilingual education in Taiwan's kindergartens.

Through the whole long-term research, this study focused on bilingual kindergartens, which can be classified into a higher category of educational pre-school institutions, as the majority of their children have a good basic command of English as a foreign language, especially vocabulary, appropriate to their age. So, the data on bilingual education in Taiwan analyzed below have been received from those kindergartens.

Based on the collected data from the surveys (see Appendices I-III) and interviews conducted on the 50 non-Montessori and 13 Montessori kindergarten parents⁵ and considering the answers obtained from six local non-Montessori English teachers and six Montessori English teachers in Taiwan, the following pros and cons of bilingual education in Taiwan could be determined through the qualitative analysis:

⁵ Such a small number is explained through following factors: a) Not very many children attend the Montessori Art class (English program) even if they go to the Montessori kindergarten. b) A response rate of questionnaire was very low (less than 50%). In foresight of such situation, the amount of distributed questionnaires has already been increased from the beginning.

Reasons for opposing bilingual education in early childhood (Cons)	Reasons for proposing bilingual education in early childhood (Pros)
1. Negative effect on mother tongue competence	1. Facilitates and motivates the child's English learning in school in later years
2. Less identity of their own culture	2. Occurs in a more natural way
3. Study pressure on child	3. Acquires good pronunciation
4. No direct continuation of foreign language class in school after kindergarten	4. Forms an open-minded child's personality → easier globalization process → more opportunities
5. Parents' decision, not a child's carefree choice	5. Fosters the child's mental development

Discussion on Cons:

1. The child's pronunciation of L1 is still not settled. The phonological and grammatical errors will increase in L1 and L2 interfering with each other. However, it should be considered that such phonological phenomenon is a temporary period in SLA or SLL which will usually disappear at least in the mother tongue by age of seven. Different studies have proven that children can be exposed up to five-seven languages at the same time. Since Chinese and English belong to two completely different language families, it will make easier for the child to acquire English grammar and syntax naturally without comparing it analytically with Chinese as adults usually do. As different as the language systems are, it is more difficult to acquire those languages after the turning point of CPH (i.e. puberty), and as it is easier to acquire them simultaneously at early ages without comparing those different language systems. However, foreign languages can make the child more aware of similarities and/or differences between her/his L1 and L2.

Therefore, at the early age, the child is cognizant of existence of different languages and cultures in the world. In turn, according to M. Jago (1999) in the SLL the child develops divergent thinking, analytic orientation, and field independence. ‘Divergent thinking’ is related to creative skills caused by different languages and cultures. ‘Analytic orientation’ means the awareness of language structure. Long ago, Vygotsky suggested that bilingualism enables a child “to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations” (1962, 110). In addition, ‘field independence’ refers to input and output of language that leads to an ability of problem solving (Jago 1999, p. 157f.). Taken together, the bilingualism contributes not only to different linguistic skills, but also to the development of cognitive and social skills.

2. The child cannot build up native cultural values and beliefs in a mixture of different cultures. However, the native culture is prevalent in the child’s environment in Taiwan giving many opportunities for acquiring it. In fact, many parents emphasize the importance of multi-cultural education in the global era starting from the early childhood.

3. Some parents mean that the child would have less pressure in growing up only with a mother tongue. However, in our global world, children can spontaneously be exposed to a foreign language, especially English, through

cartoons, songs, foreigners talking around them, and other factors. The data of the survey revealed that almost all parents want that their children to learn English in the kindergarten but without any pressure or challenging tasks. As appropriate, “easy” ways of teaching they consider are games, songs accompanied by dancing, watching cartoons, reading or listening to stories. As one teacher wrote, the pre-school education should start with the activities that correlate with the principles of the child’s development, namely playing. One parent proposed to teach English in action, e.g. during cooking or painting. Such a class could tackle two tasks in one, i.e. learning English through acquiring other practical skills. Such suggestions from the parents emphasize edutainment in early childhood education, which combines education and entertainment. This swing has occurred in recent years in the other direction, diverging from traditional teaching with drilling and memorizing vocabulary that was flatly rejected by most parents. It should be admitted, that drilling exercises are still an important part of teaching method despite the lessened role of mechanical drill in the foreign language classroom (cf. Gingras 1978, 93). However, the form of drilling has changed; it has become more diversified, transferring the drilling method from the explicit into an implicit one. For example, the same vocabulary has been practiced through different activities that keep the children interested in language learning as the research practice evidently showed. Therefore, the

researcher disagrees that “drills are very ineffective in providing meaningful input” (Gingras 1978, 92). Drills can be effective and even entertaining – supposing they are meaningful and comprehensive for children - depending on their method of implementation into the SLL classroom. Furthermore, the parents in this study also prefer that their children practice daily conversation in order to overcome their fear of speaking, which is considered by parents as the most difficult part of English learning, together with incorrect pronunciation. However, the parents don’t want their children to memorize dialog patterns without knowing how to use them in daily life. Such pattern drills commonly practiced by some teachers are a part of the audio-lingualism method where the children mimic, memorize, and simply repeat the lexical patterns. For a better effectiveness, such exercises should be done meaningfully in an approach appealing to children.

4. The early SLL has no continuity to learn English in the Taiwan’s school, after the children leave the bilingual kindergarten, since the children start to learn English only from the grade 1 or 2 in the school. It supposes they will lose their basic English ability and start to learn it again later. So, “haste makes waste?” Considering the great numbers of language schools in Taiwan, it would not be difficult for most parents to arrange some supplementary English classes for a child to keep her/his English level, if the parents don’t speak English themselves with their children.

5. Some parents think that the child should have an intrinsic (her/his own) motivation instead of parental extrinsic motivation to learn a foreign language. However, Madrid mentioned that the motivation to learn English is often dictated through an extrinsic motive, which later can create an intrinsic motivation (cf. 1995, 69). Besides, English is a required subject in the Taiwan primary school starting from the grade 1, 2, or 3. So, why not to learn it at an earlier age to be more prepared? Also in this study of kindergartens, it could be observed that most children are naturally highly motivated to learn English showing their willingness to answer the questions and participate in any activity. In sum, the natural curiosity and non-existence of scores make the very young learners highly motivated in SLL compared to the young learners in the elementary school.

Discussion on Pros:

1. The child's pre-knowledge of English acquired in the kindergarten will definitely facilitate her/his foreign language learning process in the school and consequently motivate the child for a further SLL of the same language and/or different foreign language.
2. The acquisition process of a second language occurs in a more natural way without any drilling even in a non-naturalistic setting. Today's motto "earlier means better" can be explained through many vital qualities of children such as curiosity, energy, and spontaneity, which are important for their successful

learning (Tavil & Uşisağ 2009). In addition, based on the Krashen's variables (1981) for the successful SLA, namely high motivation, self-confidence, and low anxiety, which are inherent in most children and likely decreasing through years, it is to infer that SLL in the early childhood should be considered as a positive phenomenon.

3. Children can acquire good pronunciation (possibly nearly as a native speaker) due to their having less inhibition and a good imitating ability, especially when they are taught by a native speaker.

4. Through the direct contact with a foreigner, foreign language and culture expressed through pictures, songs, English names of Taiwanese children and other factors, the child's personality will be formed as open-minded, which is often hard to reach in higher grades. Later, it will lead to an easier globalization process of the young learners of foreign languages helping them succeed in their lives due to more opportunities. Nowadays, multilingualism is highly encouraged because of the diversified world. Therefore, many parents would like to integrate their children in this global world of lingua franca (third bridge language) with English as the prevalent language as early as possible. Therefore, SLL is magnified by a sense of urgency generated by the wide spreading of English as a communication language among different nations. Some parents also mentioned a good job opportunity as a reason for studying English. However, this is in the far

distance future, but a factor for parents to include as they prepare their children for the workforce.

5. The SLA and SLL will also foster the child's mental development; especially in terms of her/his "left hemisphere" specializing in language processing, which the parents have often considered positively. The L2 positively affects the child's thinking ability, logic inference, reading skills, which can be later applied easily to a closely related L3, as well as improving of her/his memory and better problem solving ability.

As for the qualitative analysis of this questionnaire, the results showed that most parents (ca. 62%)⁶ support the idea of bilingual education in early childhood and disagree with the MOE's regulation prohibiting bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan. The parents suggested that if the child wants to have English class, the SLL can begin from the kindergarten age. Most parents are afraid that without English the children will lose their chances of job success from the very beginning, i.e. s/he won't be competitive enough. They think it is important to lay a good foundation of English skills as early as possible. Overall, the number of people who believe in the positive effects of bilingual education appears to be greatly outweighed by those who are

⁶ 20% of parents neither agree nor disagree with the MOE's rule because it depends on the child's wishes. Only 18% agree with the ban on bilingual kindergartens because they prefer to teach Chinese to their children first and begin with English later in the primary school.

convinced of negative outcomes. The most important concern of the parents is the ongoing motivation of the child towards English learning. Seeing many kindergarten children who are eager to learn English and even able to communicate in basic English expressing their needs and wishes, the researcher is strongly convinced that bilingual education should start in early childhood so as to integrate the very young learners into the globalization process as early as possible. Through SLA or SLL, the kindergarten children are exposed to a foreign language and culture at the early age and will have a better chance at success from their very beginnings.

However, the parents should consider that besides age, there are other crucial factors influencing an effective SLA or SLL, namely “learning opportunities, the motivation to learn, individual differences [e.g. gender, temper, aptitude] and learning styles” (Bista 2008, 3). However, the correlation between these factors and the foreign language outcome is obvious by the young and elder learners and less evident by the very young learners, who are usually always curious and motivated naturally in the SLL.

Furthermore, the parents in this study didn't mention the necessity of teaching literacy in the early childhood as it is probably considered too challenging. Compared to the Montessori kindergartens, the bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan don't integrate literacy in their curriculum because some educators and parents think: first, the literacy in the mother tongue

(Chinese) should be developed; and second, the muscles of the child's hand are immature for handwriting at the pre-school age (see chapter VI.1.d and VI). Possibly however, if the parents knew that their children indeed enjoyed the writing practice or building the words (by magnetic alphabet letters), they would possibly support the idea of literacy in the early childhood as a few parents already desire four skill English learning since it is adopted in the kindergarten's curriculum in the SLA of English-speaking countries. Recently, more and more parents emphasize the necessity of developing the English reading abilities of their children and have asked the kindergarten to implement appropriate activities for this in the curriculum of English class. Consequently, now the non-Montessori kindergartens implement more writing activities, including the writing of their own English names into English class.

To conclude, most parents insist on teaching English to their children but in a pressure-free atmosphere developing two-four language skills.

In the following discussion, the comparison refers to the merits and drawbacks of teaching English by local and foreign teachers as one of the survey's questions. It has to be mentioned that Taiwan's educational system employs numerous native speakers and near native speakers as foreign teachers starting from kindergarten⁷ until the university level as compared to

⁷ However, it happens despite the fact that, according to the MOE regulation,

other countries (e.g. Europe) where the native speakers as foreign teachers seldom work, especially in the non-higher educational institutions like kindergartens and public schools. A great number of educational institutions in Taiwan, especially private ones, have at least one foreign teacher. Therefore, the children have an opportunity to encounter English native speakers and their culture from the early age. The teaching combination by local and foreign teachers leads to a bilateral instruction given in the L1 and L2, but often prevailing in the local language. However, most children have adapted to teaching instruction given in both languages.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, most parents don't have any preference in terms of a foreign or local teacher as long as they are qualified and can motivate the children towards the English learning. Therefore, the discussion initiated below doesn't focus on the preferences, but only on the upsides and downsides of both kinds of teachers. The data collected from the surveys and interviews conducted on the parents and teachers in Taiwan have delivered the following qualitative results in terms of English teaching by local and foreign teachers:

Advantages		Disadvantages	
Local teacher	Foreign teacher	Local teacher	Foreign teacher
1. Explains the words' meaning better	1. Correct pronunciation	1. Incorrect pronunciation	1. Less concern about child's needs
2. Explains the grammar better	2. Fosters the child to think	2. Not fluent in English	2. Has difficulties to

kindergartens are not allowed to hire a foreign teacher.

	independently		communicate with a child
3. Easier to understand child's needs	3. Patient teaching	3. Pressure of English teaching on child	3. Unqualified as an English teacher
4. More serious in taking care of a child	4. Softer and funnier teaching motivates a child	4. Monotonous teaching leads to child's disinterest	
5. Knows the Taiwan education system better	5. Faster English learning by child		

Discussion on Advantages

Local teacher:

1. Sometimes, the local teacher can better explain the meaning of vocabulary, especially abstract words, using the native language of children (e.g. example of *'invitation'* in the chapter VI.1.a. and VI.6.).
2. The local teacher can also explain the grammar better in the native language and from the perspective of the mother tongue. However, the kindergarten curriculum doesn't provide any direct instruction on grammar. Practicing of different grammatical or syntactical pattern is implicitly implemented into different (playing) activities.
3. The local teacher can more easily understand the children's needs expressed in their mother tongue. It is important to mention that many children say some standard sentences in English uttering their basic needs like *May I go to the bathroom?/I want to drink water*. However, they cannot express other needs, e.g. *I have to go because my parents are waiting for me*; they just point outside. In this situation, the teacher's assistant, who is also in

the classroom, will usually help and speak Chinese/Taiwanese to the child to respond to her/his need.

4. Some parents think that the local teacher takes better care of their children taking the responsibility of her job more seriously.

5. The local teacher is familiar with Taiwan's educational system and its needs and requirements and can design an appropriate curriculum for English teaching (e.g. American phonics KK or American vocabulary instead of British one).

Foreign teacher:

1. The foreign teacher can teach correct pronunciation whereby the child can acquire a near native speaker accent.

2. The foreign teacher imparts on the child an independent thinking by asking questions, which unfortunately will often be answered by the local teacher who also assists the class. It is crucial to understand that the children need time to think, i.e. if they don't answer immediately, it doesn't mean that they don't know the answer; it requires a time for them to concentrate, recall the vocabulary, and reply. In the class in this study, it was observed that, when the local teacher was not in the class, the children could eventually answer the questions posed by the foreign teacher.

3. Consequently, the foreign teacher is usually patient to work with the children despite their slow pace or classroom distractions.

4. Many parents regard the teaching by a foreign teacher more fun and less strict with implementation of different games, songs, costumes and body language without exerting any pressure on child. In the surveys, many parents emphasized the importance of easy learning through games, songs, and other classroom activities. One parent also mentioned the symmetrical relationship established between the foreign teacher and the children. Another parent mentioned that foreign teacher can build up the child's confidence in terms of English speaking that will lower the child's level of anxiety and affective filter and increase her/his input.

5. Some parents also shared that they felt the teaching pace of a foreign teacher is faster using different vocabulary and various supplementary materials. After studying the English curriculum of different kindergartens and cram schools in Taiwan, it could be determined that one lesson with total of ca. 10 words has usually been stretched and repetitively studied through the whole month (see pic. 1). So, the children often felt bored by reviewing the lesson many times. More diversification of the English class is indeed desirable.

Discussion on disadvantages

Local teacher:

1. Many parents think the pronunciation of the local teacher significantly differs from the native speaker which will negatively affect the child's

pronunciation. It may be possible, but many local teachers also have a good English pronunciation. However, they often don't pay as close attention to some details in pronunciation, such as the final consonant *-s* as the indicator for the plural, 3rd person singular or possession (*Mary's book*). Dropping the final morpheme *-s* in English will be considered a grammatical error that is often done even by college students (see Yakovleva 2013). To avoid it, the teacher needs to pronounce it clearly herself and make the children aware of such nuances asking each child to pronounce it clearly what unfortunately seldom happens in English classes in Taiwan. In addition, it is ineffective only to mimick the vocabulary (i.e. pronounce it by all children together) without discovering the phonological difficulties of each child if there are any. Therefore, the foreign teacher tried to address each child individually to give a chance for practicing and being heard. Since the individual approach overweighs the collective teaching method here, the only disadvantage lies in a loose discipline of the whole class whereas most children started to feel bored and became distracted from the class. Hence, to find a balance between two methods mentioned above and to keep the children concentrated on the class is one of the objectives for effective teaching process.

2. Some parents also assume that English is not fluent enough by some local teachers because of the lack of practice which is often not a case in Taiwan.

The English level of many local teachers usually fully satisfies the requirements, especially for the kindergarten level.

3. The parents are concerned that the children will be under pressure learning English with local teacher who is usually strict and challenging with a lot of homework.

4. Some parents are concerned about the tedious teaching of the local teacher what may lead to the decreased motivation of child to learn English. All of the parents reported that they don't like the traditional teaching way where the children learn passively, e.g. choral repetition of vocabulary even without understanding its meaning. Such "parrot effect" without communicative and semantical comprehension was evident when the teacher requested "say 'carrot'" and the child echoed "say 'carrot'" without omitting 'say' even when the visual aid (e.g. image of carrot) has been applied. According to the Krashen's Input Hypothesis, this child doesn't have enough amount of comprehensible input that is absolutely essential for a successful foreign language acquisition or learning. Besides, some parents are also concerned that the local teacher may limit the child's creativity and imagination.⁸ So, diversified, creative and active learning is a must in any education, especially in the early childhood since it can increase the learners' motivation and

⁸ For example, when the foreign teacher asked the children to touch something "red", one girl touched her red dress. The local teacher corrected her saying she needs to touch "red" in the book. However, the foreign teacher didn't indicate the location.

cultivate their creative thinking.

Foreign teacher:

1. Some parents express their concern regarding the careless attitude of foreign teacher towards children. It can be possible that some foreign teachers don't want to take any responsibility for their teaching and don't try to achieve any successful results by children. However, it is usually an individual factor, i.e. no generalization is legitimate here. Some Taiwanese parents think it is better to learn English with a foreign teacher after the age of six when the child is more independent and has acquired a basic English vocabulary for expressing her/his essential needs.

2. It is true that sometimes the foreign teacher has some communication problems with the children due to the language barrier. It is advisable that the foreign teacher would have some basic skills of the children's mother tongue in order to use it in some difficult situations which can occur albeit seldom. As a rule, the English class taught by foreign teacher always had one local teacher's assistant who can speak both languages.

3. Some parents also doubt the qualification of foreign teacher to teach English. However, usually the diploma of foreign teacher will be proven by Taiwan's Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Education to assure the required qualification is acceptable under the law. Furthermore, the employer takes a responsibility to hire a suitable foreign teacher.

Returning to the results of questionnaire conducted on parents (see Appendix I), Q7 revealed that some parents use other supplementary materials for their children to learn English, such as multimedia educational programs for PC use, entertaining TV programs (e.g. Momo in Taiwan), cartoons and books in English. According to Q3, only a few parents sometimes speak English with their children while asking them questions. Some children are also willing to express themselves in English although a few children are afraid of speaking English due to their reserved temper (shyness), lack of knowledge, or confidence. Therefore, besides teaching, the educator should create low anxiety situations in order to lower the affective filter of the learner, especially of the reserved children, which would enhance their comprehensible input referring to the Krashen's Input Hypothesis. It can be done in the form of complimenting, giving some incentives (e.g. toys, candies, or stickers). It is an interesting fact that some parents use English for praising or punishing their children. Using English as a foreign language could make such speech acts special, and hence their perlocution (effect) will be more effective on children due to their rare use of English. Besides disciplinary requests said in English like *'Don't talk!'*, *'Be quiet!'*, *'Sit nicely!'*, *'Sit upright!'*, *'Don't put your chin on the table!'*, the teachers of both kinds of kindergarten sometimes praised the child for her/his achievement: *'Good job!'*, *'Great!'* which is highly important for a child's

confidence. However, the complimenting phrases shouldn't be used too often in order to avoid automatisms.

In addition, many parents want their children to have more oral practice of English because they think that the grammar, pronunciation, appropriate use of English phrases, and fluent ability to speak English are the most difficult language issues children encounter (Q 20). As for the teaching hours, the parents indicated different time spans ranging from two to ten hours a week would be beneficial. In reality, the average class time is five hours a week. Paradoxically, many parents consider only one-two hours of English class a week as reasonable (Q5) whereas the kindergartens offer at least three hours of English teaching per week. Such responses track back most likely to the parents' desire to have less pressure put on their children. At this point, one parent mentioned that despite the interesting English teaching, the child's outcome results were not great. It may depend on several factors, such as the child's concentration, character, and motivation. In general, the parents of children from both kinds of bilingual kindergartens (Montessori and non-Montessori) are satisfied with the curriculum of English classes and teaching approaches of the educational institutions.

As can be seen, there are some virtues and drawbacks regarding bilingual education in the early childhood regarding the English teaching by local or foreign teachers. Parents need to make their own choices for the best

of their children considering up- and downsides of bilingual education in the decision of exposing the child to SLL. However, “most research concludes that there are no negative effects of bilingualism on the linguistic, cognitive or social development of children...” (Espinosa 2013).

V. Description of case study bilingual Montessori and non-Montessori kindergartens

Most research on SLL has consisted of studies with a duration of less than two years. This research took place over six year period with intensive observation two to three times each week for two hours each time for both types of kindergarten. The three-year observational period for each kind of kindergarten with the same intensity implies first the equal balance of research material for an objective assessment of both methods. Second, it provides a whole picture of the linguistic development of the same children starting from the younger group and ending with the elder group. The frequency and intensity of researcher's personal involvement in teaching and observation processes in both methods can be considered as balanced (based on the spent hours), and therefore the obtained data are eligible and scientifically legitimate for the contrastive analysis on these different SLL approaches in order to delineate the upsides and downsides of both methods.

Going from the latest period to the earliest, during the last three years the researcher has studied the English teaching in one non-Montessori bilingual kindergarten in Kaohsiung City where approximately eighty children have been divided into three groups according to their age, namely into the elder (5-6 years old), middle (4-5 years old), and younger group (3-4 years old), respectively. Each group of approximately 25 children had

English classes taught for a half an hour each by one local and one foreign teacher three days a week totally for one hour each morning. In total, the preschoolers had about three 1-hour group English classes each week that greatly increased the children's retention and enthusiasm for English. In Taiwan, the kindergarten classroom teacher, who is not an English teacher but can oftentimes speak some English, leads the students in repeating vocabulary after she/he recites a word. Her/his presence provides a sense of security for young learners and also helps discipline students, as needed. Besides the English class, the children also speak English with standard phrases related to setting the table for lunch time, preparing for a nap, and other such daily tasks; the local teachers also sometimes spoke English to them asking them to fulfill their responsibilities, e.g. prepare the working place or to wash their hands. However, in general, English was scarcely used after the English class in both kinds of kindergarten, i.e. in the non-Montessori and Montessori kindergartens.

As next, for the parents' information, the SLL process of each child has been assessed each week and in turns by a local and then a foreign teacher in child's communication book (see pic. 2). This form focuses on the child's listening ability, pronunciation, and knowledge of English songs which make up an important part of the English class. The students' lack of attention has been highlighted as a separate aspect because it is one of the main problems

of (very) young learners. Statements about the need for more practice as formulated is perceived to be too general as it doesn't indicate what should be practiced more; therefore the teacher usually wrote e.g. "Practice vocabulary". The English learning of most children has been judged by the teachers and recorded in the books as "great" with comments such as "Great job! Keep doing it!". However, the English teachers attempted to write concrete evaluation for each child. Therefore, the communication book is a good source for parents and teachers to track the child's English language development.

The first three years of this study focused on English teaching in the Montessori kindergarten with the mixed-age groups. During a three-year period, this longitudinal research was accomplished in one kindergarten in Kaohsiung city, which applies the Montessori English learning approach to some groups of children, where the observations in general and in respect to each child were recorded in a student progress report⁹, which reflected the child's learning and served as reference for other teachers and parents in relation to each child's learning process. This in-depth research was possible due to the individual English class that is a part of Montessori pedagogical

⁹ The teachers of the non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens usually wrote a brief comment on the learning process of each child in her/his communication book once a week. Comparing to the Montessori's student progress record, such entries didn't contain much detail on child's progress.

philosophy. In contrary to the group class, the individual class applied some different teaching methods and educational materials described in chapter VI.

The Montessori English class was held three times a week for two hours from 9 to 11am concurrently with the three-hour individual work period where each child carried out an individual activity such as cleaning, handcrafting, reading a book, or counting. At that time, each mini-group of 2-3 children had English class for about 10-15 minutes where the assigned students were taken out for a time from the individual work period to the morning English class. Such a technique could be considered controversial within Montessori principles, where the child should not be interrupted from her/his work and should first complete her/his work. However, since the children in Taiwan do not often experience a lot of communication in English, such an intensive individual English class was simply necessary for them.

Supplementary to this English class based on the Montessori method, the children also had other English classes three days a week for approximately 35 minutes each, where they read books and learned vocabulary from the classified flash cards, e.g. geometric shapes, types of transportation, and fruits. Two days a week the class was taught by a local teacher, and one other English activity class was conducted by a foreign teacher once a week, where the children played different games with the flashcards for vocabulary learning, sang English songs, or completed

exercises by listening to the teacher's speaking in English. Such a supplementary class has been intentionally held mostly in the form of games so that the English learning will be more fun for children. Many scholars emphasize that a game is an optimum combination of fun and knowledge input, particularly in the second language learning because games help overcome or lower anxiety, motivate children, repetitively introduce the teaching contents in different ways consolidating it, diversify the regular class, and so on (Allen 1983; Dormann & Biddle 2006; Hall & Verplaetse 2000; Heidemann 1995; Richard-Amato 1995; Schmidt 2005; Squire et al. 2008; Tavi & Uşisağ 2009; Taylor 1990). Sometimes, the content of the supplementary class overlapped with that of the Montessori English learning class, especially in terms of the vocabulary for better learning.

The Montessori group in this study consisted of 18 children in one mixed-age group whereby there were 10 children in the eldest group (5-6 year olds), 4 children in the middle group (4 year olds), and 4 children in the youngest group (3 year olds). It should be mentioned that the total number of the children in each group varied insignificantly (by 1-2 children) from time to time because someone joined the kindergarten, or another quit. There was also one 3-year old German girl who was not considered in this case study because she didn't participate in the English class due to her timidity and reluctance. Considering her behavior, it was decided to not constrain her to

the English class. This fact also shows us that the Montessori method doesn't exercise any compulsion on children. Also, before the beginning of each English class, every child was asked if s/he wants to have a class. When the answer was negative, which actually very seldom happened, the English class was postponed to a later time when the child agreed to it. Such an attitude by the teacher also emphasizes the importance of each child as an individual by respecting her/his opinion.

Regarding the children's learning ability, one boy¹⁰ in the eldest group of the Montessori kindergarten had a phenomenal memory for vocabulary and was also advanced in reading, writing, speaking, and syntax in terms of sentence structure. Even his listening comprehension was impressive for his age, especially for a non-native English speaker; he could understand the foreign teacher well and properly react to the questions or requests. This can be illustrated through the following example: One day, one of his groupmates was sick. The foreign teacher asked: *What happened?* He helped explain in English: *She is sick. She has a 'hot head'.* The teacher corrected him with the phrase *She has a fever.* The interesting point is here that this child tried to communicate with the foreign teacher based on his vocabulary, and he translated the sentence said in Chinese by someone. A few other children

¹⁰ Also his younger brother in the middle group inherited similar excellent learning abilities. However, their parents (mostly mother) have been only sometimes speaking English to their children.

tried also to respond to the teacher's questions. In another example, a boy suddenly went away during the class and the teacher asked the nearby girl, "*What happened?*" The girl answered in English, "the paper flies," i.e. his paper on other table was blown away because of the draft, and he needed to retrieve it. In another situation, the three-year old boy answered the teacher's question, "*Where is Hanson?*" with the sentence, "*He washes his hands.*" One four-year old girl answered the teacher's question, "*What do you like: Pretzel or pie?*" with the sentence, "I like **to eat** pretzel", containing the predicative *like to eat* instead of the single verb *like*. One girl of the elder group could even change the teacher's sentence, "*I see¹¹ you*" into, "*You see me,*" shifting the subject to the object. Another girl answered with the subordinate clause sentence, "*I like orange **because** it is yummy,*" to the teacher's question, "*What do you like?*" Such complexity of the sentence structure indicates the child's maturity to use the semantical and syntactical features of English in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, respectively, in the non-naturalistic learning environment. In the non-Montessori kindergarten, such answers were hardly heard. Only a set of twins five years old (a girl and a boy) who were the best English learners in the class could provide such full answers in complete sentences most likely because they had visited the USA for a short trip in the past.

¹¹ The teacher introduced the meaning of the word *see* through the sentence.

There was also one child with a high possibility of having ADD¹² in the middle group of the Montessori kindergarten, i.e. he didn't pay attention well, was sometimes hyperactive or even too pensive or absent-minded. So, he might have a combined type of ADD or ADHD¹³, i.e. predominately hyperactive/impulsive and predominately inattentive behavior.

In this study, the child with possible ADD didn't participate often in the individual class with the other children. Sometimes, he had a class for only 3 minutes; afterwards he left the class of his own free will. The form of the class was one-on-one (i.e. teacher and child), or in the mini-group of 2-3 children, which was surprisingly effective for him since he could concentrate by himself for a little while and learn some concepts for a short amount of time. It is the opinion of the researcher that children with ADD should be integrated in the learning group from time to time to be positively influenced by other children. There were also such situations where he suddenly stopped near the group having a lesson and just listened to their English class. Despite the possible disturbance factor for other children, this child alone was allowed to passively partake in the English class of others because it was normally so hard to maintain his attention. In the third year of the study,

¹² Attention deficit disorder, a condition now known as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder - predominantly inattentive, or ADHD-PI. In <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ADD>.

¹³ Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

there were two-three children with possible ADHD and ADD, i.e. from hyperactivity to lethargy, who were integrated into the regular English class for 10-15 minutes, but often these children had an extra teacher and a separate room for their special learning activities (save for English) apart from the whole class. To keep the attention of the inattentive children, to integrate them into the class and perk their interest, the teacher often asked them questions calling their names (e.g. “*Tony, where is a ball?*”; “*Roy, do you like to play with ball?*”). Some of them could answer the questions promptly despite their inattentive behavior, for some it took a while to concentrate and reply.

As mentioned before, the group size for English learning was restricted to two-three children who were arranged according to their age and at times to their ability. The number of students in the group also depended on their available time and working atmosphere. For example, if the children were sleepy or inactive, three children were in the group to vivify the class. On the contrary, if the children were too active, the group was reduced to two children for more concentration and better learning. Also, the children with a significant discrepancy in language shouldn't be in the same group in order to avoid boring one or neglecting the other.

The teacher should be aware of the appropriate distribution of the children in the groups. Such factors as *social relationship* between children

(aversion vs. sympathy to each other), their *temper* (active, reserved, impatient) are often more crucial for the learning process of children than their learning ability. For example, a group, where all children are active, or they dislike each other, can lead to an unsuccessful learning experience due to their interruptions by talking or arguing with each other. All these negative aspects happened in one of the groups in the third year of study where four or five children were chosen randomly to participate in the English classroom. For the teacher, it was hard to control the children in terms of their learning pace, interest, behavior, concentration, social relationship, and other factors. This research study found it is definitely undesirable to have a large group of randomly chosen students for individual learning. The children often wanted to design the group membership on their own, choosing only their friends, which was not always beneficial for optimal learning. Thus, grouping should be established by a teacher and should not be dictated by the children. After the teacher called the name of the first child, or the child expressed his willingness to have a class voluntarily, the teacher assigned the next child to form a group, and then the first child was asked by the teacher to bring the other chosen children to the English class. This was done for the reason that sometimes the children rejected the teacher's request to have a class, but they accepted his group-mate's request to join the group for the English class. The solidarity factor was more important here than the authoritarian relationship.

In the case study, the teacher tried different group compositions and took notes on the outcomes until she discovered which group compositions worked best. So, it is highly important to make a wise decision in the grouping process to find a balance in the interpersonal relationships of children for successful teaching and learning. It was determined that children prefer to work in pairs or groups but not individually, i.e. one-on-one with teacher. It should be considered as one of the motivation factors for the successful learning. However, a few children with or even without ADD or ADHD needed to have a one-on-one class where they start to pay more attention or are less shy communicating with the teacher. That again indicates the importance of the individual approach to each child.

Another factor for motivating the children to learn English was a technique of checking their names in the class notebook to indicate whether they attended the Montessori English class. The children were eager to find their names and get a checkmark. A similar pro-form tactic worked for disciplining the children; the teacher said that she would write a notice about a bad behavior of a child in the class notebook. Afterwards, the child usually improved her/his behavior. Such an instrumental way of using the class notebook motivated most children to learn English and disciplined them as well. Another way to discipline children was the use of their Chinese names by the foreign teacher as an appeal to be well-behaved during the lesson. It

could be observed that the Chinese name was considered by the children to be more serious in usage than was their English name. It can be logically inducted that the children associated their Chinese name with the parents' and local teachers' addressing of the child. The researcher observed that the child's personalization through the Chinese name effectively outweighed her/his identity addressed by the English name.

Finally, the working environment in the Montessori group could be described as peaceful with pleasant quiet music in the background. Normally, the children were seated at different tables and worked individually, or they played on the mat where they accurately placed the educational materials for a better overview (pic. 3-4). Individual, well-organized work is always stressed in the Montessori method. Since reading ability is emphasized in the Montessori approach, there was a comfortable and attractive reading corner with a rug on the floor, rocking chair, and a supply of good books (pic. 5). Although the children couldn't read, they were still exposed to reading, visually exploring the books with pictures. The Montessori system suggests that "[on the shelf] behind every book there should be a photocopy of the cover, as a point of reference, so that children can replace books they borrow on the correct shelf and place" (Tafa 2008, 167). Such an idea of organizing would completely integrate with the Montessori philosophy of systematization.

As for the distracting factors in the classroom, the table for the Montessori English class with two-three children was set up in the middle of the classroom. This may not be an optimal decision because sometimes it was a pretty noisy atmosphere (someone was crying or shouting) and interrupted by other children who tried to join the class. A corner of the room would be perfect for this class for a mini-group to have more effective, concentrated learning. Later, the working space was moved so that the children were facing the window and sitting with their backs to the whole class which improved their concentration. Also, it was not allowed for children to take any unnecessary, distracting items such as a pencil or notebook. Furthermore, some personal belongings such as a watch carried by some children distracted these children a great deal from the English class since they were very often looking the time. So, the parents need to consider that such items could negatively influence the learning process of their children. Even a book opened to two pages with a lot of information can be distracting for some children. From that reason, the teacher usually opened only one page hiding another, although this action contradicts the Montessori rule to move neatly and systematically (one by one) through the unnecessary materials, which already have been used, to the upper-right corner of the table or mat for a better overview and a further review instead of putting them outside the working area. Hypothetically, it may apply only to the

Montessori materials, which are usually less colorful, that helps concentrate on the learning process. Another distracting factor is the situation, when the whole class was doing a special creative work individually (e.g. making ginger bread), the children didn't want to be interrupted and refused to have an English class. It is desirable to arrange such extra creative hours separately from the integrated English class.

An a-priori involves that discipline is pivotal for an effective learning process. In contrary to other bilingual programs in Taiwan, the Montessori program naturally fosters discipline in children through its systemized educational materials and individual working approach. It strives for perfection in the child's every movement: in how the child walks across the room, pushes in a chair, keeps the pencils sharp, keeps objects straight on the shelves that in total evolves the child's self-discipline (ref. A. Lillard 2008, 22).

Concluding, the Montessori classroom is dominated by the phenomenon of less colorful learning materials, no toys, and more self-discipline in comparison to non-Montessori kindergartens that are more colorful, have many toys and fewer duties for children, such as sharpening pencils or watering plants.

VI. Process of learning and teaching English: evaluation of educational materials and their implementation into classroom activities

The variety of Montessori educational materials is diverse, and its choice depends on each Montessori educational institution. In this case, the following educational materials used for the Montessori English learning in the kindergarten mentioned above were integrated in the English class (ref. pics. 6-15):

- Phonics book 語音書 (pic. 6)
- Sound box 聲音書 (pic. 7-8)
- Sandpaper letters 沙紙手指畫 (pic. 9-10)
- Vocabulary flash card 單字卡 (pic. 11)
- Vowel matching cards 母音卡 (pic. 12)
- Sentence analysis 句型分析 (pic. 13)
- Phonics sounds 自然發音(pic. 14)
- Movable alphabet 活動字母盒 (pic. 15)

These educational materials will be introduced below in detail, and the working process utilizing them will also be described and assessed. Many of these exercises are interwoven and implement different linguistic skills of phonology, vocabulary, grammar, syntax through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Afterwards, other non-Montessori materials, such as flashcards, posters, magnet alphabet, and various activities, including singing English songs and playing educational games, will also be elucidated.

1. Montessori English class

This chapter describes and evaluates the individual English class (with one-three children) with the use of the Montessori educational materials. Different language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and kinesthetic abilities (i.e. sensory) with concentration have been practiced in the lesson. It should be noted that Montessori English classes described in this study may differ from Montessori English classes adopted in English-speaking countries because of their different purposes in terms of L2 (second language learning) vs. L1 (first language acquisition), respectively.

a. Phonics Books

The first English class in the Montessori kindergarten started with discovering the background of the English knowledge of every child since it is crucially important to group the children according to their ability, to determine the appropriate teaching strategy for each mini-group, and for some individuals, who are beginners or relatively very advanced. For this purpose, the English *alphabet* was used to check the children's knowledge of English letters, and also phonics, i.e. the sound of letters, e.g. the sign A was called by children as [æj] for letter and *a* for phonics. In the Montessori method, since the name of a letter has no use for a three-year-old for

speaking and later reading, the children first learn the sound of the letter (phonics) as English native speakers also do (ref. Lillard 1988, 128). For better learning, the children said every alphabetic sign in the following rhythm: letter – letter – phonics – phonics - phonics, i.e. [æj] – [æj] – a – a – a, where the phonics is pronounced three times instead of two times for the corresponding letter. It implicitly indicates that the phonics are more important in the Montessori method than the letters which are traditionally firstly learned in the foreign language learning. In comparison, the non-Montessori kindergartens in Taiwan teach mostly names of letters. If some kindergartens also teach phonics, they will then be pronounced three times, i.e. the same as letters, which implies that letters and phonics are considered equally important. It may prove useful that children learn the pronunciation of letters (alphabet) and also their corresponding phonics (sounds) since both of them are used in the word's pronunciation. If they knew only phonics or only letters, it would cause them to be perplexed about the inconsistent pronunciation of some vocabulary, especially in the reading process. Also, McBride-Chang and Treiman emphasized the importance of phonological skills in initial reading acquisition of language (2003, 142). Almost all children of the Montessori kindergarten found no difficulty with the spelling of a word or with the movable alphabet, i.e. they know most of the phonics and letters as well, despite the fact that some

students mixed up some similarly voiced or voiceless sounds like *p* vs. *b*. This exercise is also the first teaching step for newcomers who are not familiar with the Montessori method. Some newcomers with a solid background of English could catch up with the English class program in the middle of the term and easily integrate into the class while others with no or a very low level of basic English could hardly follow the Montessori English learning program and started with the phonics sounds.

Afterwards, the next English class was based on the **phonics books** introducing the letter's sound separately. This conception underlies Montessori's Principle of Isolation with its focus on new knowledge (ref. Lillard 1988, 128). Every phonics book used in each English class consists of a picture on one side and a corresponding written word on another side; there are a total of five or six words for one phonic sounds (pic. 6). Such isolation helps expose the child to the reading offering her/him indirectly with only one option of word recognition. Next, the teacher showed a picture, named the word, and the children repeated after her. The astonishing point in this process is that most five-or-six-year olds tried to read the word, especially the one- or two-syllable words (e.g. *bat*, *che-rry*) and then gave an answer, i.e. the written word for them was a primary reference for the object. On the contrary, the middle group first referred to the picture and named it, by using their visual memory. Only one child of

four years old tried to read some words and then identified them. The youngest group could name the words only by referring to the picture. It indicates that the *reading process*, which is emphasized in the Montessori method, starts in some children at age 4 as could be seen from their facial expression of surprise and continues through age 5 or 6. In the Taiwanese Montessori kindergartens, the children learn to read by sounding out the letters and combining them into a syllable, then forming syllables into a word. The concept that the child's ability to pronounce the sequence of connecting letters into syllables, and only then forming syllables into words was also emphasized by the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy half a century before Montessori's works and it is still timely to this day (ref. Tannikova 2007, 16). This process indicates that children, who have already begun the reading process, implemented the alphabetic skills of name (letter) and/or sound (phonics) condition in contrast to the visual condition. However, Taiwanese children could not find the movable letters and puzzle a word pronounced by teacher without first showing them the word, in the same manner that English-speaking children could. The Taiwanese children needed to see the written word in order to decipher it for the puzzle exercise.

It is necessary to mention that the whole environment of the Montessori kindergarten, i.e. surroundings with the written words (e.g. labeled objects), assists the children in naturally acquiring reading skills in contrast to

force-fed reading. Even if the reading process is not a primary objective of teaching process in a non-Montessori kindergarten, every opportunity should be used to expose the child to reading, e.g. to introduce the new vocabulary on flashcards through reading the written word syllable by syllable, to create the print-rich environment of the Teaching English for young learners (TEYL) classroom. This idea also supports Cameron's principle: "children's foreign language learning depends on what they experience" (2001, 19). Such an atmosphere is favorable for the reading readiness approach which, consequently, contributed to the emergent literacy approach for the teaching of reading and writing already adopted in the most European, Asian and other kindergarten curricula (ref. Tafa 2008, 164). In the bilingual kindergarten, literacy can be acquired also through play (exp. "in the store/hospital") whereas different objects (e.g. fruits, paper money) used in play would be labeled in the target language. This idea is commonly used in monolingual kindergartens and is a natural process of acquiring first language through playing (Owocki 1999). The importance of labeling words in L1 and/or L2 in the classroom has been emphasized by many scholars (Lillard 1988; Pinter 2006; Cameron 2001). The idea of the use of helpful labeling the world for the children stated by famous scholar Lynne Cameron (2001) because of their prevailing visual perception and picture-word orientation has also found some proof in this

longitudinal study. Even if the children will use their native language in the play, the visual representation of the written form of the foreign language will expose them indirectly to the literacy process of the target language. Furthermore, “children can learn concepts or words in the second language that they do not yet know in their first language. This is natural in a rich linguistic environment” (Pinter 2006, p.84).

In the Montessori method the teacher doesn't subconsciously use the verb *read* in the requests and should rather utter such indirect requests in form of questions as, “*Can you tell me what this is?*” without forcing the child to complete the reading. The children are aware that reading and writing are necessary and go hand-in-hand. There is no “particular time when children should begin to read”, and the reading is here more complicated here than the writing, which starts earlier, as will be shown later, because it is a less complicated psychological activity of the child (ref. Lillard 1988, 123). The reading process requires the understanding of sounds' meaning contrary to writing which is often done by the child automatically, i.e. without considering the meaning, especially of written letters or syllables (ref. Tannikova 2007, p.14).

The Montessori education theory asserts that reading comes in a full form, i.e. as “total reading” which couldn't be observed in the case study since the five-and-six-year-old children could read only simple words

consisting of one or two syllables. When the word consisted of three syllables, the five-and-six-year olds did not try to read the whole word, instead they tried to guess the word after reading only the first and/or second syllable (e.g. *fla-min-go*). The children had learned this word before, so they read only the first syllable, gave up reading the whole word, and pronounced the whole word immediately by guessing. To avoid that occurring again, the teacher showed only one syllable at a time to facilitate the visual reading process of children. After the children read three or four syllables, they combined them together to make a word. It is natural that due to the complexity of the reading process, at its initial stage some children try to guess the word based on the provided image or on the first letter of the word instead of reading it. Only if their guess was wrong, would they retry. Therefore, the educator needs to prevent them from guessing as advised above. In Taiwan's Montessori kindergarten, the children usually practiced reading only with single one and two-syllable-words with a corresponding picture, and not with phrases or sentences as happens with native speakers at the same age. Such simplicity could be grounded in the fact that the transition to the reading process is a difficult task; therefore it is crucial to awaken and sustain the child's interest in reading.

After some time (ca. 3-4 months), when all phonics books were reviewed by children, they were assessed and classified by the researcher

into the following three categories of their degree of difficulty:

1. Easy phonics: *b, d, g, h, k, m, n, s, t, v, w*;
2. Medium difficulty phonics: *a, c, e, j, p, r, y, z*;
3. Difficult phonics: *i, o, q, u, x, y*.

The degree of difficulty means the ability of the children to read the word or to remember it with reference to its picture. When the children could name most words of one phonics book promptly, it was defined as easy. When only about half of the words could be identified, this phonics book was classified as medium level of difficulty. The phonics book was classified as difficult when the children had difficulties naming most pictures or reading most of the words. Here are some examples of most difficult words for children, especially for the youngest group, due to the hard pronunciation, specific meaning or rare frequency of use: *anchor, apron, astronaut, axe, garage, jigsaw, kettle, kitchen, ladder, leaf, octagon, optometrist, pillow, rake, rocket, rod, scissors, tag, windmill, xylophone, yolk*. However, it is erroneous to assume that the children, especially from the eldest group, absolutely couldn't learn any difficult words. They also knew such complicated words as *church, checkers, chess, grandparents, plunger, ruler, skeleton, umpire, x-ray* that normally aroused their interest or seemed fun due to the word's special meaning or its periodic use. Some phonics books have been considered easy when the children could easily recall the depicted objects,

e.g. the phonics book ‘B’ with *bag, banana, bear, book, bus*; the phonics book ‘C’ with *can, cap, cow, cup*; the phonics book ‘G’ with *grapes, girl, goat, gorilla*. It is of mention that such exercises as pointing to an object also serves as a good listening comprehension practice for children.

Hence, based on the researcher’s experience with various educational materials introducing new words, the vocabulary can roughly be divided into:

- Difficult (e.g. *apron, kettle, leaf, rocket, scissors, xylophone*);
- Medium-difficult (e.g. *grandparents, ruler, x-ray*);
- Easy (e.g. *apple, banana, sun, snake, tiger*).

The vocabulary can be defined “**difficult**” if the children, especially the youngest ones, cannot learn it even after a long practice time due to the hard pronunciation, specific meaning, or rare frequency of use (e.g. *apron*).

However, it is also erroneous to assume that the children, especially from the eldest group, could hardly learn any difficult words. They also knew such complicated words as *chess, plunger, skeleton, umpire* which normally aroused their interest or seemed fun due to the word’s special meaning or its periodic use. So then, the potentially difficult vocabulary has been defined as “**medium-difficult**.”

The vocabulary was defined as “**easy**” if the children could learn it quickly due to easy pronunciation (one to two syllable words) or an

interesting and special meaning given them despite hard pronunciation of the word, e.g. *bag, banana, bear, book, boy bus; cap, cow, cup; grapes, girl, goat, gorilla*. The easy vocabulary often refers to the animals or fruits that children learn traditionally as primary words.

In short, the children learn the vocabulary quickly if it is easy to pronounce (one-two syllable word) or has an interesting and special meaning to them despite its hard pronunciation. The multi-syllable words, the vocabulary with a hard to understand meaning, or the words less frequently used are learned by children slowly. It should be accentuated that the classification of phonics introduced above cannot serve as a reference for further studies because it was based only on the phonics books available in the Montessori kindergarten mentioned above. The phonics books can contain different words with different pictures depending on the manufacturer. For example, one phonics book, # 19 *i*, contained the difficult word *igloo* with the meaning ‘snowhouse’ and another had the abstract word *invitation*, which rather should be replaced with *ice cream* as a child’s favorite treat. Next, the children giggled when learning such words as *udder* (the part of cow that hangs down between its back legs and that produces milk) and *underwear*, but they could remember it quickly. The children also easily learned the word *ugly* because of the picture with a funny ugly mask

(see pic. 16).¹⁴ Also, in the non-Montessori kindergarten, the elder group children were asked to choose the easiest word from the following: *umbrella*, *vest*, *water*¹⁵. The given answers varied among students: some children remembered the word *umbrella* easily despite its long form because it is commonly used, but other children preferred the word *vest* due to its shortness. Interestingly, none of them considered *water* as an easy word although they drank it from their water bottles all the time. Therefore, the right choice of the appropriate vocabulary, i.e. meaningful, non-abstract, preferably short, catchy and useful words, with clearly referential and interesting pictures is indispensable for an easy and fun learning process in order to keep the children more concentrated and motivated.

b. Sound Boxes

After the children named the pictures or read the words in the phonics book, and recalled them again on the reverse side of the book, which depicted the related images, they worked with the **sound box** of the corresponding phonics (pic. 7-8). As a kind of Montessori educational material, the sound box contains several objects¹⁶ (5-7 items) beginning with

¹⁴ The word *ugly* was introduced in the *Oxford Very First Dictionary*.

¹⁵ Each lesson studied for one month introduces three new letters for the very young English learners. In total, there are twelve lessons to study in one year.

¹⁶ In the Montessori method, they are purposely not called toys.

the same phonics, e.g. *apple*, *ant* for *a*. The teacher showed the object, named it, and the children repeated the word. They also were asked to find this written word on the reverse side of the lid of the sound box. Since some vocabulary of the sound box purposely overlapped with that of the phonics books, it is made possible for the children to find the pursuant written word based on their visual memory in terms of the written word in the phonics book. Afterwards, every child touched the object¹⁷, called its name, played with it a bit, and passed to the next child. The last child put the object in the sound box, and the teacher took out the next object from the sound box following by the same procedure. It should be emphasized that the *touching process* (e.g. sound box objects) is an indispensable part of the Montessori method, as curious children like to perceive the world through this direct way. Also, the common active learning of vocabulary in form of visual aids and games is considered highly important by many scholars because very young learners absorb information by looking at things (Slattery 2005; Tavil & Uşisag 2009). Supplementary to the phonics book, the sound box is a helpful visual and sensory impetus for learning vocabulary effectively by very young learners. “Tactile experiences with holding and arranging objects allow the learner to interpret what is seen, guide the accuracy of vision, and focus attention. Montessori developed many object box activities for teaching

¹⁷ It is assumed that children have considered the objects as toys and enjoyed playing with them, e.g. pretending to eat a candy cane or ride a camel.

reading, writing, and language skills” (Rule and Welch 2008, p.14). Based on the Montessori theory (1966) the sound (object) box perks the curiosity and consequently encourages the motivation for the child to touch and explore the objects, and learn the vocabulary. Such an ostensive definition¹⁸ is very useful for the child’s learning process and is also of big help for a foreign teacher to communicate with the young learners in the target language.

As well as by the phonics books, some the sound boxes’ vocabulary was also too hard for children to remember due to its hard pronunciation (especially compound words), specific meaning or rare frequency of use, e.g. *apron, anchor, angel, jack-o-lantern, jewel, nightgown, paints, sailboat, toothpaste, turkey, tub, velvet, vest, well, whistle, yacht, yak, zigzag*. For that purpose, in this researcher’s class, the vocabulary has very often been practiced through a simple sentence pattern such as: *I like koala*. Some advanced children even combined some objects from the same sound box making a sentence like “*Gorilla eats grapes,*” and showing this action

¹⁸ “An **ostensive definition** conveys the meaning of a term by pointing out examples. This type of definition is often used where the term is difficult to define verbally, either because the words will not be understood (as with children and new speakers of a language) or because of the nature of the term (such as colors or sensations). It is usually accompanied with a gesture pointing out the object serving as an example, and for this reason is also often referred to as ‘definition by pointing’”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostensive_definition).

through the objects. One child also tried to make a sentence from some written words with the same initial sound, e.g. *The feather falls*. This indicates the child's readiness for language learning on the sentence level, including vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

For that reason, in English class, the vocabulary has very often been practiced through the simple sentence pattern such as: “*I have a book,*” “*I like bear,*” “*I want ice-cream,*” as these verbs are commonly used. Through these simple syntactic constraints the children practice vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. It can lead the child from the word or phrase level to the sentence level,¹⁹ which is absolutely necessary for a complete communication. It helps language learners retain vocabulary easily and use it in real life communication. The children like to say such sentences expressing their own preferences and it often has a “ripple effect” whereas almost every child wants to say those sentences expressing their own opinion.

It should be emphasized that the kindergartners had more difficulties with vocabulary from the sound box in comparison to those from the phonics book because they exercised less with the sound boxes than with the phonics books. The children were more familiar with the words that also appeared in the phonics book before (e.g. *ostrich, otter*). So, for a better and easier learning process it is advisable to provide almost the same vocabulary for the

¹⁹ The word/phrase/sentence levels are commonly used in the SLL in contrast to the text level dominated in the SLA.

sound box as from its corresponding phonics book.

c. Sandpaper Letters

Next, after the sound box, the preschoolers performed the act of **finger tracing** the same phonics practiced in the phonics book while repeating the sound. **The sandpaper letters** (pic. 9-10) for finger tracing are mounted on smooth boards approximately fifteen centimeters high and divided into the vowels mounted on blue boards and the consonants on red ones, where such distinctions prepare an earlier visual foundation for children (Lillard 1988, 128). Such sensitive touch exercises help the children of the youngest and middle group control their hand movements. As the first formal introduction to the written language, it was the easiest exercise considered as mechanical quick action, especially by elder children, where they felt bored and considered it unnecessary (because the elder children had already passed their sensitive period). It should be stressed that the finger tracing of the sandpaper letters is designed for use during the child's sensitive period for touch and sound, i.e. until the age of four years, for the muscular memory. However, the light finger tracing technique, namely tracing with two fingers (index and middle finger)²⁰ of the child's dominant hand simultaneously pronouncing the sound, and the correct tracing sequence (e.g. from up to

²⁰ The use of two fingers is probably better for muscular memory than one finger as many children have preferred to do.

down, from left to right) should be sustained for the furtherance of proper writing skills. Therefore, this exercise should be done in a slow and deliberate movement (ref. Lillard 1988, 128). Although the children considered finger tracing to be easy, they were sometimes corrected due to their incorrect direction of finger tracing, especially among the youngest group of children. Some children repeated the finger tracing of a sandpaper letter twice on their own initiative, probably for better learning of the tracing direction. On the other hand, Lillard (1988, 129) mentioned accurately that the exercise with the sandpaper letters should be considered as practice of sound and its corresponding shape of the letter and not as a writing exercise. The tracing letters exercise has also been implemented in the non-Montessori English class whereas the children traced the letters on the flashcards (not on the boards) willingly. Furthermore, it is of mention that some of the children were tracing letters of the word by themselves without any teacher's prompts. This implies that, if finger tracing is practiced periodically, it stimulates the children to do it; however, excessive use could make the children feel bored during the activity. In general, tracing letters is a good practice to allow the students to become more familiar with the letters and to retain the visual form and spelling of a word that contributes to the literacy development in its turn.

d. Movable Alphabet and Writing Practice

Finally, after the exercises mentioned above, the children in the Montessori kindergarten anticipated the last exercise, namely writing, which normally develops in an early period. This complex action requires coordination between both hand and mind, proper handling of the marker, and the ability to reproduce the graphic symbols in the available space. The children were indirectly prepared for handwriting through different Montessori educational materials: The pincer grip necessary for grasping the writing instrument was practiced through the cylinder blocks fitted with little knobs that the child has to pick up using the pincer grip which requires a light touch of the lifting hand. The sandpaper letters are conducive to the writing ability while the child learns the graphic symbols by sight, sound, as well as touch. The tactile-muscular memory plays a crucial role for learning the letters, especially in the sensitive period between 3 to 4.5 years. Used by a local teacher, the metal insets and frames of geometric figures²¹ also train one hand for the exact, correct writing in various angles and directions, for wielding a pencil and prepares the other hand for holding down the paper firmly during writing. The movable alphabet described below is also a good preparation for the writing process,

²¹ This educational material is used permanently in the Montessori class also for making straight lines within the outlined shape, and later for writing Chinese or English letters within the outlines.

which normally “... is not developed gradually, but in a sudden outburst;” (Montessori 1985, 228ff.). According to the Montessori method, the best time for children to start with writing is age 3 as it is considered their most sensitive and teachable period. “And Montessori seizes the period of sensitivity to prepare the young muscles for later hand writing.” The use of pencil instead of pen is common and recommended by Montessori approach because it is easier to erase and correct. The writing movement is softer with a pencil than by pen, which is important for the initial stage of the writing process.

Referring back to the sensorial exercises of the Montessori program, together with the colorful magnetic movable alphabet consisting only of capital letters (pic. 17), different from the Montessori **movable alphabet** consisting of both upper and lower case letters and divided only into two colors, namely red for consonants and blue for vowels (pic. 15), the writing practice was supplementarily introduced into the Montessori English class²². The teacher or the children chose the same word for all groups from a studied phonics book for the writing practice. Normally, it was a kind of word that was challenging to remember, or one which the children liked because it was cute, interesting, or useful word (e.g. *hug*, *mug*). After the word was named and spelled by the children, every child was appointed to

²² The children in this Montessori group didn't before this time have such an exercise.

find one or two letters of that word, and then all of the children (2-3) readily spelled out the word together in left-to-right progression. Despite that the youngest and some four-year old children couldn't read or write the word yet, they were able to do the mechanical reproduction of the word by remembering the letters and its respective sounds (Lillard 1988, 130). In order to avoid fighting, the children were advised to search for the letter(s) only with one hand and one after another. Although this would seem to be an easy task, this exercise revealed some difficulties even for the stronger pupils²³ because it requires more concentration and a quick reaction to find a letter among many other letters.²⁴ Roughly 50% of the children often couldn't find a letter quickly by themselves, and then only with help of other children.²⁵ It indicates that the expressed strength of every child is different, e.g. some had a better visual or muscular memory, others an aural, tactile, or motor memory. However, some children have improved their ability of word puzzling after several months of exercise, i.e. they could then also find the letters quickly by themselves.

²³ The best boy in the group with a phenomenal memory for vocabulary and advanced reading skills often found the letters slower than some of his weaker groupmates.

²⁴ Some children have often confused the lowercase printed letter **l** with the lowercase letter **i**.

²⁵ Such help from outside was often rejected by a child as s/he didn't accept the help immediately and pretended that s/he was still looking for a letter and only later showed the right letter to the teacher, actually using the help of others' hint.

After the word was composed, the teacher wrote this word on a small white board to demonstrate the writing direction and technique. While this exercise was considered as writing practice for the eldest and middle group, it was considered rather as a creative process of drawing by younger children where some of them often asked for help to write the word by marker on the outlined white board. After the children wrote the word, they pronounced it, and then erased the board cheerfully. A few children erased the white board not as quickly, but slowly letter by letter, pronouncing each letter for better learning of the word.

The main problem in this exercise was the type of letters, i.e. most children tended to write in the block letters as shown in the book, and only 1-2 children²⁶ wrote the cursive letters as taught in the American elementary schools²⁷ (pic. 18-19). Attention was also paid to the writing direction (e.g. from up to down, from left to right). Even when the direction of the letter's finger tracing was completed by a child correctly, sometimes her/his direction by writing the same letter was wrong. To write within the outlines on the white board and to write the letters of the same size was also a challenge for some of the youngsters. If the child wrote the letter wrong, i.e.

²⁶ The knowledge of cursive writing technique of two children could be explained by the fact that they have elder brothers who study in the elementary school and had there learned cursive English writing.

²⁷ The Montessori kindergarten also has two posters of cursive (pic. 18-19) and block (pic. 20-21) letters as reference.

wrong direction or outside of outlines, the teacher asked her/him to write this letter again until it was correct. It is also astonishing that the eldest group of preschoolers was able to write the word without looking at it while the teacher was spelling the word, i.e. they were very familiar with the alphabet and phonics. The Montessori teacher often writes and cuts off different labels of words for different games in the child's presence in order to demonstrate to the child the slow and careful writing process.

The fact that the children were disappointed when this writing exercise was omitted on rare occasions as a part of the English class indicates that the writing practice designed in an interesting way also creates a fun learning process for children. This strongly convincing fact should also motivate non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens to implement this kind of teaching of literacy into their curriculum.

Going back to the question regarding cursive writing, according to the Montessori method, much of the educational materials (e.g. the sandpaper letters) use cursive letters. The preference of the cursive type of letters is explained by different reasons: first, the children can practice more streamline movements instead of the abrupt movements of the printed letters where the former is required for writing; second, "there is a more natural linking together of hand and mind in the forming of cursive letters" what is easy to remember (ref. Lillard 1988, 128). In contrary to the Montessori

training programs organized by British institutions, the American Montessori trainings introduce cursive writing using cursive sandpaper letters. It should be considered that the Montessori method came originally from Italy, Europe, where the cursive writing is taught in elementary schools and is commonly adopted in handwriting. However, many educational materials don't display the usual style of cursive writing compared to the alphabet of the cursive letters shown on the pic. 18-19. Despite the flowing character of letters, the educational materials actually contain a mixture of printed (pic. 20-21) and cursive letters what often appears in the writing style of the adult native speakers of English. It is an interesting fact that when the teacher wrote a word consisting of fully cursive letters, the children were confused and/or began laughing about it, because they were not accustomed to this type of lettering. It should be mentioned that the cursive letters might be considered less important for language learners in Taiwan since the cursive writing style seems to be only slightly different from the printed Chinese characters. Based on the explanations above, in the researcher's opinion, the Montessori method cannot assert that it teaches the cursive letters through their educational materials in that it desires constancy of writing styles for clearer educational guidelines.

2. Non-Montessori English class

As mentioned prior, the English class in the non-Montessori kindergarten has been held three days a week²⁸ by a foreign teacher for 30 minutes in each of four classes and four days a week by a local teacher also for 30 minutes in each of four classes. Each age group consisted of 15 students on average and had a textbook and workbook of the appropriate level with 10 lessons that stretched through the whole year. Most students of the middle age group and the elder group could say only some English words or short phrases. Only a few students could produce some short simple affirmative sentences or questions in English, whereas some of their statements were incomplete usually missing the verb (e.g. **She not here*). In contrast to the Montessori class, it was a group class; therefore the use of posters and about 5-12 related flashcards for each lesson was a very helpful visual aid for teaching the whole class. One lesson introduced 3-5 terms (e.g. *angry, sad, happy; have a fever/cough/runny nose*) dependent on the age group 2-3 letters accompanied by a short verse were also taught in each unit. However, one phonic sound presented in four sentences was introduced only to the elder group. One lesson was taught for four weeks and supplemented

²⁸ In the second year of the study the number of days taught by foreign teacher was reduced only to two days a week. It is a growing tendency among Taiwanese kindergartens to employ the foreign teacher only for a few hours in order to reduce the costs as the payment of foreign teacher is usually higher than of the local teacher.

by exercises from the workbook, singing, playing, reading, and other activities. The learning materials in the non-Montessori kindergarten introduce first the upper-case letters for the younger group. For the next year, the middle group learned the lower-case letters. And in the last year, the elder group children reviewed both the upper and lower case letters. By contrast, the Montessori program introduced both the upper and lower case letters together from the beginning. From the semiotic perspective, it seems to be more reasonable to teach the capital and its corresponding small letter together to build up the unified concept of one letter (signified) presented through two (slightly) different images (signifiers) from the very beginning. As the researcher's practice has shown, some children cannot recognize the letter if they are not very familiar with its upper or lower case. Consequently, the learning process will become more complicated as the children need to retain two signifiers as words separately without being conscious that they refer to the same signified as one concept. Later on, they need to combine these two concepts into one referring to the same letter. So, it is advisable to introduce the upper and lower case of the letter simultaneously to facilitate the learning process.

Therefore, teaching materials implemented in the non-Montessori kindergarten cultivate the phonics awareness only in the elder group children in comparison to the phonics awareness of all Montessori children. The local

teacher in this case study non-Montessori kindergarten usually taught only the names of the letters to the children. On the other hand, the foreign teacher, perhaps influenced by the Montessori method, taught the names of the letters and their corresponding phonics together. However, the most children were more familiar with the letters and less with their phonics, which may impede their reading process later as they need to get acquainted with phonics.

The flashcards accompanying the lesson were actively implemented by the foreign teacher in teaching vocabulary and letters. They were used not only for the explanation, but also in the interactive activities and games (e.g. *What's missing? Back-to-Back*²⁹) which followed afterwards. The teacher let the students play and simultaneously learn with the flashcards where the children could choose the flashcard answering a question (e.g. *What do you like?*). The children were highly motivated to answer the question and in return to get a flashcard. The desire of possession forces them, even the reserved children, to participate in the activity in order to be a temporary holder of the learning object. The importance of this sensorial method in learning, especially emphasized in the Montessori method, has already been discussed (see chapter VI.1.b. Sound Boxes).

The teaching methods and materials mentioned above have also been observed in many other non-Montessori kindergartens. They seem to be

²⁹ See chapter VIII Implementation of Games and Songs.

similar and are commonly used in Taiwan; this therefore makes it possible to generalize the implications of this study.

3. English Reading Class: Storytelling with picture book

Besides the above mentioned exercises of the Montessori method, which usually were practiced at least twice a week, English reading class was held periodically at least two times a month devoted to **reading books** in both kinds of kindergartens. In addition, the story reading is an integral part of childhood starting from infancy. Many researchers have emphasized that the reading started in the cradle can create an intellectual environment for the child's development (Langan 2009). It forms the beginning of inducing the literacy of a child by exposing her/him to the reading process and written language. According to Sipe (2012), story reading enacts three basic literary impulses: 1) the *hermeneutic impulse* (the desire to understand the story and interpret it), the *personalizing impulse* (relate the story to own experience), and 3) the *aesthetic impulse* (story as a basis for own creative expression e.g. through drawing) (cf. van der Pol 2012, p.95). All these three aspects contribute to the child's motivation to explore new knowledge, especially the second impulse which has earlier been emphasized by Piaget (1972) through the text-to-life and life-to-text connections as the

4-6-year-olds have concrete thinking and strong egocentrism (ref. van der Pol 2012, p.103). Consequently, story reading with the multifaceted motivation factor is undoubtedly a great start in acquiring literary competence.

For the (very) young readers, the story book is also a picture book with colorful illustrations catching children's attention that are inalienable for every picture book. In agreement with Lewis (2001), the picture book consists of two different sets of languages: "the language of the sequence of words and the language of the sequence of pictures;" however, the words and images in the picture story book supplement each other, building unity with "synergistic relationship." In addition, these two languages, including words, pictures and even colors associated with different feelings, represent systems of signs in the semiotics that are highly important for the illiterate learners (Sipe 2012, p.4f.). Massey (1980) indicated that words and pictures could even contradict each other, producing an unusual juxtaposition. From the researcher's point of view, considering the prevalent image-orientation of the (very) young EFL learners, it is however advisable to avoid any major or even slight contradiction in order to facilitate the learner's comprehension process of the foreign language in their beginning stage. It means, according to the commonly adopted terminology, for the very young EFL learners the text and illustrations should tell the same story simultaneously, employing

parallel storytelling instead of interdependent storytelling (Agosto 1999; Sipe 2012). Lewis also pointed out that the relationship between words and pictures is interdependent (“words-as-influenced-by-pictures” and “pictures-as-influenced-by-words”) and it is constantly changing. Moreover, “the words and pictures limit each other at the same time, but in different ways,” whereas the words “anchor” the illustrations (Sipe 2012, p.10). Furthermore, the right placement of words and correlated pictures is also a pivot for the learner’s comprehension process (Sipe 2012, p.6ff.). The child’s image-oriented perception of the world is self-evident and requires a certain amount of illustration which would present every idea in the story that can be understood through those pictures. Pictures leave room for imagination especially for the non-reading kindergartners; pictures can be discussed and interpreted. Storyteller can ask children some questions and let children think what the story and pictures want to convey. Sheu (2008) pointed out that a picture book has three educational values, namely linguistic value, the value of the story, and the value of pictures whereas the linguistic value refers to the vocabulary. Furthermore, Lin (2000) indicated four aspects that should be considered by the storyteller. First, the storyteller should understand the reason for telling the story; the story should be related to the learning material or situation. Most picture books for preschoolers introduce vocabulary related to animals,

food, life experiences (exp. don't be greedy, have friends), etc. Second, the storyteller should choose the proper story for children considering their level, the contents of the story, and others. Third, the storyteller needs to plan in advance how to conduct the story (intonation, facial expression, gesture, questions to involve children in the story, puppets, drawing pictures, accompanying music etc.) and practice it. And last, the storyteller has to arrange the setting so that children can comfortably hear and see the book. Another researcher, Bromley (1991) proposed using the webbing or clustering system with different ideas related to one central topic as a versatile and flexible method before telling the story to promote comprehension. Taken together, discussion is very important before and after reading to arouse children's curiosity, to grasp the story and to know the children's point of view about it.

Bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan use different English story books for reading class, such as *The Gingerbread Man* (elder group), *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*, *Little Red Riding Hood* (for middle group), and *Three Little Pigs* (for younger group) (pic. 22). Those picture books can be read by teacher or by means of CD, especially if the story is accompanied by some poems, or story-songs, which the children usually like to sing. Such stories expose the child to an incidental and effective vocabulary acquisition due to the combination of music with a simple melody, rhyme, repetition, and

parallelism of words, as well as illustrations (cf. Medina 2003, p.13; Sipe 2012, p.10). Through these and other stories the children get familiar with conventional character traits, such as tricky fox, big bad wolf, and wise lion. To stimulate the critical thinking of children, the teacher may reverse these stereotypes whereas the wolf becomes a protagonist who is anxious about bad pigs which was the storyline for the graduation play in one non-Montessori kindergarten.

Also, other small stories in English written in Taiwan have been implemented into the reading class (pic. 23). The implementation of such books led to a combined form of class, which can be called “story-telling reading class,” as it consisted of story-telling with demonstration of the illustrations, asking questions about the story and reading accompanied with pointing to each word at once, i.e. tracking a finger along the text. The latter technique (“finger tracking”) has been employed to expose the children to the reading process as early as possible, which is very unusual for most bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan. Several research studies proved that print referencing style, including questions about letters and pointing at words, attracts the children’s attention to the print, which can boost their early literacy skills and contribute to emergent literacy (ref. Justice et al. 2009, 69). Unfortunately, many of Taiwan’s bilingual kindergartens haven’t incorporated print reference in their reading class. The former technique of

telling the story has been accompanied by eye contact, pertinent gesture, facial expression and intonation signaling the beginning, culmination, and ending of the story. These components help foster the child's imagination and visualization. However, the primary purpose of storytelling class is the cultivation of listening skills and the promotion of vocabulary acquisition (cf. Medina 2003, p.13). The meaning of vocabulary has been elicited from the context accompanied by clear and meaningful illustrations; and the vocabulary is also retained through its repetition. According to Krashen (1985), vocabulary acquisition happens here through extralinguistic support (i.e. nonverbal means like illustrations, gesture, mime, and other actions) and linguistic support (i.e. verbal means like synonyms). Paralinguistic support (i.e. phonological means like intonation, pace of speaking, and others) makes the reading come alive.

Every storybook used in an English class of non-Montessori and Montessori kindergartens usually had a vocabulary list with a corresponding picture at the end of the book. For better comprehension, the vocabulary has been introduced first through pointing out the picture and its corresponding written word. The unknown vocabulary should be explained through the substitution by known words. Surprisingly, the kindergartners acquired the vocabulary (about eight words) of one book very quickly. Afterwards, the story was read or played on CD, and the children repeated the phrases or

short sentences after their teacher. At the end of the semester, the story has been performed with costumes and masks for the parents. It served as evidence that most children have become familiarized with the vocabulary and its meaning, which was the objective of the story-reading class. Besides the acquiring of new vocabulary, the activity of reading books has a side effect, namely the cultural exploration of the target language (ref. Andersson et al. 2004).

During one semester, every group in Montessori kindergarten had a reading book appropriate to its age as an interesting and effective way to learn English (pic. 23). According to Justice et al., the reading book for kindergartners should preferably contain speech bubbles, which were depicted in most of the reading books mentioned in this study, some different fonts, accentuated words for acquiring the print knowledge, etc. (2009, 71). The children were very motivated to learn the vocabulary to understand the story. It should be mentioned that some words were hard to remember for children, e.g. *treasure*. Also, some reading books weren't assigned properly to the children's age, e.g. the reading book for the middle group was too difficult for the children's learning ability due to its complex sentence structures and vocabulary, e.g. *'he cries for help, but no one comes to help'*. For better understanding, a Chinese translation was sometimes provided for the middle group. However, the reading books for the other two groups of

the eldest and youngest children were chosen as appropriate for their age groups.

Regarding the reading process, the foreign teacher first read a sentence by pointing out each word for the sentence construction, and the children repeated after her. Although it wasn't an aim, after some time the children already knew the book and could recite it from memory. The reading was often accomplished by answering some questions asked by the teacher (e.g. *How many mice are there?; Who is a pirate?; Do you like candy?*) with regard to the contents of the reading book, whereas the children gladly answered the questions. However, it is advisable to ask the (wh-)questions with regard to contents and illustration after the reading and not during it; otherwise some children will quickly lose their interest in reading the book. Some questions related to the text could refer to the personal experiences of children, which is called agency in the classroom which will be discussed later (ref. chapter VIII). It is of note that the same picture book can be reviewed or read again after a while because the children usually don't get bored from the known storybook. The children's interest in the story, which can be read several times, remains longer.

After the reading was completed, the teacher asked only the eldest children of the Montessori kindergarten to do the **sentence pattern exercise**. The teacher read one or two sentences word by word from the book, and the

children looked for the corresponding sign of a certain part of speech³⁰, e.g. a black triangle for a noun, a red circle for a verb, a dark blue triangle for an adjective, a small light blue triangle for an in/definite article for which importance in the meaning difference is emphasized in the early stage of the English learning process (pic. 13). These symbols with different colors and shapes are highly important in the sensitive period of children and help them fix the word function in their minds. After the children composed the sentence pattern, they pronounced the sentence loudly by pointing out every part of speech. When it was required, the teacher assisted the children in this sentence structure exercise, which teaches the meaning, function and position of each word in the sentence.

Sometimes the eldest children first built a sentence by letters and then put the corresponding sign of a certain part of speech beneath each word starting the sentence with the capital letter and ending it with the full stop. Such clear structure is very helpful for the visual memory and awareness of children in terms of punctuation rules of the sentence. One six-year old boy, who is advanced in English, was even curious about the apostrophe in the sentence *I'd love to* and the hyphen in the word *Good-bye*. The children consider the apostrophized words, e.g. *can't*, *don't*, *it's*, *isn't*, as one

³⁰ The children learned the parts of speech and not the parts of sentence, so e.g. the subject will be marked differently depending if it is a noun (with the black triangle) or a pronoun (with the purple triangle).

morpheme instead of two. Therefore, some English books for the beginning learners of EFL introduce such words separately (e.g. *I am...*) to show their independent nature. Some children also asked why the separate word *Gran* used as a proper name is written with a capital letter. The teacher explained the function of these orthographical signs to them. In addition, some children sometimes curiously asked a related question to increase their knowledge what is very common in the early childhood. For example, by learning the word 'eye' one girl asked the English signifier of eyebrow pointing on it. It demonstrates her willingness to learn more related vocabulary. Also, the interest in verbal or nonverbal action further motivated the children to learn language. For example, one boy showed a teacher a piece of paper folded into the shapes of a *fan* and a *tie* that he had made, and asked the English foreign teacher how to name the objects.

Sometimes, the children mixed up the parts of speech with the parts of a sentence. It was also unclear whether to mark the predicate as part of a sentence (e.g. *can dance*) consisting of an auxiliary and full verb with only one red circle or to consider them as two verbs and two parts of speech with different functions indicated with two red circles. The latter was the tendency in order to be coherent in terms of parts of speech in this exercise. Later, another larger set of signs was introduced for the parts of a sentence where the word 'predicate' was written on the red circle, the subject was

represented through a big black circle, the indirect object through a middle-sized black circle, and the direct object through a small black circle; so the size of signs plays a role here. These signs for the parts of sentence are supposed to be introduced to the primary school children. As it can be noted, it is fairly challenging for the children to get familiar with the morphology (parts of speech) first and then with the syntax (parts of sentence).

One day, the youngest children asked why only the eldest children made the sentence patterns, and not them. The teacher then experimented and taught the youngest children to make an easy sentence pattern from their reading book such as: *I like candy / I want candy*. With three parts of speech the children could easily repeat and remember the sentence. This indicates that the exercise with the simple sentence pattern can sometimes also be practiced with the three-and-four-year olds.

However, the practice showed that this exercise could also be fairly challenging for the children since they couldn't find a correct sign. Sometimes, the teacher used a poster with the visual signs explaining the parts of speech as hints for the children to move forward with the sentence pattern (pic. 13). The problem was that the children knew the terms, such as noun, verb, and adjective in Chinese but not in English. It took time when they started to understand some of them in English and react properly to the

teacher's request to designate a certain part of speech with the corresponding sign. After three-four times of practice, during three-four weeks, some children could correctly make the sentence pattern of the same sentences by themselves. It is assumed that the visual memory still played a crucial role here because based on the researcher's observations after eight months, the children were still not really able to make the new sentence patterns freely by themselves. Consequently, this exercise, which traditionally occurs in the elementary school, is a long learning process for the kindergartners, who only started to acquire the distinguishing sense for the parts of speech in the early language learning stage. This concept might be an advantage, especially for Chinese children in terms of in/definite articles, which do not exist in Mandarin. The Montessori approach makes the EFL preschoolers familiar with the English grammar because for the Chinese learners of English it is always difficult to distinguish parts of speech and parts of sentence because the syntax of English differs significantly from the syntactical structure in Chinese. Therefore, teachers want to deal with this difficulty as early as possible to foster the natural understanding of morphology and syntax of English language. In the Montessori method, the parts of speech are also acquired explicitly through the metalanguage as the teacher asks the child:

Which word told you *what* I wanted? (noun)

Which word told you *what kind of thing* I wanted? (adjective)

Which word told you *one particular thing* I wanted? (article)

Which word told you *put things together*? (conjunction)

Which word told you *the relationship between two things*? (preposition)

Which word told you *how to do it*? (adverb).

Such metalinguistic exercise helps children understand easily the functions of the parts of speech. Unfortunately, the sentence pattern exercise of identifying the part of speech was seldom practiced in the Montessori kindergarten probably due to the immaturity of the most non-native speaking children for language learning on the sentence level, especially from the metalinguistic aspect.

It is also advisable to make children aware about the difference between nouns (e.g. *sailors*) and corresponding pronouns (e.g. *we*) as early as possible. Although the Montessori method is supposed to first introduce the structure ‘article + adjective + noun’ (e.g. *the happy sailors*), the children were more familiar with the structure ‘noun + verb’ since they could find these parts of speech easier. It is important to mention that more attention has first been paid to the nouns for naming objects, then to the verbs for naming actions, later to the adjectives and pronouns, and so on, because it is a common sequence in which the small children acquire the first or second language (ref. (Tavil & Uşisağ 2009)). The *logical adjective game*, where the

child needed to match different adjectives with the appropriate nouns, make possible collocations³¹ only with one noun or match appropriately different adverbs with the verbs, hasn't been practiced in Taiwan's Montessori program because of the limited English vocabulary of the children and the complexity of some exercises. It reminds readers once again that different approaches applied in the SLA, including the Montessori method, may differ significantly in the SLL.

During one semester, the eldest children of a Montessori group had two reading books: a) *We are Sailors* and b) *Martin's*³² *Vacation*. The local teacher read both books with the children, so they were familiar with the books' contents and vocabulary. Both books included many adjectives, such as *busy, brave, happy, smart, strong; cool, dirty, great, noisy, polite, quiet*, which the eldest children knew well. Also, the different grammatical tenses were presented in the book, e.g. the simple present tense *he says* or the present continuous *he is going home*, where the latter was often practiced in the activity class unconsciously through the game *What are you doing?* – exp. *I am sleeping*.

³¹ Collocation is the act or result of placing or arranging together specifically: a noticeable arrangement or conjoining of linguistic elements (as words)
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collocation>.

³² The foreign teacher felt it necessary to explain to the children the meaning of the possessive morpheme 's, indicating the belonging to someone, and its '-de' equivalent in Chinese.

Contrary to Book A with its two different sentence patterns for practicing, Book B introduced two sentences of the same pattern for better development of the skills: *The children in the school are polite.* / *The food in the restaurant is yummy.* However, after the eldest children made the first sentence pattern and put the signs back in the box, they couldn't make the same pattern of another similar sentence by themselves. It indicated again that there was no association between two similar sentence patterns. Even after finding the appropriate sign (the small light blue triangle) for the first definite article *the*, the learners couldn't find the same sign for the second definite article in the same sentence even with the teacher's hint. It implied again that the children weren't mature enough to analyze the sentence pattern completely. More practice was still required because some progress in terms of the vocabulary and sentence pattern could be observed after more practice.

Next, the eldest group was polled regarding their preference for the two reading books. Of the ten children, six of them (five boys and one girl) liked Book A "*We are Sailors*" because the characters in the book were pirates and it was about fighting. Four children (three girls and one boy) preferred Book B "*Martin's Vacation*" because it was colorful or the vocabulary was easier than in the other book. Such preference is logical since boys normally prefer fighting stories, and the girls normally like the colorful, peaceful books. Some children didn't like such books when the text in English was too long

there. The group for the reading class was later formed based on the children's preference for the same book.

The teachers should be aware that even every small detail is important for choosing a good book and other educational materials as the children are very good observers. Otherwise, some oversights can lead to a child's confusion. For example, if two cats are named in the book, then it has to be indicated through a color or position where and which cat is to clarify those questions arisen by children.

In addition, the issue of the names mentioned in the book is also highly relevant for kindergarten children. If the name in the book and the name of a child in the group are the same, other children usually will independently tease that child based on the good or bad character in the book, which will disturb the learning process. So, it is advisable to choose books with names that no child in the group has or replace such names with other names.

These and other reasons remind us again that the appropriate choice of reading and educational materials by considering the boys' and girls' preferences (e.g. a pirate story for the boys and a doll story for the girls), as well as the volume of the book (not too long), the sentence grammar and syntax (no complicated grammar or long compound or subordinate sentences), the clear and proper illustrations are highly important for children's motivated and effective learning.

In the second semester of the Montessori program, the other reading books with different sentence structures were used. For example, the book “Wonderland” introduced the new structure “pronoun + verb + adjective + conjunction + adjective”, e.g. in the sentence: “It’s rainy and windy”, where the children learned new parts of speech. In the sentence “The cucumbers can talk.” it was again questioned whether *can talk* should be indicated with one red circle as predicate consisting of the auxiliary *can* and full verb *talk* or with two red circles as two parts of speech, namely verbs, whereas the parts of speech are actually introduced in the Montessori method. Some children wondered that two verbs could be in one sentence as they saw two identical signs close together.

The same or similar books have also been implemented into the reading activity of non-Montessori kindergartens but without sentence pattern exercise. All children were excited about the reading class as a whole group activity where they learned vocabulary, discussed and retold the story after the teacher. To summarize, the reading class was one of the favorite classes of children independently from the educational program where they primarily enjoyed a story with colorful illustrations.

4. Supplementary Vocabulary Exercises

As shown, the Montessori and non-Montessori English class focuses a

great deal on the vocabulary most likely because it plays a crucial linking role in acquiring four skills (Nguyen & Khuat 2003). This correlates with Tavil and Uşisağ that, “there must be an ongoing effort to introduce and explain new vocabulary, starting from kindergarten,” to expand their vocabulary for better listening comprehension (2009, 301). Some researchers (Foster-Cohen, Papandropoulou, Sinclair, Bialystok) claim that only children aged seven can start to understand a single word as a separate linguistic entity. This concept refers only to monolingual children or children who acquire a second language naturally in authentic situations. On the contrary, very young learners from the age of three years old, who learn a foreign language in the non-naturalistic environment of attending English class, already become aware of a word as a semantical unit because they learn the vocabulary also as an isolated word and not only in context. However, most children don't often use the learned vocabulary because they forget it or cannot bridge it to the real world. In kindergarten, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach commonly applied in English class at different levels is presented only in its initial stage, i.e. in a brief form of communication (e.g. child's opinion, wish, experience expressed through the verbs *be*, *have*, *wish*, *like*, and others). Therefore, more extensive practice through empirical use is here required for development of the communicative skills of child because vocabulary is essential for each communication

process. It can be observed that the children like to communicate even with their foreign teacher using the minimum of vocabulary they know and their emotional expressions like gesture and facial expression. Therefore, the researcher doesn't fully agree with the Barska's statement (2006) that the learners will gradually lose interest in learning if their vocabulary knowledge doesn't increase. It is highly possible for the young and elder learners from the age 6 to 12 and above, but wouldn't affect much the motivation of very young learners from 3 to 6 years old because of their natural curiosity about the world around them.

a. Scrabble Game

As is well-known, vocabulary learning is a cumulative process. Therefore, different educational materials and techniques have been employed for acquiring vocabulary in Montessori or other bilingual kindergartens. For example, the **game Scrabble** as educational material in the Montessori program has been found to be a good enrichment tool for building the children's vocabulary, e.g. they knew the body parts very well and could attach the words, such as *nose* or *hand* (pic. 24).

b. Picture-Card Matching Game

Also, the **picture-card matching game** applied in the Montessori Art class for practicing the short vowels enriched the children's vocabulary (pic.

25). One set of the matching picture cards is labeled beneath the pictures. The other set has no printed labels, but unattached plain ones are in the same box. Such matching exercises with pictures and labels “help to fix the word in the child’s mind” (ref. Lillard 1988, 131). This exercise is very significant for making the difference between the short and long vowel sounds (e.g. *ship* vs. *sheep*), as well as the vowel phonics, e.g. *cup* vs. *cap*, which was often jumbled by children. Also the vowel sounds in *blab* and *bleb* were hardly different audibly for the preschoolers. However, the teacher explained how to produce the sounds [æ] and [ɛ] and made the difference clear. It should be mentioned that the children were very familiar with most vocabulary and could match it easily with the corresponding pictures.

c. Vocabulary Cards

The exercise with the **vocabulary cards**, where only the object is depicted on one side, and another side has a corresponding written word, was challenging for most children (pic. 11). The children first learned the name of the shown object and its written denotation also as a picture, whereby the eldest children tried to read the word without memorizing it as a picture. At this point, it needs to be said that the reading process requires much of a child’s concentration and occurs slowly because reading is a cognitive process where the child connects the denotation (i.e. meaning) with the

known object in order to decipher the meaning of the written word. Such willingness to read was confirmed through the fact that the some children requested to be undisturbed by their groupmates during the reading process. After some practice, the teacher named ca. 12-20 cards, spread them with the written word facing down and asked the children about the meaning of the picture. Then the cards were turned over with the picture facing down, and the children tried to remember the denotation of the written word, or the teacher spelled the words to facilitate the searching process for children. After they found the right card, they turned it over, saw the picture and pronounced the word. For the eldest group, the cards with the difficult vocabulary (e.g. *muffins*, *lock*) were used, while the cards with the easy vocabulary (e.g. *bear*, *ball*) or medium difficult (e.g. *dishes*) were used for the youngest and middle groups, respectively. This exercise took approximately 25-30 minutes for only two-three children because the vocabulary has been consolidated through three different visual ways of learning, namely picture - word - picture through the visual memory of the children from the middle and youngest group and through the visual memory and reading ability of the eldest children. The sequence word-picture didn't work for the middle and youngest group since the children couldn't remember the written word and afterwards often couldn't name the picture. As stated prior, while the eldest children tried to read some

words, the other children could remember it only because of the same location of the cards. This fact was so proven in that when the card was moved, the children could hardly find a correct card based on its picture or word. Therefore, the transposition between objects is important in the Montessori method since it will require more attention from the child to find the called object after changing its location. It will make the children more patient, educated, and logical in their thinking. Since this exercise was fairly hard for the children, it was practiced longer for two times during two consecutive days, which led to the better learning of vocabulary. It is vital that the children always look at the card, and not away, using their visual memory. Every child had been looking for a certain card after calling her/his name. When the child failed to find a certain card, he was asked to find another card until s/he succeeded in order to gain the self-confidence and not to be teased by other children, which often happened in case of failure. Giving the child a chance to succeed should be considered as an important factor of the child's motivation in the learning process. After two months, when this exercise had been practiced repeatedly, the children knew the vocabulary better than before. They knew the words even when the cards were in different locations. The list of difficult words was minimized to the few words such as *wrench*, *picnic*, *glass*, *badge*, and *lock*. At the end, each child of the eldest group was asked to determine the most difficult word to

him/her, where the succession of difficulty degree is respectively shown above, for later creating of words by movable alphabet and writing of that word.

d. Phonics Sound Cards

Similar exercises occurred with **phonics sound cards**³³, divided into phonograms (e.g. blends like *br, cl* or monograms *sh, ch*), diphthongs (e.g. *ai, oi*) and vowels (e.g. *i, a*) (pic. 14), whereas the object is depicted on one side and another side has a corresponding written word, and were also challenging for most children in terms of learning sounds. The eldest Montessori group had a problem reading the words with phonograms, i.e. they weren't sure about the produced sound of two combined consonants. From this reason, a great deal of time was devoted for practicing this exercise with phonics. In general, the teacher first introduced the written word pointing syllable by syllable; only afterwards drawing the children's attention to the depicted object. It was done for purpose of developing the reading skills. It has to be mentioned that the eldest children surprisingly preferred to see the written word instead of picture when the teacher asked them to name the object. It means they couldn't remember some words easily and asked to turn a card to see the written word, which they mostly could read. However, the teacher asked them also to learn the picture and not just

³³ Although the phonics sounds cards do not belong to the Montessori educational materials, they were used in the class due to the phonics sounds.

to read it in order to make the children not only word-oriented but also picture-oriented. Even looking at the picture, some youngsters tried to remember the letters of the word and put them together in their mind for reading. It proves again that reading is one of the core aspects in the Montessori method, which often dominates the learning process of the eldest children. Some advanced children of the Montessori middle group tried to remember both the picture and the corresponding written word visually on the principle of 'scanning function' with the difference that they could understand the meaning of object. Therefore, they could point out the corresponding written word called out by the teacher without possessing a reading ability. Almost always, all of the children correctly pointed out the picture called by teacher even if they didn't know how to pronounce the word. It stresses their visual and aural memory in the acquisition process of vocabulary. The vocabulary of a certain sound learned in the previous class was again reviewed the next day since the children couldn't learn all the vocabulary (only 4-6 words) because of their complexity (e.g. *bread, clover, groceries, grill, space, spur, stocking*) or a fairly homophonous pronunciation (e.g. *plane, plant, plate*) where one word was later used for a puzzling and then a writing activity. If some older children couldn't learn the word, the teacher asked them to read this word because later they could remember it more easily. Afterwards, the children pronounced the difficult

word (e.g. *trash*) three times consecutively, namely a) read and pronounced the puzzled word, b) named this word on the picture, and c) showed and named this real object in the surroundings (if available). If the three-or-four-year-old children still couldn't remember the words, the vocabulary was reduced to 2-3 words instead of 4-6. Later, many older children could connect the signifier (written form) with the object (i.e. picture) to which the sign refers. They also could make a reference of the object (picture) and the signifier (written word) to the signified (meaning) separately, i.e. they knew the meaning of both the object as well as the signifier, what is highly important for the meaningful learning process.

However, when the written word, which the older children learned before (e.g. from the phonics sounds cards), appeared in other learning materials (e.g. blend cards), they couldn't make a connection between different 'words' locations' in terms of the same signifier (e.g. *plug*). The students were unable to answer the following question, when the teacher asked them: "What does 'plug' mean?" Only after seeing the picture from other educational material did they remember the word. It indicates that the older children could better remember the meaning of the written word when it originated from the same learning material than from different learning sources where the latter requires more practice. It also means that the child's memory is closely connected to a certain location and event and can be

considered as ‘local memory.’

As discussed before, since some phonogram cards have a picture and a corresponding written word underneath, the five-to-six-year old children tried to read these words and learned them by pointing out the written word while the children of the middle and youngest groups repeated and learned the vocabulary from the pictures pointed at by the teacher. However, the reading process of combining the letters into syllables and then making a word was also demonstrated to the three-four year old children in order to involve them slowly into the reading process. The vocabulary of some vowel cards was easier than of others, e.g. the children were more familiar with the vocabulary of short *a* (*cat, hat, mat*) or *o* (*box, pot*) than of short *i* (*dig, zip*) or *u* (*jug, mud*) whereas the latter required more practice. It should also be mentioned that the children couldn’t recognize the homonyms, i.e. the words with the same pronunciation, e.g. the noun *can* (*of beans*) and the verb (*I can*). They knew both words but considered them separately since this homophonous verb hadn’t been explained while learning the noun *can*. It indicates that the children have relative restricted learning with ‘local memory’ and the short-term memory which cannot be utilized broadly yet with accumulating all their knowledge. Hence, the explicit guidance from the teacher is highly important to the children’s successful language learning.

Additionally, it should be taken into consideration that the aggregate of the exercises with the educational materials mentioned above, namely the phonics books, sound boxes, finger tracing, writing, vowel cards, and phonics sound cards develops the perceptual abilities of a child and brings into play all kinds of memory, i.e. the visual, aural, muscular, and motoric memory through seeing and reading, listening, touching, and writing, respectively, contributes to an effective, and consequently, a successful learning process for the child.

Needless to say, the eldest children have advanced in their learning ability in terms of vocabulary, reading, and writing compared to the middle and youngest groups of children who often reviewed the lessons and will still have more practice in their future.

It is worthy to mention that many pictures depict the objects, which surround the children in everyday life in order to apply the acquired vocabulary in real life situations (e.g. *globe* used for geography, *sponge* used for cleaning). However, it was surprising that the children couldn't say the depicted realistic images in the book, which they have used and listened as realistic objects in the daily activities very often (e.g. *stairs* in 'go up/down stairs', *stamp* in 'stamp your paper'). It indicates that they can't bridge between the real world and 'theoretical' world because of their 'local memory'. Also, in another example, the children could say the phrase e.g. *My*

name is Alicia, but they couldn't recognize the isolated word 'name' in the book. Therefore, the teacher explicitly made such connections between the daily use and the class use of vocabulary to the children. However, the elder group children could often relate the learned word to the real world, e.g. in learning the word *library* some children automatically pointed at the reading corner filled with the books in their classroom. The same was done with the learned words *plant* and *tree* located respectively inside and outside the class, and also with the words *clock*, *window*, *door*, *jug*, which were automatically pointed by children. In short, if the children cannot bridge related vocabulary, the teacher needs to help them for their easier and effective learning process.

Only after the vocabulary was reviewed successfully, did the teacher introduce a new sound. It should be mentioned that review as a part of learning process is very important for very young children because of their short-term memory. As a rule, the children could more quickly recall the last learned vocabulary. Checking previously learned vocabulary was a common warm-up activity in English class in both kinds of kindergarten. Such activity has revealed that children learned the words easily if the vocabulary consisted of six-to-nine words practiced during one week. If the amount was greater, a few vocabulary words couldn't be recalled. The further between the learning periods was, the less vocabulary was retained by children. Hence, less than nine new words introduced per week can be considered a

reasonable task for very young learners, especially for the elder kindergartners.

As already mentioned above, some vocabulary words were also repeated through different educational materials, e.g. *sod*, *log* appeared in the phonics books, in the sound boxes, and later in the short vowel cards. It means the children learn the vocabulary in the different combinations which enhances their learning efficiency. With more practice, the children could overcome their difficulties with English language, e.g. after some practice time, they finally learned the difficult word *octagon* and could pronounce such words as *optometrist*. It is of course questionable whether kindergartners need to learn such specific terms which aren't applicable in their language use. For example, for the letter *W* the younger group children learned the word '*wig*' whereas other words like '*wolf*' and '*wheel*' are more practical for the very young foreign language learners. Therefore, the choice of vocabulary should primarily base on its practicality which is determined through frequency of use and realistic events for the child. As mentioned above, some vocabulary from the educational materials also refers to surrounding objects of practical use, e.g. the word *jug* had a reference to the corresponding object in the classroom where the children used it as a vessel holding water. Thus, the word *jug* was learned from several sources: namely from the phonics book, vowel card, through the writing practice, and also

consolidated through the practical use of this object. Such learning cycles are necessary for the children with quick learning abilities and albeit “short-term” memory (e.g. next day, many children forgot the word *jug* even after the extensive practice the previous day). As seen, the emphasized natural way of learning vocabulary, which creates an important part of the Montessori language learning method and other approaches, occurs often through the educational environment by touching and using the objects. In sum, the children learned the same vocabulary through the repetitive exercises, overlapped educational materials, and the surrounded objects. Such multiple practice leads to effective, consolidated vocabulary learning.

5. Morphological changes

The challenging exercises with the phonograms cards or booklets and “puzzle words” were more suitable for the advanced children in Montessori kindergarten who could think of different words with the same phonogram³⁴ (e.g. *fl* in *flake, flag, fly*). One day, when the children learned the vocabulary from the vowel card for short *i* (e.g. *hip, ship, kit*) and afterwards spelled the word *ship* with the movable letters, the teacher removed the letter *s*, so that it

³⁴ Phonogram is a) a character or symbol used to represent a word, syllable, or phoneme; b) a succession of orthographic letters that occurs with the same phonetic value in several words (as the *ight* of *bright, fight, and flight*) (Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/phonogram>).

became another word *hip*, which was also displayed on the same vowel card, but the children couldn't recognize this word although they had just learned it. The teacher showed them a picture of *hip*, and they were so astonished about this morphological change. It means they discovered that sometimes removing or adding a letter in one word can lead to another word. The same was done with *clip* changed into *lip*, *plant* into *ant*, or *snout* into *out*. In another case, the children spelled the word *mug* which then surprisingly for them was rearranged into *gum* consisting of the same letters, or *sub* into *bus*, and *live* into *evil*. The same root in two different words like *pen* and *pencil* was also shown to the children who were surprised about such morphological closeness of the familiar vocabulary.

In the last period of the study, the teacher tried to implement such exercises also in the non-Montessori kindergartens where the children (of the middle group) have been exposed to the system of English language itself less than in the Montessori kindergartens. To the surprise of children, the morphological changes have been demonstrated and their denotations have been explained in the learned words *car* changed into *arc*, *yam* into *may* with two parts of speech, namely verb (ask permission) and noun (month). Furthermore, in the unit "How is the weather?" four related adjectives, namely *sunny*, *windy*, *cloudy*, and *rainy* were introduced. At the same time, the images of *sun*, *wind*, *cloud*, and *rain* were drawn. The teacher pointed

and said 'sun' first and only afterwards introduced the collocation 'sunny day'. The same was done with other words mentioned above. So, the learners understood that there are two related words 'sun' and 'sunny' which are very similar, but they are not the same. The teacher also pointed out the suffix *-y* that makes this lexical and morphological difference between noun and adjective or adverb. In the same kindergarten, while teaching the unit "What are you doing?" the teacher demonstrated to the elder group the slight morphological changes in one word's family through replacing, adding or removing some letters that causes the meaning's difference. As example the word 'singing' was changed into 'sing' through removing *-ing*, which meaning of progression has also been explained, later 'sing' was changed into 'song' through replacing one magnet letter, and finally 'sing' was transferred into 'singer' through adding the derivational, bound suffix *-er* (also called 'content morpheme) for designating the person's occupation. Afterwards, the teacher pronounced the sentence, 'The singer sings songs', putting to the related words in one meaningful sentence to demonstrate the closeness of the word's family. The children knew all these words before; however they weren't aware of their closeness as a word family. And from their face expressions, it could be seen that the children were interested to see such morphological changes and became aware of the words' closeness. In one kindergarten, a poster as educational material with some

morphological change (God – dog) had even been hung on the wall exposing the children to such a specific language acquisition (see pic. 26). As a conclusion, the teacher realized that such exercises with building up new words are very useful and interesting for children making them aware of vocabulary closeness, and the effect of ‘new discovery’ would facilitate their learning process of vocabulary because it has an effect of longer retention of the material acquired.

6. Oxford Very First Dictionary

Another teaching method applied in the third year of the Montessori kindergarten also focused on vocabulary and reading books. In this third year, the supplementary English class was not only taught in the Montessori approach because the teacher’s qualification was not from a certified Montessori system.³⁵ Children worked in pairs twice a week with *Oxford Very First Dictionary* containing 222 basic words oriented on the letter’s condition (see pic. 27). The implementation of this dictionary was carried out parallel to the use of the phonics books mentioned above. It was very helpful that some words taught from the phonics book were also used in the *Oxford Very First Dictionary*. Such refresher exercises are usually helpful for the children’s learning process.

³⁵ Other subjects like math, Chinese, and geography were taught according to the Montessori method.

In general, bilingual education in early childhood focuses greatly on vocabulary input since it is essential for a complete communication. The researcher supports the Planned Lexical Instruction Hypothesis proposed by B. Laufer which stated that the vocabulary knowledge of foreign language mostly comes from ‘word focused classroom instruction’, including the meaning explanation and its practice through different activities, contrary to the Default Hypothesis where the native speakers acquire the words mostly through exposure to input (e.g. writing, reading, and others) (ref. Housen & Pierrard 2005). For the beginners of the SLA or SLL, the classroom instruction with explanation is more helpful than informal environment of the target language (cf. Krashen 1987).

Referring back to the *Oxford Very First Dictionary*, the most difficult to remember words here were *jug, juggler, instrument, insect, kettle, kitchen, knife, laugh, ladder, letter, read, river, road, rocket, shirt* and others due to their semantical unclearness or difficult pronunciation. Such words require a longer oral practice from children. However, some words like *story* most children could learn easily. Some letters introduced easy and commonly used words, e.g. ‘B’ with *ball, bear, big, book, bus*; ‘C’ with *cake, car, cat, cheese, cow, clock, cup*; ‘E’ with *ear, eat, elbow, eye*; ‘G’ with *giraffe*³⁶, *good, guitar*;

³⁶ It could often be observed that most Taiwanese young learners don’t know how to say *giraffe*, when they saw a picture of a giraffe, oftentimes confused it with *kangaroo*.

‘H’ with *horse, hot, house*; ‘K’ with *koala, kangaroo, kite, key*; ‘T’³⁷ with *telephone, toy, train, tree, TV*³⁸; ‘L’ with *leaf, lemon, lion, lips*; however, other words beginning with L, such as *laugh, leg, little, look, loud*, could hardly be learned by the children. Since these words are commonly used, two days were spent on pronouncing and learning them.

The words *camera, computer, microwave* were hard for children to learn even if they knew their denotation. Since these words are commonly used, they were practiced through different sentences (*I have a camera*) and questions (*Show, where is a computer here?*) until the children learned them. After this dictionary was finished, the results of the vocabulary review revealed the most difficult words in this study for the children to learn were *gate, juggler, insects, rocket, wall, yesterday, and x-ray*. Some words (e.g. *electricity, information, invitation*) have been omitted from the learning process because of their complexity and current irrelevance to the children. However, the children asked why they didn’t learn these words and the teacher explained that they were hard to pronounce. This indicates that the children usually prefer to work systematically and that the omissions, which confused them, should be explained. The teacher plans to cover the more

³⁷ The children were already familiar with this vocabulary.

³⁸ The word *television* was replaced with its common abbreviation *TV* because of the word’s complexity. Also, since most children couldn’t pronounce the long word *vegetable*, it was shortened to *veggie*.

difficult vocabulary the following year when the children mature.

Most children preferred to point to the word called out by the teacher instead of naming it. The younger children could point out the easy words, however they couldn't pronounce them, i.e. their audio and visual memory has worked excellently, but they were still not really mature in their speaking ability. Their speaking lagged behind their listening comprehension which is a natural occurrence in language learning.

If the children couldn't find the word requested out of eight other words beginning with the same letter, the teacher gave some hints saying the 'seek word' in the sentence with other connotative words, e.g. *color* as reference word for *paint* or the sentence *I read a story in a book*, where *book* as indicator is depicted in the learning material. Of course, it is questionable whether the children related the signifier (form) *story* to its real signified (meaning) or to the signified of the shown book. For the foreign teacher, it is hard to check the understanding of correct reference between signified (meaning) and signifier (form), especially in terms of abstract words. The use of the native language of the learners would be helpful in this case. Supposedly, the appearance of *story* and *book* in one sentence could clearly make a difference for children between these two words.

As indicated above, the foreign teacher emphasized the connection between different learned words through the whole learning process. It was

done in the form of common phrases as collocations (e.g. *read a book, sing a song, smell a flower, close/open the door/window*) and sentences (e.g. *I use a pen to write./ I write with pencil. / Don't touch! / Sit down!*) to strengthen the learning process of vocabulary and expose the children to sentence level. Therefore, the foreign teacher also tried to introduce the subordinate conditional or clause sentence if the children were familiar with the highlighted vocabulary: *When it rains, I use an umbrella*. Thereby most children understood the meaning. However, the learning of collocations can lead to an inseparable use of the learned words, i.e. the children could easily say, “*Don't touch!*” but hardly say, “*Touch him!*” because children tend to learn each unit (i.e. word, phrase, sentence) as whole. So, it is advisable to use the vocabulary in different connotations.

Another important technique used in the English class by the foreign teacher was the self-evaluation test of each child where the teacher asked the child to point out the words that s/he couldn't learn well. The child chose the unknown words (usually three-four words from eight words) and the teacher and then the child repeated those words again. So, at the end of the class, the children usually expected the teacher's question, “*Which words don't you know?*” and pointed out the words for them that were most difficult. Through such self-evaluation and explicit admission, it was hoped to improve the learning ability of the children.

At the end of the academic year, the teacher chose one strong student from each age Montessori group to check how many words they learned from this dictionary containing 222 words. It has to be admitted that all three students were tired during this test, which lasted for 20 minutes since they are used to 5-10 minute class. So, their concentration may have been weakened after the first ten minutes, which might impact the results negatively. Despite this fact, the child from the eldest group could name about 155 words, from the middle group about 120 words, and from the youngest group about 40 words. It is important to mention that the curriculum of most bilingual kindergartens supposes that children will learn about 70-120 words each year depending on the age group. This means that after three years of kindergarten the child is supposed to know about 300 words in English, which is often far from reality. During this test, the child was praised for a correct answer; if the child responded incorrectly, the teacher didn't provide the correct answer, due to the time constraints.³⁹ It is worthy to note that the children knew the vocabulary mostly on the picture-oriented basis not on the word-oriented basis since they didn't try to read or couldn't read yet. So, some pictures were misleading or unclear for them, so the children named a synonym or another related word, or American English instead of British English, e.g. *electricity* was called *light* because of

³⁹ In the regular class, the teacher usually corrected a wrong answer of each child.

the depicted light bulb, *envelope – mail* and even *e-mail, journey – walk, loud – noisy*⁴⁰, *recorder – flute, seed – plant, trousers – pants, upset – cry*. Such answers were also counted as they indicate a rich vocabulary of the child. The teacher gave two hints in the form of opposites for the six-year boy, so that he could answer with the right word, e.g. the teacher said *old*, then the child said *new*, and respectively *close – open*. In general, it was easier for the children to learn the antonyms, which they sometimes figured out by themselves with the help of teacher's facial expression, like with the adjective *mad* vs. *happy*. The children knew *happy* but not *mad*, which they learned in the sentence, 'I am **mad at** you,' while practicing the required proposition *at*. As for the girl from the middle group, it was difficult to distinguish between the verb and adjective based on the picture whereas the noun was mostly determined correctly.

Sometimes, the body language in form of gesture should be applicable in the early second language learning since it impresses the children and the vocabulary will be retained longer. Therefore, the teacher acted out the verbs and imitated some nouns or adjectives, e.g. in the sentence *The owl flies at nights* showing 'fly' and the big eyes of the owl. In other sentence, *I play piano*, the teacher pronounced the assertive sentence demonstrating the act and the children repeated the act and the sentence after the teacher on their

⁴⁰ Most children couldn't differentiate between 'noise/noisy' and 'loud' preferring to say the latter.

own initiative, i.e. without teacher's request. The intonation is also not the least of the factors here. The teacher should sound enthusiastic inspiring the children. Such acting amuses the children, facilitates their learning under the motto "Play Fun – Learn Smart!" and is very appropriate and helpful in the SLA and SLL by very young learners.

The vocabulary from the *Oxford Very First Dictionary* has been practiced through the whole year in the form of matching exercises when the teacher called out a word and the children pointed it; they also named the word on the picture and answered the questions related to this word asked by teacher (e.g. *Do you have an umbrella? – Yes/No; Do you like it? – Yes/No; Are you upset/hungry...? What color is your umbrella? – Red.*). So, the word was used in different situations to implement it into the child's real world and consequently to facilitate the acquiring process of the foreign language. Besides the vocabulary, the children practiced certain syntactical sentence patterns for Yes/No-questions, Wh- questions which fulfilled one of the communicative tasks between children and teacher.

Regarding the vocabulary and its real implementation, the teacher tried to relate the word not only to the immediate surrounding but also to an extensive environment. For example, the word *river* was related to the '*Love River*' of Kaohsiung City where the children live. Some children spontaneously translated '*Love river*' into Chinese '*Ai He*' and concluded

that *river* is '*he*' in Chinese.

In conjunction with the issue of vocabulary, some other observations are relevant to this study. In the third year, in the Montessori group of thirteen Taiwanese students, there were two girls from Europe, namely from Germany and Russia. The German girl could speak good basic English and was nearly a native speaker of Chinese, but the Russian girl, who came later to Taiwan, could speak neither English or Chinese. However, in one year she could catch up on English with her stronger groupmates. It was interesting to observe that her knowledge only of one native language helped her learn English vocabulary quickly (even the difficult words), which was pronounced similarly in Russian, such as *address*, *camera*, *computer*, *doctor*, *video*, and *yogurt*.⁴¹ However, such phonological analogy between English and German didn't help the German girl learn some difficult words like *address*, *camera*, *computer*, *doctor*, *glass*, and *insect*. She also struggled with these words as Taiwanese children did. It may indicate that **multilingualism** doesn't facilitate the process of SLA or SLL in childhood where the language acquisition occurs not analytically but naturally or imitatively. Multilingualism and possibly bilingualism helps only after the 'unconscious phase' of foreign language acquisition, which usually starts from the age of 12. However, this hypothesis should be proven by further studies.

⁴¹ Such words adopted from other languages are called 'foreign words', 'loan words', or 'internationalisms'.

At the end of *Oxford Very First Dictionary*, there are some illustrations with shapes, colors, days of the week and months that were also introduced to the children. After the foreign teacher worked with these materials, the following observations could be concluded: it is advisable to write the numbers parallel to the days of the week and months as orientation for the children, especially in Asia, where the numbers are used in Chinese to indicate the days of the week and month. The calendar indicating the months including their corresponding numbers was implemented here as a visual aid. Afterwards, the teacher used the weekdays to explain the meaning of the adverbs *yesterday*, *today* and *tomorrow* starting with the actual weekday for *today*. In the circle with the days of the week depicted in the dictionary (see pic. 28), most children could point out the called out days through utilizing the written word as signifier (i.e. form). The logographic method (i.e. perception of the printed word as whole) was an orientation for most children who haven't started to read yet.

7. Features of Montessori and non-Montessori approach

To get an objective evaluation of the Montessori English Learning Method in Taiwan, a survey of nearly 200 members of the Teachers Association of the Montessori Method in Taiwan was conducted (see Appendix III). However, only ten local teachers in Taiwan work with the

Montessori English Learning Method.⁴² Despite a small number of interviewees, which totaled 6, their opinions are highly appreciated for the research. The questionnaire contained 10 questions written in English and Chinese for better understanding; the answers were mostly given in Chinese. The results of the questionnaire were as follows:

Regarding the first question, some teachers stated that they learned about the Montessori method from their supervisors in Taiwan or in the USA through the training courses of the AMI (Association Montessori Internationale). All six teachers apply the Montessori English learning method in the kindergarten for the children at the age of 3 to 6 years. All of them use such educational materials as phonics books, sandpaper letters, and movable alphabet. Four of them also utilize the sound boxes and word functions. Only a few of the six teachers employ the sentence analysis in their English classes or use other supplementary materials – different flash cards, reading books with CDs. Half of the teachers surveyed said their course objective includes practicing all four skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) during the English classes. Two teachers focus more on reading and writing.

Based on observations by the researcher, the children also listened to English throughout the school day outside of Montessori Art class, i.e. the

⁴² It might be explained through Taiwan's high requirement for a teacher's qualification but low salaries.

language with the acquired vocabulary was used in a natural way, (e.g. *Could you bring me the tissue, please?*), and they reacted properly (e.g. they took the tissue from the box), but most children hardly spoke in English, except some questions like *'May I go to the bathroom?'*. The speaking ability of the children was a bit negligible in the Montessori class, a concern that is advisable to strengthen.

Question number 6 about the differences between the Montessori method and other English teaching methods was quite interesting because it emphasized the uniqueness of the Montessori approach. The teachers expressed their views of the Montessori English learning method as follows: This method has different levels and is suitable for the youngest as well as for the eldest children in kindergarten. It is not too simple of an approach (such as singing and playing) but a more challenging, structured method for English learning with emphasis on the vocabulary, only later on the phonics, and later on the reading ability of children which is developing in the natural, easier way. The English learning process occurs in a small-sized group (only one-three children), where the interaction between the teacher and child is more intensive and close, which leads to a quicker and more effective learning process for each child. The biggest concern of the interviewees is the lack of the qualified teachers for the Montessori English learning method that could lead to its extinction in Taiwan. In addition, all six respondents

answered 'yes' to Question 9a regarding the statement expressed by the opponents of the Montessori method, namely "Montessori method is extremely structured, i.e. limited due to the structure of toys and play time". This may have confirmed one of the disadvantages of the Montessori method. On one hand, the structured form of the educational materials such as metal insets, geometric forms (see pic. 29) and the educational environment such as lines on the floor for balance walking, for developmental control of movement, for an awareness of right and left side, and developing concentration) (see pic. 30) can limit the child's creativity. On the other hand, it can discipline the child's behavior (e.g. be neat, concentrate), and develop her/his logical thinking. It is also assumed that the inner quiet achieved through the Montessori environment "could promote the child's creative powers as well" (Lillard 1988, 127). The oval line on the floor can be seen in many classrooms of even **non**-Montessori kindergartens in Taiwan (see pic. 30). Another criticism of the Montessori method lies in the statement that the "Montessori education focuses too much on the individual instead of group involvement. Children may be slow to develop social skills because of the lack of interaction." Four responses to the Question 9b were negative, i.e. the Montessori method designs the work for the individual as well as group. Also, in this study no lack of social interaction between children could be observed. Question number 10 about the evaluation of the Montessori

English learning method was assessed very positively. The teachers considered the Montessori English learning method to be up-to-date, providing a solid basis for learning English in terms of reading, oral practice, pronunciation through touching, speaking, spelling, and reading. This was especially effective or even very effective in ratio 3:3 where 1) the teacher introduces several objects, 2) the child touches the object called on by the teacher and puts it somewhere at the teacher's request, 3) last, the child names the object or repeats it after the teacher if s/he doesn't know the word. This is an approach that doesn't exert any pressure on the child's learning process but systemizes the learning process.

Another aspect of this study was to gather the children's point of view about their Montessori kindergarten, particularly the English learning, because their opinions are most valuable in the whole learning process. The suitable way for getting the children's opinion was regular communication in the form of a brief interview initiated by foreign teacher.⁴³ The teacher randomly asked some of the children if they liked a certain book or learning method used by the teachers and tried to figure out a reason for their feedback. If a child didn't want to have English class, the teacher asked for a reason. In general, the majority of children liked to attend the Montessori kindergarten and the English class in particular; they especially liked the

⁴³ Because of the language barrier, the local teacher sometimes translated for the child the question asked by the foreign teacher.

group class with the different games in English. It is true that children as lively learners often wanted to participate in the activity without a real understanding of ‘why and how,’ because they wanted to have fun and to please the teacher rather than their peer group (ref. Cameron 2001, 1). One third of the children (approx. 7 children) were more than willing to go to the individual English class without any persuading. They were very motivated in English learning and seriously considered this class as a part of their education. Only a few children were reluctant to attend this class as they preferred to do physical activities (e.g. mopping the floor) instead of intellectual tasks (e.g. math, geography, and English). The rest of the children attended the English class freely, but only after being reminded and the teacher advising them to do so. As it could be observed, most children had a positive attitude towards the Montessori program and its English learning class.

After collecting data by observing the Montessori teacher’s English class, interviewing Montessori teachers and children, and from the researcher’s own teaching experience and reflection, it can be inferred that Language Art class is a successful part of a Montessori education which offers an advanced level of basic English as foreign language, and moreover, it provides all four skills in comparison with other non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens overseas which often neglect the development of literacy in

early childhood students. The popularity of a Montessori education is also evident through the fact that “the government of China has established the objective of replacing much of its school curricula with the Montessori method [...]. And China already has more Montessori schools than any other nation including the U.S.” (Powell 2009, 25).

In sum, main differences between Montessori and non-Montessori English learning methods applied in Taiwan and their results are summarized in the table below.

Montessori method	Non-Montessori method
Use phonics more often	Use letters more often
Learn most and less frequently used words	Learn most frequency words
Communicate often on sentence level, but also use single words or phrases	Say mostly words or phrases ⁴⁴ , seldom sentences
Do syntactical analysis, including parts of speech	Do not learn syntax explicitly
Use often sensor educational materials (e.g. sandpaper letters, movable alphabet)	No sensor educational materials usually

⁴⁴ Many children tended to omit the subject (agent) in the sentence e.g. (*I eat cookies* using the semantic structuring action-object and not syntactic structuring and therefore remaining on the phrase level (ref. Foster 1990, R. Brown 1973). Also the semantic relationship object-attribute has often occurred in the children’s speaking at the two-word stage whereas the verb has been omitted, e.g. **Apple [is] red*. Only after the local classroom teacher’s correction did some children produce a correct syntactical utterance.

Develop writing skills	No writing practice (except letter tracing)
Develop literacy in sound and name conditions (i.e. reading ability)	No literacy, only its prerequisite in visual condition (i.e. no reading ability)
Respond appropriately to questions in English or Chinese	Respond appropriately to questions mostly in Chinese
Use classroom etiquette in speaking and listening	Use classroom etiquette in speaking and listening
Use flashcards and reading books	Use flashcards and reading books
Individual class	Group class
Mixed aged class ⁴⁵	Single-aged class

It is obvious that literacy is highly emphasized in the Montessori method in contradiction to the non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens in Taiwan. However, the development of listening comprehension is almost the same in both types of kindergartens. It means that oral skills, including speaking and listening, have been developed in both methods in comparison with written skills (i.e. reading and writing), which have been taught only in the Montessori kindergarten. In general, Taiwan's pre-school and primary education focuses mostly on the speaking and listening in contrast to the English-speaking countries where the reading and writing skills are primarily taught because the oral skills are already acquired naturally by children. As an ensuing consequence, different teaching approaches have been adopted

⁴⁵ In fact, some parents whose children attend Montessori kindergarten don't like the idea of the mixed age class, probably because they think it is less effective. However, the individualistic character of the Montessori program vs. group class allows children aged 3-6 to mix in one group.

for the SLL in the non-English speaking countries and for the SLA in the English-speaking countries. The importance of listening has already been emphasized by Krashen (1987) in his Input Hypothesis whereas the listening and reading are considered to be the most important sources for the SLA, as well as for the SLL, in contrast to speaking and writing which build earlier outcome of SLA. As for Taiwan, the reading learning process happened in children implicitly as the teacher reads an English book pointing out the words, and the children are exposed to reading indirectly. Krashen stressed that the effectiveness of the Input Hypothesis depends on several factors whereas the comprehensibility is the greatest pivot. He suggested that, “perhaps the main function of the second language teacher is to help make input comprehensible...” (1987, 63). It is definite that phonological comprehensibility, including clear articulation, slow speaking pace, is crucial, especially for kindergartners. Therefore, it is common for Taiwanese teachers to use microphone in the classroom for a better acoustic perception. Otherwise, the phonological incomprehensibility will result in “noise” leading to a wrong (misunderstood) input or no input. Also, the simplicity of vocabulary and syntactical patterns contributes to the comprehensibility, and consequently to the optimal input of the SLL (cf. Hatch 1979 “Apply with caution”).

VII. Literacy development

The researcher's personal involvement in bilingual preschool education in Taiwan has given some impetus to conduct the detailed research on English reading and writing skills of Taiwan's very young learners. In addition, previous and current experiences in collaboration with different bilingual educational preschool institutions in Taiwan have also conveyed new impulses and new understanding of some effective and ineffective English learning methods of literacy applied to Taiwanese very young learners. Therefore, sharing these observations, implications and ideas with Taiwan's community is the goal of this research.

In this study, the comparative approach will be applied to different aspects of English literacy described below in order to grasp the degree and way of literacy's implementation in the preschool's curriculum. The development of literacy in early ages will be contrastively analyzed by the researcher in terms of different kinds of Taiwanese bilingual kindergartens, drawing a comparison between Montessori and non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens.

As indicated above, the environment of the Montessori kindergarten significantly differs from the traditional kindergartens since there are no toys and colorful materials for the children. The researcher was astonished when the children in the Montessori kindergarten reacted properly to English statements trying to communicate in English. Furthermore, the five-six year

old Taiwanese children could read and write one-two-syllable English words. On the contrary, only a few children in other bilingual kindergartens had a good command of spoken English whereas most children couldn't reach such a level. What are the reasons for such discrepancy in the English oracy and literacy of the very young learners from different kindergartens? It was the starting point of the researcher's curiosity about the English literacy ability of Taiwan's preschoolers who started to read and probably to write some basic English on the morphological (word) and/or syntactical (sentence) level.

Together with prevailing oracy of foreign language of very young learners, literacy should also be an integral part of the teaching curriculum because "reading and writing can help to reinforce what [children] are learning orally" (Pinter 2006, p.66). Its importance and necessity will be advocated in the research through demonstration of different experimental situations and other examples (e.g. impromptu writing of "My English name"). The implementation of literacy in any bilingual kindergarten is indisputably necessary, because children acquire it during play as shown below, which makes them highly motivated, especially to write English words. It is different from the primary school where they have to learn writing and reading in English in a more formal, traditional teaching way that may lower their motivation and consequently their outcome. It is important

to emphasize children's engagement in literacy activities that they find motivating and meaningful because the learners gain a positive attitude towards literacy (ref. Strickland 2000, p.42f.). The kindergarten teacher needs to seize the opportunity to teach written language through fun activities discussed below providing easy input and receiving great outcome of the foreign written language. However, as Strickland mentioned correctly, "it is not enough to introduce children to skills and strategies. It is also essential to provide modeling and scaffolding that lead children to apply skills and strategies on their own and help them gain independence as readers and writers" (2000, p.44).

For this purpose, the research aims to find the answers to the following question:

1. What is the proper definition of literacy for the very young learners of a foreign language?
2. What is the recent state of literacy in Taiwan's bilingual preschools? (contrastive evaluative analysis)
3. Should English literacy be implemented in the curriculum of bilingual kindergartens and why?
4. What are the effective ways of literacy's implementation for very young learners of foreign language (incl. alphabet, spelling and writing activities, story reading, etc.)?
5. What should be taught first, writing or reading and why?

These and other subsequent questions (e.g. How to create the literacy rich environment? How to start to teach literacy? What are the problems in the pre-literacy? e.g. dyslexia with letter reversal or mirror writing) will be

examined in the study. Some of these questions have already been discussed in chapter VI. The compatibility of the Montessori method and other techniques for developing English literacy in Taiwanese children in early childhood are also part of the research focus. For this purpose, the English Reading class with Storytelling, learning of alphabet and corresponding phonics, writing and reading exercises as well as other approaches for literacy skills were elucidated in chapter VI. The study examined and compared some of the developmental stages elaborated on by D.R. Bear et al. (2008), namely the Stage I Emergent Spelling and Stage II: Letter Name-Alphabetic Spelling as pre-literal phase with the factual literacy development in Taiwan's Montessori and non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens.

Regarding the literature review, there are many studies on bilingual education in general; however, most of them focus on second language acquisition in the natural environment where the target language is spoken; whereas only some of them describe the process of second language learning, including reading and writing skills, in the non-authentic situation. The essential emphasis in SLL should be on the letter-level, then on the word-level later, rather than on the reading process of the sentence-level as in SLA. Furthermore, the existing literature doesn't provide an in-depth exploration of SLL by very young learners as the linguistic research often

starts its focus on primary school children, leaving aside the preschoolers (ref. D.M. Barone & L.M. Morrow 2003; D.M. Barone & J.M. Taylor 2007; A. Browne 2009; L.M. Justice et al. 2009; C. Langan 2009; S.B. Neuman & K.A. Roskos 1998; G. Owocki 1999; J. Riley 2006; L. Sipe 2012, E. Tafa 2008, D. Wray et al. 2002). In addition, after looking through more than one hundred literature sources related to “literacy” and SLL, many of the valuable works have been found to focus on storytelling, including the right choice of the story, delivery technique, pre- and post-discussions, etc. (ref. Bromley 1991; Justice et al. 2009; Medina 2003; Sheu 2008; Wright 1995/1997). Some of those proposals are examined in the TEYL (Teaching English for Young Learners) classroom in some Taiwan’s kindergartens and later on evaluated and properly adopted in the curriculum. In spite of this fact, some suitable ideas of literacy in the SLL could be found in several works, analyzed and adopted in this research project as some of them are presented below. It is appropriate to mention some literacy activities for supporting literacy development in Taiwan’s bilingual kindergarten proposed by Wray et al. (2002, p. 42ff.) and modified and enriched by the researcher:

1. teach letter sounds and names in alphabet or word, but not in the text
2. use phonic exercises
3. use flashcards for letters and words
4. use sequencing activities to build up knowledge
5. use big books for work on the word and text level

Writing activities can involve:

6. finger writing
7. letter formation / handwriting
8. copying written words
9. spelling
10. matching letters with the word
11. word formation by (magnetic) letters
12. word reformation (incl. morphological changes; done by teacher)

Those activities should be executed in the sequence mentioned above based on the teacher's knowledge of the student's literacy ability. Such activities could be considered as pre-literacy activities leading to the actual reading and writing process. Therefore, the implementation of literacy in Taiwan's bilingual kindergartens starts with the pre-literacy activities, exposing the very young learners to the written world of the foreign language. The pre-literacy lays a strong foundation for the later literacy process starting with writing as an easier task and following by reading that requires more concentration. In the pre-literacy stage, the reading is done by a teacher and/or parents, exposing the child to the world of written words.

Pinter (2006) pointed out that knowing the letters and phonics will not help the children read, but it will enable them to spell words in English and try to play some games (e.g. *Hangman*) guessing the letters. It is recommended to post the English alphabet in each classroom and to practice singing it again and again to get familiar with it. The pretend reading (in the reading corner) and pretend writing prepare for the beginning stages of the child's literacy process (ref. Pinter 2006, p.76). The finger tracing of the

letters as a multi-sensory approach used in the Montessori method can be the beginning phase in the writing process. Also, non-Montessori children are familiar with tracing letters in their workbooks or on the flashcards. Using fingers, children can write in the air, on each other's backs, or in the sand.

Contrary to the Montessori program, literacy in general hasn't been practiced in Taiwan's non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens, probably due to the complexity of different writing systems in the more analytic Chinese language and more synthetic English language whereas both belong to the typologically distant languages. Some Chinese educators deem that children need to be literate first in their mother tongue and only afterwards to acquire literacy in the foreign language. The same opinion is also represented by some scholars that say, "it would be controversial to introduce reading and writing in a second language to children who are not yet literate in their first language" (Pinter 2006, p.71). However, as the result of the Montessori method has indicated, the skills of reading and writing in English wouldn't hinder the child's L1 acquisition process; they will become literate in both languages simultaneously considering the scientifically proven fact the reading happens in all languages with the same principle. Another reason for opposing the pre-/literacy in the preschool education was also indicated in the questionnaire of one non-Montessori English teacher who said that the hand-coordination muscles of kindergartners are not ready for the

handwriting process, which involves holding the pencil and tracing out the letters. In spite of last argument, writing activities were attempted with all three group levels and proved that starting from the middle group and continuing with the elder group, most children could hold the marker correctly and firmly, and write legible letters in contrast to the younger group children where only a few children could write letters or copy their form. In addition, the Montessori program defends its reasonableness and importance of various sensorial exercises in order to easily adopt the writing process by the child. The researcher strongly believes that literacy, including reading and writing, should be taught at the kindergarten age independently from the chosen method of English teaching because through it the children discover its informative and communicative purpose and “reinforce what they are learning orally” (Pinter 2006, p.66). According to observations, many children in non-Montessori kindergarten knew printed words by sight on the flashcards, i.e. they acquired the print knowledge but without reading ability as compared with some “Montessori” children who already underwent the process of print knowledge and started to acquire the reading process. For example, non-Montessori learners couldn’t spell the words (e.g. ‘*water*’) from memory, but they knew that there are five letters because without reading skills they perceived the words semiotically (as signs). In SLL theory, this represents the whole-word approach, when the children

recognize some fifty to one hundred words by rote learning. So, the whole word is considered as a single written character like characters of Chinese language. It is not an efficient way to learn the reading of Latin letters; however, it was an initial stage of pre-literacy used by many very young second language learners. The second approach used for acquiring reading skills – phonics – “emphasizes the correspondence between letters and sounds associated with them” (Fromkin et al. 2014, 314). Because English language doesn’t always have one-on-one sound-letter correspondence, it is challenging for beginning readers to learn different correlations between one letter and its different sounds. However, this is the most suitable and common approach applied to reading acquisition in bilingual kindergartens, including Montessori and non-Montessori methods. There is also a third whole-language approach commonly used in the 1990s where “the child is supposed to make the connections between sounds and letters herself based on exposure to text.” The child looks for clues for unfamiliar words based on the context or the pictures. Learning to read here is like learning to speak. However, “understanding the relationship between letters and sounds is critically important in reading” (Fromkin et al. 2014, 315).

Referring back to the writing activity, almost all children were very excited about writing the English words or composing them with magnetic alphabet letters (pic. 17). However, a few children couldn’t find the required

letter in the alphabet, or placed it in the wrong orientation (e.g. upside down) even if the corresponding letter had been depicted on the flashcard. It is absolutely necessary to seize the child's curiosity to expose the very young learner to literacy, both writing and reading, in the L2. However, since every child is different, the individual approach should be considered here. In addition, the literacy development of the child in the foreign language should be supported by the kindergarten and also by the parents, if possible.

1. Experiment: My English name

As learning a foreign spoken language starts with the significant question, "What's your English name?" so should consequently begin the literacy class where the children learn to recognize, write and later read their English names. Starting from kindergarten, the use of English names is very common in Asian countries and can be explained by several reasons, such as the students' willingness to integrate into Western culture or to facilitate the vocative speech act (i.e. addressing) with foreigners (see Yakovleva 2012). In contrast to elder learners of English, English names for very young learners are often chosen by their parents or instructors. These are usually easy English names that are short (e.g. *Sam, Ryan, Joyce, Vicky*) and commonly used, whereas some of them choose what are actually nicknames like *Rabbit* and *Apple* for girls or *Teddy* and *Water* for boys. Some determining factors in

the naming act are: to be named after someone (usually after celebrities), the meaning of the name (Crystal for a ‘transparent gemstone’), or an onomatopoeic resemblance with the pronunciation of their Chinese name (e.g. Way/Wei). If the child does not have an English name, the English teacher will propose some English names for the parents to choose considering the parents’ preferences, if any. Their English name will be mostly used by English teachers or sometimes by their homeroom teacher. Along with the Chinese name, their English names are also written on their English textbooks and communication books, on their nametags (commonly in the younger group) or posted on the bulletin board to get students used to their English names (see pic. 31). Because of this reinforcement, the children have reacted promptly when they were called by their English names. After seeing their own English names so many times (and probably sometimes writing it sometimes as Montessori children do), the researcher wanted to determine if the non-Montessori students could write their English names. The experiment for the writing ability of their own English names on the white board was conducted with two age groups in the non-Montessori kindergarten with the pre-test and post-test carried out within two days after the writing practice of their English names as their homework. In the pre-test class, there were two elder groups, named Penguin with 22 students and Dolphin with 20 children, and two middle groups, Sheep with 21 pupils and

Elephant with 14 children, respectively. The 4-5 year old children had an experimental group, Elephant, with the pre- and post-test and one control group Sheep with only the pre-test.

In the elder group Penguin, five children could write their English names impromptu. One girl needed some help as she wrote **Viay* instead of *Vicky* (see pic. 32). In the post-test, most of Penguin's children⁴⁶ (17) tried to write their English names (see pic. 33) whereas only 12 students wrote their names correctly and others had some orthographic errors discussed below (see pic. 34). Three weaker students didn't try to write their English names because they seemingly didn't practice it at home. In another elder group, Dolphin, 5 of 20 students tried to write their English names spontaneously whereas four of them could write it correctly and one wrote a reverse letter *J* in his name *Joe*. In the post-test⁴⁷, 18 Dolphin's students tried to write their English name whereas 13 of them wrote correctly and 5 of 18 had some writing problems studied below (see pic. 35 and pic. 36). One student with perceived symptoms of ADHD didn't attempt to write his English name.

In the middle group, Sheep, with 21 students, only one bilingual girl (English-Chinese) could write her name and another strong student tried to write his name *Teddy* resulting in **Tyddda*. In the Elephant group, all three strong female learners wrote their English names correctly even in the

⁴⁶ 20 students of the elder Penguin group were present in the post-test's class.

⁴⁷ 19 students of the elder Dolphin group were present in the post-test's class.

pre-test (*Apple, Bella, Yoyo*). In both middle groups, two other girls with the commonly used word *Apple* as their English name or nickname couldn't write it. In the post-test of the experimental group Elephant, with 14 students, 9 students tried to write their English names and only 5 of them could write it correctly and 4 pupils made different mistakes as analyzed below (see pic. 37 and pic. 38). Three other students attempted to copy their English names with visual help by looking at their English names posted on the bulletin board and still writing it incorrectly. Even in the younger group Ladybird with 22 students, 4 of them tried to write their English names that they could see on their English nametags (see pic. 39) and 2 of them could write their recognizable names *James* and *Sam*. Logically, being younger students, few of them could write their English names. Surprisingly, not all strong students of all four groups could write their English names. However, the post-test proved that very young learners can easily learn how to write their English name and almost all of them wanted to write the English name on the white board and in general could write it well. After the homework, the students could not only write their English name but also could spell it correctly by means of moving magnetic alphabetic letters (see pic. 40).

The common orthographical errors made by the children can be seen in pictures 32-40. The most common mistake was letter reversals or mirror writing that is a common phenomenon among children age 6 and younger

who will usually “outgrow” it over time.⁴⁸ Reversal writing occurred even in the writing of children whose first language is English. It applied to such letters as *J, S, d, b, e, M* vs *W*. Thereby, some children hesitated before writing to choose the direction of those letters. Another problem was the writing sequence of the letters such as *E* and *T*. Besides, the sequence of letters in the name was also convoluted by a few students (e.g. **Angle* vs *Angel*), or some of them missed letters (**Jams*), or quite the contrary, added some letters (**Bellea*). Most children tended to write letters that were very small with variable heights, not following page lines, making it hard to read. Being objective, the results of the post-test were quite sufficient considering that writing an English name is just a first step for the very young L2 learners. It is advisable to start teaching writing of English names to the very young learners, which will make them more curious about their own foreign names.

The English reading class occurs frequently in Taiwan’s bilingual kindergartens in the form of Story Reading class where the teacher usually reads the Picture Storybook to the whole class. It is often the only way to expose the children to the written language. It might be difficult to convince some non-Montessori English kindergarten teachers to implement other literacy activities, such as phonics techniques, to teach English reading skills of one-two syllable words to five-six year-old learners. It might also be

⁴⁸ Source: http://www.psychologicalscience.org/media/myths/myth_17.cfm.

harder to ask those teachers to teach writing skills to children and from the beginning let them write their English names. For this purpose, the persuasive method will primarily be the explanation of the objectives (incl. importance of literacy in the early childhood) and demonstration of the colossal results on the child's writing ability driven by her/his curiosity and a high motivation to hold the marker and write the letters together so that it makes sense to them. The researcher has already successfully conducted such experiments in composing words, writing English names, and other related tests, and therefore believes in the convincing power of implementing these literacy activities.

The scarcity of similarly related studies in Taiwan requires more research to be done to shed light on the necessity of and effective techniques for development of the English reading and writing skills of Taiwan's preschoolers. It is hoped these results and conclusions could be taken as one of guidelines for enhancing the efficacy of English literacy by Taiwan's very young learners.

The demonstration of initial reading and writing skills of the Montessori pupils could give some impetus to other bilingual kindergartens to reconsider their curriculum while implementing Reading class (different from Story Reading class) to start with the reading process and Writing class to teach writing (not only tracing) on the letter level, then word level, subsequently

phrase level, and finally sentence level, as done in some Montessori kindergartens in Taiwan.

It should be taken into consideration that the learning activities, including story reading, games, and songs, and the educational materials applied in bilingual institutions should be employed with consideration to teach not only oracy (vocabulary and pronunciation), but also to bring literacy into the English classroom. The long-held practice of writing activities has shown that almost no child refuses to do writing activities, especially if it is a class activity, rather than individual work, as there is a “competition factor” (CF) - to be chosen by teacher among others - and a “possession factor” (PF) - to temporarily possess e.g. marker and white board - as well as the factor of the attention of the whole class. This produces a high motivation factor (MF) that, in addition to the child’s natural curiosity (NC), creates a great opportunity for effective knowledge input (EKI). As a result, this study aims to explain and demonstrate the successful recipe for literacy implementation in the bilingual kindergarten using the two-level formula: $CF + PF = MF \rightarrow MF + NC = EKI$. Seizing the opportunity of EKI should be a premise in any learning process leading to a greater outcome.

VIII. Implementation of Games and Songs

1. Games

As mentioned above, the Montessori and non-Montessori English learning classes were later extended through some other activities, **games and songs**, especially focusing on vocabulary and their phonological features. Such spontaneous and creative use of language highly motivates children in contrast to the traditional way of teaching, namely learning vocabulary through memorizing without any enjoyable activity which is boring and not very effective for children. Many scholars emphasize the importance of any games' appropriateness in terms of teaching objectives, children's level and age, timing, facilities, group size, environment and cultural context since only the right choice can deliver good results (Sari 2006; Taviş & Uşisâğ 2009; Uberman 1998). In fact, many games proposed by different educators are not suitable for the young L2 learners as their vocabulary is limited and the game requires a certain language's adjustment.

Games as well as songs provide less anxiety and pressure and subsequently provide a pleasant learning environment for students to study easily and naturally so that the input of knowledge will be retained longer. Through games, the students can demonstrate what they already learned, practice it and acquire new knowledge (e.g. learning new vocabulary and phrases). It is a teacher's responsibility to choose the most applicable game

for the class. When games are too easy, students will be excited and noisy; when games are too difficult, students will feel frustrated and lose interest in learning from the game. Besides this, the implementation of games can cause some difficulties for the teacher, namely the time management and class management that might be hard to control, as well as the balance between learning and playing. Also, the correction of errors should be done undisturbedly without interrupting the game. Furthermore, the premises of the game implementation must refer to the known rules that should be explained beforehand and to the language aspects (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, etc.) that should also be taught in advance. Therefore, the related game can be used as a reward after the students have learned a certain topic. So, adequate input before the game, a suitable level of the game related to the course content, the right amount of time allotted for games, and a well-managed class order and subsequent error analysis will improve learning achievement. In short, the games are used for reinforcement and review of materials studied in prior lessons. Furthermore, mime and gesture are found to be an integral part of the teaching process.

The English games practiced in some Taiwan kindergartens can roughly be classified into *active* (also called *muscular games*) and *inactive* (also called *cognitive games*), where the former incorporates both the mental and physical activities, and the latter consists only of intellectual

work. In both kinds of **Vocabulary games**, flashcards as visual aids are regularly used. The main function of flashcards consists of presenting an object with its written form and image. The implementation of flashcards in the class carries another positive side, namely the high motivation factor that has arisen from two sources: primarily, the high desire to possess the flashcards after answering the teacher's question, and then the desire to demonstrate the knowledge and/or to express the student's own opinion if the teacher has asked for it.

Students may appreciate the competitive factor, especially with some incentives such as giving points or candy, which is also one of the crucial aspects for motivating kindergartners, or even adult students, to participate in the class (ref. Yakovleva 2011). The younger the learners, the more games that should be implemented in the class, because the elder learners get more reluctant to participate in games that require their active participation. In contrast to the traditional classroom, where the end of the class is the most suitable time for games as relaxation for students after the concentrated learning; in the kindergarten, any teaching time, even the whole class (ca. 30 min) can be used for playing an educational game as it is a natural learning method in the early childhood. Before the game starts, the teacher should clearly explain the rules, which could be altered according to the factors mentioned above for a maximum learning effectiveness and enjoyment, but

they should be adhered to during the whole game. In summary, the fun factor and the competition factor produce high motivation usually leading to effective learning.

As for the Montessori program, the English class, with the purpose of vocabulary learning, mostly consisted of inactive activities described below, such as matching by using the vowel cards, sound box, and others or composing the word by means of the movable alphabet. Therefore, additional activities of active games and songs often applied in non-Montessori kindergartens may also be a good enrichment for a Montessori program because they deflect from the routine of English class and more highly motivate the children. In general, English games enhance students' vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, spelling, and often their communicative skills as well, and later also reading ability. Some of the games implemented in the bilingual kindergartens are described and analyzed below. Some inactive games, such as "What's missing?" and "Quick shot," have been implemented into the (supplementary) group class of English in both kinds of kindergarten.

a. What's missing?

In this game, the children first see 5-7 flashcards placed on the magnet board. Afterwards, they close their eyes while the teacher takes away one card each time. After the children open their eyes, they report which

flashcard is missing. The children were very excited about this game. The only problem is that some children tried to furtively watch which flashcard would be removed. To avoid such spying, the teacher requested that they first turn around and then close their eyes. Such a game primarily trains the child's memory and helps retain new vocabulary.

b. *Quick shot*

In another game, *Quick shot*, the children need to be very attentive because the teacher shows the known flashcard very quickly (for 1-2 seconds) and the children try to recognize the image and shout the target word. This game requires a quick reaction from the children to recall the vocabulary. This activity has been used as review exercise after the children have been familiar with the vocabulary.

c. *Guess Word*

To refresh and consolidate the vocabulary learned before, the game *Guess Word* has been played on occasion. The teacher describes the word and indicates the first letter, e.g. 'beginning with *B* it can fly', whereas the children answered 'bird'. As a hint, the teacher used an initial letter and/or color, etc. This was usually an easier orientation helper for children than the letters or their corresponding phonics. If the answer was wrong, the teacher would encourage the child saying "*Nice guess, think harder*". This game

requires the use of metalanguage⁴⁹ making the children aware of the word's meaning. Metalanguage was sometimes used by teachers in the form of a question, e.g. *'What does 'bakery mean?'* to prove the children's comprehension. Very often the children said the equivalent in their native language and seldom tried to describe it in English. However, the foreign teacher continued to speak entirely in English.

d. Back-to-Back

Other games, introduced below, belong to the active category where the children move their body along with using English as the target language. In this game, two children stand back to back to each other and the teacher gives one flashcard to each child. Afterwards, the whole class shouts "One, two, three, turn around!" and two children face each other, see the partner's flashcard and name the depicted word. It is important to mention that the children usually name the word based on the visual condition, i.e. without reading the printed word, since all flashcards contain a corresponding picture. So, the teacher needs to be aware that the use of flashcards with word picture is not suitable for reading practice. The visual condition will dominate the sound (phonics) or name (letter) condition of the word that will hinder the reading process of the child. In the non-Montessori kindergarten, it happened even when the back of the flashcard contained only the written form.

⁴⁹ A language or vocabulary used to describe or analyze language
(<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/metalanguage>).

e. *Touch the Word*

Another active game, ***Touch the Word***, is also picture-oriented, as the child needs to touch the target word called out by the teacher. Two children compete in this game and wait on the starting line for the teacher's command "Start!". Afterwards, they quickly perform the assigned action, such as *run*, *jump*, *hop*, or *fly*, heading for the target word and choosing it from five-seven flashcards by touching it quickly. Through this active game the children first practice the vocabulary of action verbs in English, and second review the vocabulary from the flashcards. Usually, the vocabulary carries a thematic character, e.g. fruit, nature, or colors. Through such task the children learn vocabulary effectively because the enjoyable aspect motivates them significantly.

f. *Go, Touch, and Run*

A similar touch activity has been practiced in the active game ***Go, Touch, and Run***, where two words have been practiced through repetition. The children sit in a circle and one child goes around the circle repetitively pronouncing one learned word; only saying another word once s/he can choose and pat one child who will stand up and chase after this child. If the first child can run fast around one circuit and occupy the empty seat of the child chosen, the chosen child will have the next turn. After a while, two words can be replaced through another two words. Since the children pay

close attention to two words, one of which has been repeated many times, the learned vocabulary will more easily be retained. This activity is very popular among the children, but it requires a spacious room.

g. *Simon says...*

Another popular active game, *Simon says...*, requires even more attention from the children. The teacher gives different commands to the children, especially for the action words (e.g. *count*, *swim*, or *climb*). However, the children should carry out those actions only if they hear “Simon says ...” before the command. Otherwise they should keep doing the previous command of “Simon says...” skipping the command pronounced without “Simon says.” This game develops attentive children and practices the action words later demonstrated by the children. Sometimes, the action words were not only called out but also shown by means of flashcards with only the printed word (pic. 41) or the printed word and its picture (pic. 42). It emphasizes again that the visual condition is prevalent in the language learning of very young learners, more so than the name and sound conditions. Therefore, the flashcards with images are a common education material in the early childhood where the reading is usually out of study focus in SLL, except the Montessori method.

Some of the active games (e.g. *Simon says*) embed the Total Physical Response method developed by James Asher (1977), which

consists of obeying commands given by the teacher and the appropriate physical response by the learners. The method correlates to the listening comprehension of the spoken language (usually in form of the imperative) by learners.

As mentioned before, the competitive aspect of the game will increase the children's motivation. Therefore, the group of children can be divided in boys versus girls, but it should be divided proportionally. However, in this researcher's opinion, the mixed groups consisting of both genders and of a balanced number of slower and faster learners would diminish the already naturally extant differences between girls and boys. If necessary, a stronger student can start the game (ref. McCallum 1980, xiv). The teacher has a good chance to involve the reserved children into the learning process through their willingness, curiosity, and imagination to participate in the games. Reticent children should be actively encouraged to participate in the game.

It is important to mention that there were sometimes unanticipated problems when the game was impeded by children due to their lack of understanding the rules. Some children couldn't understand the explanations of the foreign teacher. In this case scenario, the local teacher helped explain the procedure in the local language or some of the stronger students were able to translate the game for their groupmates.

There are a vast amount of educational games applied in SLA and/or

SLL classroom. They can definitely be modified, adjusted to the current external and internal factors. However, their purpose remains to learn and consolidate the vocabulary knowledge while simultaneously developing and increasing the children's (visual and aural) memory, attention, and their quick responsive reactions.

2. Songs

In addition to games, English language children's **songs** have often been incorporated into English classes to practice vocabulary. Some examples include: *Good morning!*, *Hello!*, *Goodbye!*, *ABC*, *Finger's song*, *The wheels on the bus*, *Four little ducks*, *London Bridge*, *Two little eyes*, *Row your boat* and others from the book *ABC English Songs* (pic. 43-44). It usually takes time for the children to get familiar with the lyrics. For this purpose, the teacher needs to pronounce the lyrics and the children should repeat it after the teacher several times. After a while, the children knew the song and sang it with joy. This empirical study fully supports the claim that through the songs the children practice their listening and speaking skills, including pronunciation, and learn vocabulary together with grammar (Al-Mamary 1998; Lo & Li 1998). The rhythm of songs facilitates the children's process of acquiring vocabulary, which was retained for a longer period of time and often as chunks, i.e. common lexical patterns. Through the rhythm, the children seemingly speak more naturally. According to G. Cook, repetition of

rhythm, including the phonetical, grammatical, lexical, syntactical parallelism, helps acquire the language in all aspects (2000, p.28). Therefore, poetry has also been implemented in some (non-)/Montessori programs through different short poems in posters for learning vocabulary (exp. “*elephant, elephant – long, long trunk*”). According to Gill (2007), poetry offers “a concise and memorable case of language with intensive feeling, imagery, and qualities of sound that bounce pleasingly off the tongue, tickle the ear, and leave the mind something to ponder” (cf. Reid 2009). Herewith, the effectiveness of meaningful rhyme is emphasized, i.e. the meaningfulness of the realistic logical phrases should go first followed by rhyme; otherwise the children will be puzzled by it. Such non-realistic phrases may distract them from learning due to the indeterminacy of meaning or disbelief in the story. However, the assessment of different posters introducing English letters with short slogans occasionally showed illogical word combinations that impede the input of vocabulary and leads to less effective outcome according to the Krashen’s Comprehension Hypothesis. For example, the letter *U* and its corresponding sound [ʌ] have been introduced through the word *umbrella* in the rhyme:

Umbrella, umbrella
Look so good
Let me put it
On the wood.

The last two lines seem less meaningful to children despite the accompanied

illustration of umbrella put on the log. The practicality of vocabulary is highly important for the effective outcome, namely for the greater learning of vocabulary. Therefore, the rhyme above could be advisably modified into following one:

Umbrellas, umbrellas
Look so good
So many colors
Green, white, blue.

Thereby the children can practice the colors and at the same time learn the regular plural form of the noun as part of their implicit grammar acquisition. Afterwards, the teacher asked the color of each child's umbrella to personalize the question, which further increased the learners' motivation. To motivate the children to speak English and to learn vocabulary, their background has been involved into the class. In essence, the teacher asked the children questions related to their own experience. For example, the word *towel* in the Montessori Art class was practiced through the personal question '*Do you have a towel?*', '*What color is your towel?*' The children were so highly motivated that they called the color of the towel of each their family members ('*my mother has a red towel*') on their own initiative. Such motivation had also been shown in answering the questions '*Do you have any pets?*', '*Which pet do you like?*' while reading the book "My Pets" in both kinds of kindergarten. The children eagerly answered related personal questions. It is crucial to build up the bridges between the classroom and the

students' identity. In today's classroom, it is advisable "to transform [...] form-focused exercises into meaning-rich activities, such as personalized questions, role-plays [...] to emulate a target-culture environment..." (Magnan 2008, 357). The novel idea of agency, which is similar to the Natural Approach, in the classroom has recently been more highly emphasized within the sociocultural theory in SLA (ref. van Lier 2008). The agency of such reflective teaching emphasizes "the relevance and significance to things and events" happening outside the classroom (Lantolf and Thorne 2006, 143). It means, from a pedagogical perspective, that in the sociocultural theory it is considered as a g e n c y when the significance of the student's background is related to the studied object. The teacher asks questions related to the person in order to elicit the student's feeling and personal experience. It is worthy to mention that some children answered in Chinese, but the teacher repeated their answer in English and kept asking them in English. Even if some children didn't speak English, their adequate response was an evidence of their good listening comprehension.

Coming back to the less common phrases used in the educational materials, they may develop the critical thinking of the child distinguishing between realistic and less- or non-realistic relationships between objects. It may also contribute to development of the child's fantasy and creative imaging of her/his own fictional world. Considering these controversial

points of view, it is advisable to prioritize the meaning of the rhymed words that can sometimes be arranged into non-realistic but interesting, imaginative combinations. It is worth mentioning that for the younger children group the similar rhymes introducing the letters and sounds are somewhat shorter (exp. *Up, Up – the way we go*). It is especially pivotal in the SLL to consider the length of the rhyme, its meaningfulness and its practicality for the effective vocabulary input and subsequently the output.

Referring back to the songs, if no pictures accompanied them, the foreign teacher sang the songs with an appropriate mime and gesture (e.g. wave the hand for *hello*), which the children imitated immediately without any request from the teacher. Sometimes the song was implemented with the role play, e.g. in the *Finger's song*, five children were assigned to be Thumbkin, Pointer, Tall man, Ring man, and Pinkie, respectively. Also in the song *Four Little Ducks*, six children have been asked to be four little ducks, a mother duck, and a father duck. Such role play or another action fulfills several effective functions, namely it motivates the children, facilitates their learning process, and allows individual learning and singing, which makes sure that the child knows the lyrics and pronounces them correctly.

During one school year, the children usually learned the twelve English songs mentioned previously. One day, the foreign teacher experimented with three groups of different ages. She asked children to sing all these songs

during the English class, which lasted thirty minutes. Most children liked to sing songs and therefore cheerfully sang them. Afterwards, the teacher asked each child which song s/he liked the most. Surprisingly, many children chose the last song that was played on the CD that they had sung. Such an answer could be due to the short-term memory of children; therefore it cannot count as reliable indicator of their preference. However, many children from different groups also chose the *ABC* song, which was played in the middle of the sequence. That song can be considered as a favorite of many children most likely because of its rhythm and simplicity of vocabulary, mostly naming the letters. Interestingly, one English teacher in the non-Montessori class had tried to implement modern pop songs, teaching usually just the refrain of such songs as *We Will Rock You* or *Baby Baby* accompanied by dancing. The children had a lot of fun singing these while listening to them on the radio and performing them later for their parents, to their surprise. The aspect of popularity and the recency of learning material should always be considered in the teaching.

In the researcher's very first English class with kindergartners, she experimented with different teaching materials and methods to have a good starting point with the class and to build up a friendly relationship, especially with the children from the youngest group. As a result, the songs served as the most effective means to relieve the tension between children and a new

teacher in their first class because the children were very interested in listening to a song (especially when this was supported with pictures and/or action) and then sing it. On another occasion, the teacher mentioned that the youngest children lost their interest in the English class after 12-15 minutes while teacher used posters and flashcards to interact with them. To liven the atmosphere in the class and draw the children's attention to English, the teacher decided to play a CD of English songs mentioned above and sing them. Interestingly, most children started to pay attention and to sing songs familiar to them. So, the teacher could continue her English class. Similar to games, the younger the children are, the more songs should be implemented into the English class to keep the children motivated because the younger children cannot concentrate for a long period of time (20-30 minutes), in comparison with the elder children (5-6 years olds) who get bored easily.

To summarize, here are some tips on how songs can effectively be implemented into an English class:

- 1. Choose the right song.** The song should be pertinent to the age and learning objective in terms of its content and vocabulary.
- 2. Introduce a new song at a slow pace.** The song should be played a few times, so the children can get familiar with it.
- 3. Teach the lyrics of the song using materials like flashcards and/or gestures and mime.** The images and actions will reinforce

the vocabulary acquisition in terms of its meaning and retention by children. The teacher needs to practice the vocabulary with children several times before singing it as a group.

- 4. Play the song and give it a try.** “Practice makes perfect” is crucial in this process. The teacher needs to practice the song with the class for several weeks. Some songs can be used as “opening” (e.g. *Hello, Good Morning, Are You Sleeping*) and “closing” (e.g. *Goodbye*) ritual songs for nearly each class since the children never feel bored by singing them.
- 5. Put the song into action if possible.** A role play or game completed along with singing will reinforce the children’s understanding of vocabulary and its retention.

The children usually requested the teacher sing certain songs “one more time.” If the songs weren’t practiced for a while, some children asked for them in order to diversify the routine activities in the classroom. Such requests also indicate that the songs are a very suitable and also an effective learning instrument for language by very young learners who feel less inhibited to sing the songs as compared with more elder learners. Surprisingly, the songs could usually get the attention of all children, making them concentrate more and be involved in the English class. It is also worth mentioning that even the youngest children (three years old) can implicitly

and naturally learn difficult grammar and vocabulary understanding its meaning more easily through songs. This task would be hard to accomplish through only the text without melody and rhythm (e.g. conversation and story). Thanks to the songs, children have a positive attitude towards English learning. Also, in the questionnaire the parents expressed their desire to implement more games and songs into the English class in order to avoid exercising any pressure on children's learning and to make learning English fun. The communication book of the non-Montessori kindergarten has a grading criterion: "Your child can sing English songs very well and happily," emphasizing the importance of singing English songs (pic.2). It is necessary to employ different activities into the curriculum to avoid boring children with repetitive exercises that may become "drill-like".

As mentioned above, very often in the English class, songs have accompanied games. For example, the children built a bridge with their hands, standing in two lines as one child passed under the bridge of their arms, while the song *London bridge* was playing. When the music stopped, the children tried to catch this child with their lowered arms. The lyrics of the song had been embodied into the game. The teacher made one condition: if the children don't sing the song, the game will be stopped. So, many children sang the song loudly.

In another game with action words, the teacher paused the English song

and pronounced an action word which the children imitated (e.g. *'jump'*). Afterwards, the song, which is familiar to the children, was continued. So, the combination of game and song effectively strengthens the vocabulary knowledge of children.

It can be concluded that games and songs are a perfect means for easier and more fun language acquisition and learning by very young learners since these activities employ visual and auditory aspects, and sometimes the kinesthetic features (e.g. touching and movement) which enhance the learning process (Tavil & Uşisağ 2009). They expose the learner to an indirect foreign language learning process closely related to second language learning opening in the child's personality. Through such collective activities the children also become more socialized with their classmates.

IX. Summary: Guidelines of English class for preschoolers

The summarized guidelines drawn from this longitudinal study have been classified into the following categories and presented below:

1. English Vocabulary

- Use the same vocabulary in different activities because the children don't get bored if they have diverse activities, and they will retain the vocabulary for a longer period of time. Since many children cannot recall the same word for the same object due to the child's 'short-term' and 'local' memory, the teacher's help is here needed.
- The teacher also needs to bridge the learned vocabulary to the real objects existing in the learning environment so that the learning process will become meaningful and effective.
- The choice of taught vocabulary should be based on its practicality often applied in the real environment.
- The teacher should show some morphological changes of words through replacement or omission of letters to demonstrate the children the vocabulary similarities or differences.
- In an activity with vocabulary, it is useful to apply the transposition between objects, i.e. change their location, in order to challenge and improve the child's concentration and memory.

- Use meaningful, non-abstract, and useful vocabulary for children, with clearly referential and interesting pictures to build the proper input comprehension of the child.
- The teacher needs to make sure that the child correctly understands the denotation of the vocabulary through listening and/or speaking for her/his effective learning input and later output (ref. Krashen's Input Hypothesis).
- The learned words should be connected with each other and practiced in the form of common collocations, phrases, and simple sentences.
- Practice vocabulary through easy and useful sentences (e.g. *I like / want / have...*) where the children express their own preference or experience because such a g e n c y in the classroom highly motivates even the reserved children who are willing to share their opinions.
- Appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and intonation can be applied in introducing the new vocabulary as it facilitates the learning process of the child, making it fun.
- The teacher should practice self-evaluation testing on vocabulary where each child admits to the words which are the most difficult to her/him. It helps reveal the children's difficulties in order improve.
- The learned vocabulary should be reviewed systematically and regularly because the children forget it quickly due to their short-term memory.

2. English Grammar

- The important grammar aspects of English demonstrated through learning materials should also be emphasized for the kindergartners. Such aspects include a) the final morpheme *-s* in its three functions as plural form, 3rd person singular, and possessive indicator; b) *in-/*definite article; c) different verb tenses, especially gerund; d) noun and its corresponding personal and possessive pronoun, etc. Of course, no extra grammar class should be taught for preschoolers.
- The teacher should correct the child's speaking if needed, but only after s/he is finished speaking.

3. Story Reading

- The content of the chosen reading book should meet the interest of both boys and girls.
- The book shouldn't be too long and shouldn't contain complicated grammar and syntax.
- Complex and unclear pictures should be avoided.
- The story should be retold and discussed by children.

4. Development of Literacy

- Teach all four skills to the preschoolers so that they will learn language as one whole system.
- Create ‘the written word rich environment’ through posters, stickers with the child’s English name, labeling of objects, and other such ways to let the children get familiar with the written form of the foreign language.
- Establish a reading corner in the classroom to expose the children to the written language.
- Expose the child to pre-literacy through reading the stories, labeling the objects, and others as early as possible.
- Have a regular story reading class that is highly motivating for the children, especially if the story relates to the children’s own experience.
- Expose the child to literacy from the age of three starting with writing first and then reading.
- Be aware that in pre-literacy the visual condition of image is prevalent, then the name (letter) and sound (phonics) conditions that are necessary for the reading process.
- Introduce both the upper and lower case of the letters at the same time to create a unified image of the corresponding letter.

- Introduce the letters and their corresponding phonics at the same time from the beginning of the pre-literacy stage to prepare the children for the reading process.
- Teach cursive writing for easier streamlined hand movement and use pencils for writing since it is easier to write and also correct.
- Implement easy writing and reading exercises to develop the literacy condition of the child.
- Practice ‘letter tracing’ exercises with the children regularly to get more familiar with the letters and correct writing direction.
- Start to teach reading with one- and later two-syllable words to facilitate the reading process of the child in the beginning phase of the literacy.
- Teach the child how to spell, write, and read her/his English name. Practice it several times until the child can do it well independently.

5. Games & Songs

- Implement more games and songs related to the course content into English classes of very young learners considering their appropriate English level and the right duration of the game.
- The younger the learners, more games and songs should be practiced in the class.

- Through games and songs, the vocabulary, grammar, listening, pronunciation, and/or communicative skills are practiced.
- Besides educational benefits, games also develop visual, aural, and/or motoric memory, attention and quick physical responses of the child.
- Both kinds of vocabulary games, active and inactive should be practiced.
- The rules of the game should be explained clearly in the beginning and should be adhered to consistently during the game.
- During the game, balance the fun and learning and maintain a good class management.
- Competition factors with some incentives like stickers or candies highly motivate almost all children to participate in the game.
- Singing a familiar song can be a good starting point for the very first English class to establish a good relation between teacher and young learners and diminish their tension and fear.
- Use meaningful, easy remember, rhymed verses for vocabulary learning. The appropriate length of the rhyme (the younger, the shorter) and its practicality are crucial for effective input and output.
- Appropriate gestures and mime, as well as role-play accompanying the song can highly motivate and consequently facilitate the learning of song's lyrics that should be taught before singing the song.

- Recent popular songs can also be practiced in the class because the children can hear them often outside the classroom and already know the tune.
- Games and songs contribute highly to the positive attitude of the child towards English learning.

6. Class Management

- Allow the children touch and ‘possess’ the learning materials as it will motivate them, even the reserved children may choose to participate in the class activity.
- If the children need to work in small groups, the teacher (not based on the children’s preference) needs to do the grouping considering the temperament, learning ability of the child, her/his social relationship with other children and other factors for a better learning outcome.
- ADD and ADHD children can be integrated into the group class or might have an individual class depending on her/his behavior in a certain situation.
- Have an individual teaching approach. Don’t use choir repetition for the whole class. Focus rather on individual speaking to assess each child’s foreign language learning process.
- Create a low-anxiety learning environment for learner’s improved language input and output while encouraging and praising the child.

- Disciplinary requests (e.g. *Sit nicely!*) and complimenting phrases (e.g. *Good job!*) should be said by the teacher regularly, but not automatically and too often, to sustain their effect on the learners.
- Impart the philosophy of systematization and (self-)discipline to the children.
- Avoid any distracting external (e.g. noise) and internal (e.g. new toys or child's wristwatch) factors that might hinder the children's concentration.
- Use a student progress record to enter notes regarding the English learning of each child. It can also be used during the class to motivate children in order to participate actively in the class activities.
- If the child failed in one task, the teacher should give him another chance to succeed for establishing his self-confidence and motivation.
- Use the children's English names to build up their 'new' identity.
- Use diversified, creative, and fun ways to teach a foreign language to motivate the learners and cultivate their creative thinking.

These guidelines can be applied to any kind of bilingual kindergarten to foster the child's SLL effectively.

X. Conclusion

This study explored the hypothesis that cultivation of literacy should begin in early childhood with bilingual education. Its feasibility and effectiveness could be proven through the Montessori English learning method applied in some of Taiwan's bilingual kindergartens. The scarcity of similarly related studies also requires more research to shed light on the effectiveness of the Montessori English learning method. It is hoped that the results, which were obtained and confirmed during six years of study, might be taken as a guideline for further research.

The Montessori Language Learning Method could be applied in early childhood education for native speakers as well as English as a foreign language by using different techniques and educational materials. Despite the absence of colorful toys, which are normally plentiful at children's homes, the classroom of Montessori kindergarten with its well-structured educational materials still provides fun activities for children.

Besides the advanced writing and reading ability of children, as well as their extensive vocabulary, the Montessori English Learning Method needs to focus more on the English speaking ability of the children while the communication between the teacher and children should be based more on the foreign language (English) than the native language (Chinese) which already dominates in the children's environment.

It is also desirable that every foreign language teacher would become a

researcher of her/his own classroom practice observing, analyzing, and improving each child's SLA or SLL process.

In summary, the researcher agrees with other Montessori teachers in Taiwan that the Montessori English learning method is effective and up-to-date and has a long history. The secret of the effectiveness of the Montessori method consists of the use of the child's sensitive period with her/his motivation and curiosity for new discovery. The crucial point of the Montessori method is that the children don't experience any pressure in their learning process. Learning English through the Montessori method can be fun and effective! Also, the non-Montessori bilingual kindergartens provide the joyful SLL process for very young learners. Such kindergartens also try to introduce a few writing activities into their programs. Therefore, it is desirable for more extensive pre-/literacy activities, including reading, to be implemented into their curricula to naturally expose the child to the written world as early as possible.

In general, both kinds of bilingual kindergartens could provide enough evidence of their creative, diversified, and various levels of effectiveness of exposing the children to English as a foreign language.

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Survey of parents whose children go to the bilingual kindergarten

Age: 20-30 30-40 40-50

Do you have a child? Yes No (Age of the child:) Profession:

1. Is your child exposed to the English learning? Yes No

2. When and Where has your child begun to learn English? Age: Place:

3. Do you speak English? Yes No If yes, what is your English level?

Basic Lower-Intermediate Higher-Intermediate

If yes, do you sometimes speak English to your child? YesNo Other

If yes, when and what do you say? (e.g. request, appraisal, etc.)

4. MOE stipulates that establishing bilingual kindergarten is forbidden. Do you agree? **Why?**

Yes No Other

5. When do you think the child should begin to learn English? **Why?** Age:

6. How many hours a week does your child have English class? Hours:

7. Is your child exposed to English outside of the English class? **If yes, how?**

Yes No Other

8. Which English teaching methods do you like the most? **Why?**

9. Which English teaching methods do you like the least? **Why?**

10. Are games and songs implemented in your English class? Yes No

If Yes, does your child like it? Yes No Other

11. Do you think English class taught in your kindergarten is effective? **Why?**

Yes No Other

12. Are you satisfied with the content of the English curriculum? **Why?**

Yes No Other

13. Can your child speak or understand a little bit of English? Yes No Other

14. Which problems does your child encounter in using English?

15. What is your opinion about the English teaching of the foreign teacher?

16. What is your opinion about the English teaching of the local teacher?

17. What do you expect from the kindergarten in terms of bilingual education of your child?

18. What would you like to improve in the kindergarten in terms of English teaching?

Other Comments:

Survey of non-Montessori teachers in Taiwan

Age: 20-30 30-40 40-50

Do you have a child? Yes No (Age of your child:)

Profession: English teacher Educator Other

1. How long have you been working as kindergarten teacher? Years:

2. Do you speak English? No Yes If yes, what is your English level?

Basic Lower-Intermediate Higher-Intermediate

3. MOE stipulates that establishing the bilingual kindergarten is forbidden. Do you agree?

Why? Yes No Other

4. When should children begin to learn English? Why? Age:

5. How many hours a week do children have English class? Hours:

6. Are children exposed to English outside of the English class? If yes, how? Yes No

7. Which English teaching methods applied in your kindergarten do you like the most? Why?

8. Which English teaching methods applied in your kindergarten do you like the least? Why?

9. Are games and songs implemented in your English class? Yes No

If Yes, do children like it? Yes No Other

10. Do you think the English class taught in your kindergarten is effective? Why?

Yes No Other

11. Are you satisfied with the content of the English curriculum? Why? Yes No Other

12. Can children in your kindergarten speak or understand a little bit of English? Yes No

13. Which problems do children encounter in using English?

14. What is your opinion about the English teaching of the foreign teacher?

15. What is your opinion about the English teaching of the local teacher?

16. Does the local teacher speak mostly English with children? Yes No Other

17. Do the children respond in English to the questions asked by English teacher?

Yes No Other

18. If you are not an English teacher, do you sometimes speak English to children?

Yes No Other If yes, when and what do you say? (e.g. request, appraisal, praise, etc.)

19. How can English class be made interesting and effective?

20. How can the bilingual environment be improved in your kindergarten?

Other Comments:

Appendix III

Survey of Montessori teachers in Taiwan

1. Where and when did you learn about the Montessori English Learning Method? 您在哪裡得知蒙台梭利英語教學法?

2. Where do you apply the Montessori English Learning Method?
您在哪裡應用蒙台梭利英語教學法?

Kindergarten Cram school Elementary school Other
幼稚園 補習班 國小 其他

3. What is the age of your pupils? 您學生的年齡有多大?

4. Which educational materials do you use for Montessori English Learning Method? 您在蒙台梭利英語教學法使用什麼教材?

- Phonics book 語音書
- Sound box 聲音書
- Sandpaper letters 沙紙手指畫?
- Movable alphabet 活動字母盒?
- Word function 字的分析?
- Sentence analysis 句型分析?

Other: 其他

5. Which skills do you usually practice in your English class by using the Montessori Method? Why? 在您的英文課中您一般是練習蒙台梭利英語教學法中的什麼技能? 為什麼?

Speaking Reading Writing Listening All four skills
說 讀 寫 聽 所有的四種技能

6. What are the main differences between the Montessori Method and other English teaching methods? **Why?**

蒙台梭利英語教學法和其他的英文教學法之間有什麼差別? 為什麼?

7. How do you modify the Montessori Method in your teaching? (e.g. add supplementary materials such as...)? **Why?**

您如何在您的教學中變更蒙台梭利英語教學法?(例如, 加入額外教材等) 為什麼?

8. What are some flaws/disadvantages of the Montessori English Learning Method? **Why?**
蒙台梭利英語教學法的缺點有哪些? 為什麼?

9. Do you agree with these statements? **Why?**: 您同意以下的觀點嗎? 為什麼?

a) The Montessori method is extremely structured, i.e. limited due to the structure

of toys and play time. 蒙台梭利教學法是非常有組織的，例如因其玩具及玩的時間的結構。

Yes 是 No 否

b) Montessori education focuses too much on the individual instead of group involvement. Children may be slow to develop social skills because of the lack of interaction. 蒙台梭利教學法主要是針對個人化而不是集體參與/兒童可能會因為比較少的互動而造成對於社會技能發展得較慢。

Yes 是 No 否

10. What do you think about Montessori English Learning Method? **Why?** 您對蒙台梭利英語教學法的看法？為什麼？

very effective 非常有效 effective 有效 sufficient 還算有效

not very effective 沒有效

up-to-date 最新的 outdated 已經過時 Other 其他

月份 month	週次 week	實施日期 date	會話本 I can say 3	頁數 Page
8	預備	08/01~08/09		
	1	08/12~08/16	開始上課 review , games	
	2	08/19~08/23	Unit1	4~5
	3	08/26~08/30	Unit1	6~7
9	4	09/02~09/06	Unit1	8~9
	5	09/09~09/13	Unit1/ Review	Test sheet
	6	09/16~09/20	Moon Festival 中秋節美語	
	7	09/23~09/27	Unit2	10~11
10	8	09/30~10/04	Unit2	12~13
	9	10/07~10/11	Unit2	14~15
	10	10/14~10/18	Unit2/ Review	Test sheet
	11	10/21~10/25	Unit3	16~17
11	12	10/28~11/01	Halloween 萬聖節美語	
	13	11/04~11/08	Unit3	18~19
	14	11/11~11/15	Unit3	20~21
	15	11/18~11/22	Unit3/ Review	Test sheet
	16	11/25~11/29	Unit4	22~23
12	17	12/02~12/06	Unit4	24~25
	18	12/09~12/13	Unit4	26~27
	19	12/16~12/20	Christmas 聖誕節美語	
	20	12/23~12/27	Unit4/ Review	Test sheet
1	21	12/30~01/03	Unit5	28~29
	22	01/06~01/10	Unit5	30~31
	23	01/13~01/17	Unit5	32~33
	24	01/20~01/29	Unit5/ Review	Test sheet

pic. 1 non-Montessori curriculum for one semester



美語評量表

教學日期：11月 07日~11月 11日	
Text Book 課本進度	Unit3 單元: My Head Hurts P.20~21
Phonics 自然發音	Gg- Goat 山羊, Hh- Hippo 河馬, Ii- Insect 昆蟲
Vocabulary 單字	Knee / Finger 膝蓋/手指 Head / Ear 頭/耳朵
Sentence Patterns 句型	Are you OK? 你還好嗎? My <u>knee</u> hurts. 我的膝蓋受傷了。
Chant 韻文	Are You Ready? 你準備好了嗎? Are you ready? 你準備好了嗎? Ready! Ready! Go! Go! Go! Let's play games. 一起玩遊戲。 Paper, scissors, stone. 剪刀、石頭、布。
Daily English 生活美語	I am not picky. 我不挑食。
Numbers & Songs 字母&歌曲	Numbers 數字:1~20 Song 歌曲: Are You OK?
Workbook 習作進度	單元習作本：Page _____ 字母練習本：Page _____
Learning Situations 學習狀況	<input type="checkbox"/> Your child is doing great in the class. 上課表現很棒 <input type="checkbox"/> Your child needs improvement in listening. 聽力稍弱一些 <input type="checkbox"/> Your child can pronounce very well. 發音不錯喔 <input type="checkbox"/> Your child needs more practice. 需要再加練習 <input type="checkbox"/> Your child needs more attention in the class. 上課需要再專心一點 <input type="checkbox"/> Your child can sing English songs very well and happily. 唱英文歌很棒
Teacher's comment: 老師評語	Parents' feedback: 家長回應
Teacher's Signature 老師簽名: _____	Parents' Signature 家長簽名: _____

pic. 2 Communication book



pic. 3 Structured educational environment



pic. 4 Mat



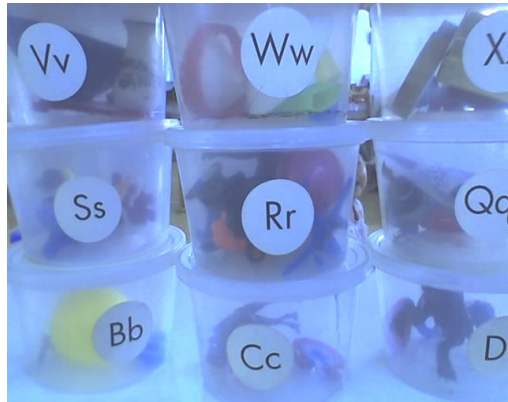
pic. 5 Reading coner



pic. 6 Phonics book



pic. 7 Sound box



pic. 8 Sound boxes



pic. 9 Sandpaper letters



pic. 10 Finger tracing



pic. 11 Vocabulary flash cards



pic. 12 Vowel matching cards



pic. 13 Sentence pattern signs



pic. 14 Phonics sounds



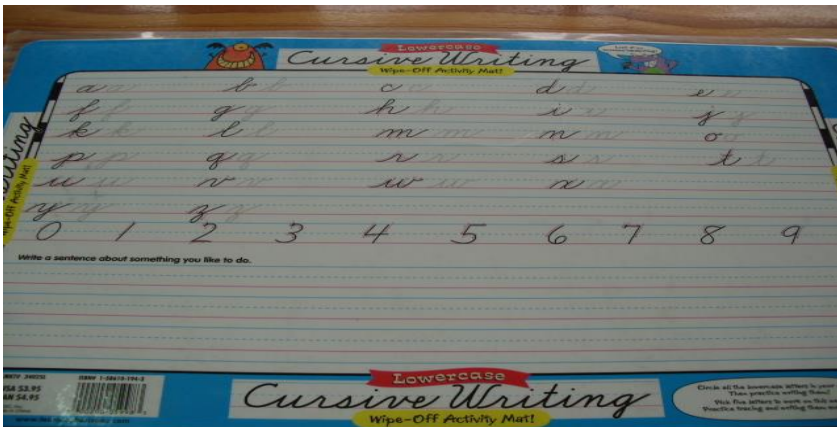
pic. 15 Movable alphabet



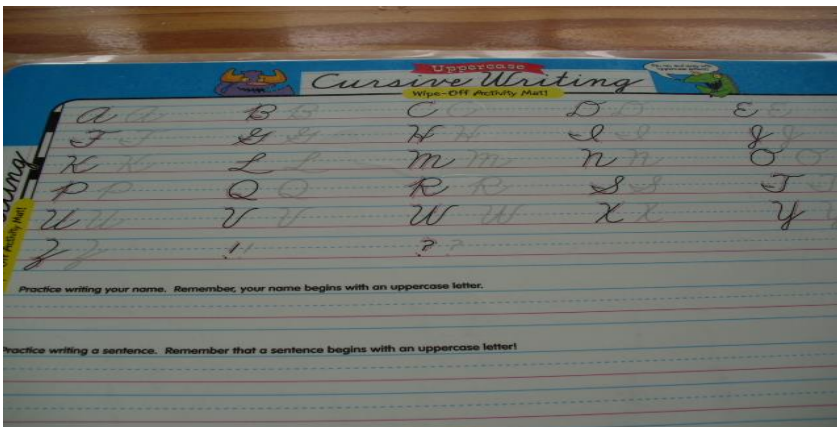
pic. 16 Ugly mask
(Oxford Very First Dictionary)



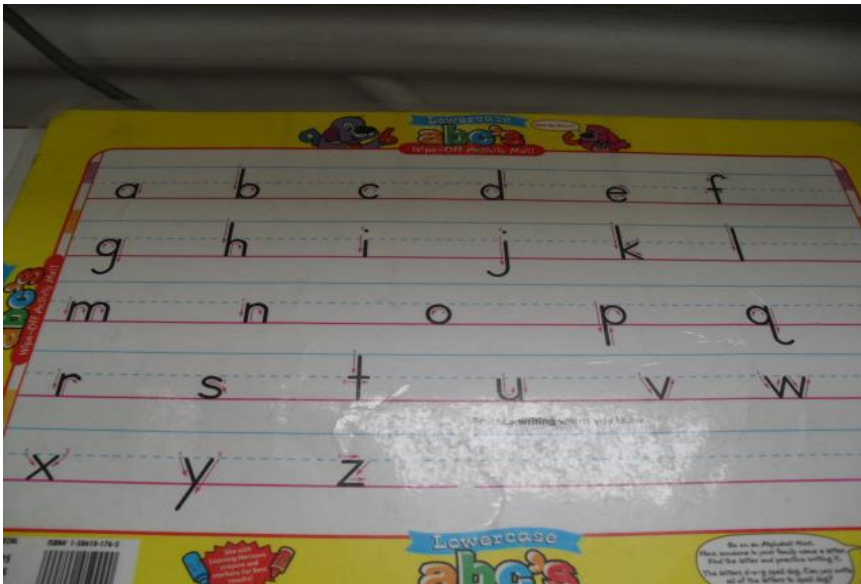
pic. 17 non-Montessori magnet alphabet



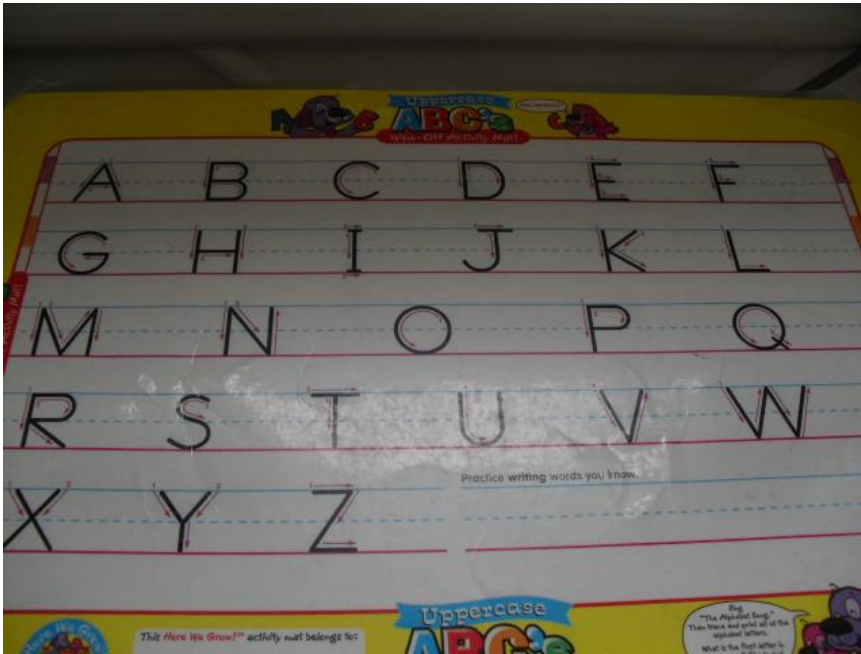
pic. 18 Cursive letters – Lowercase



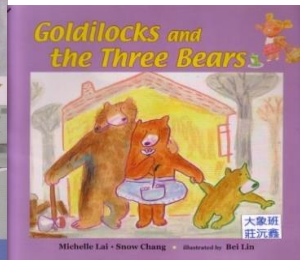
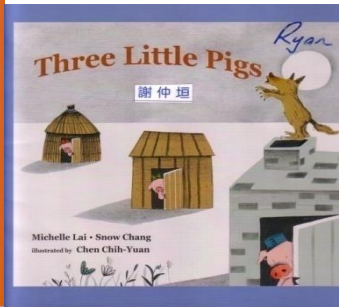
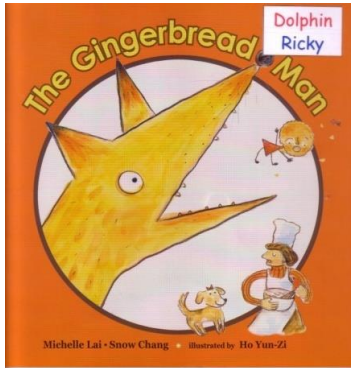
pic. 19 Cursive letters – Uppercase



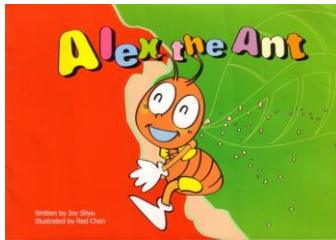
pic. 20 Printed letters – Lowercase



pic. 21 Printed letters – Uppercase



pic. 22 Reading books



pic. 23 Reading Book



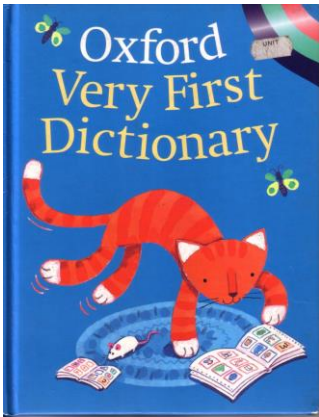
pic. 24 Scrabble game



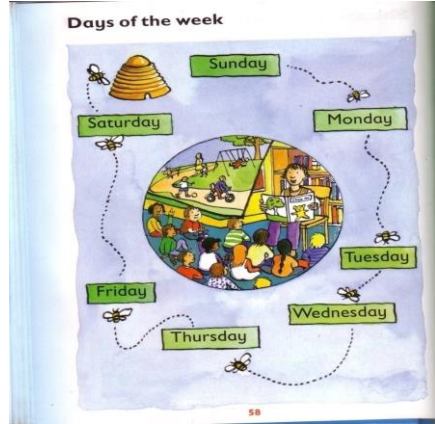
pic. 25 Vowel matching cards



pic. 26 Morphological change



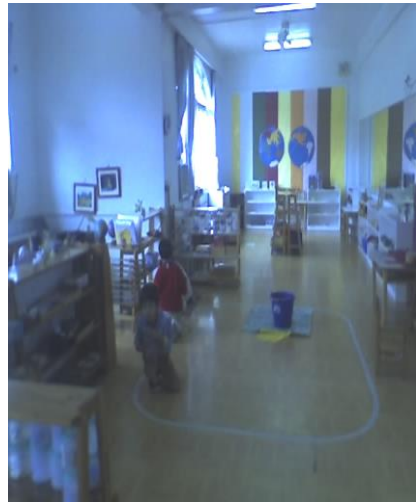
pic. 27 Oxford Very First Dictionary



pic. 28 Days of the week



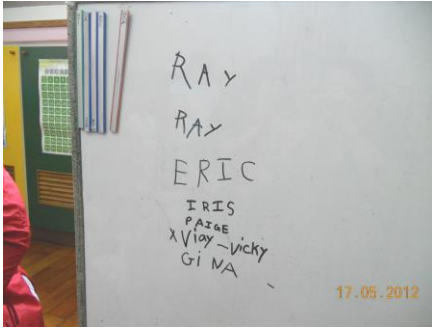
pic. 29 Geometric forms



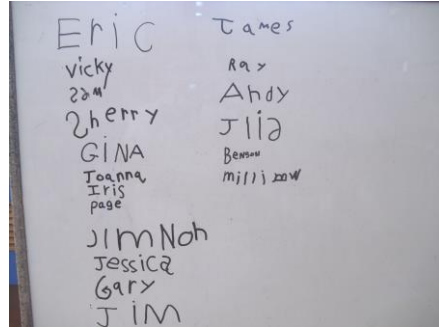
pic. 30 Line on the floor



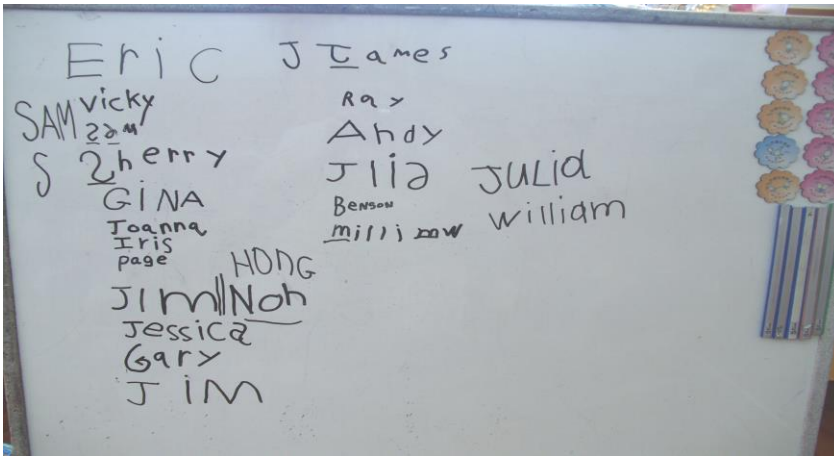
pic. 31 English names on the bulletin board



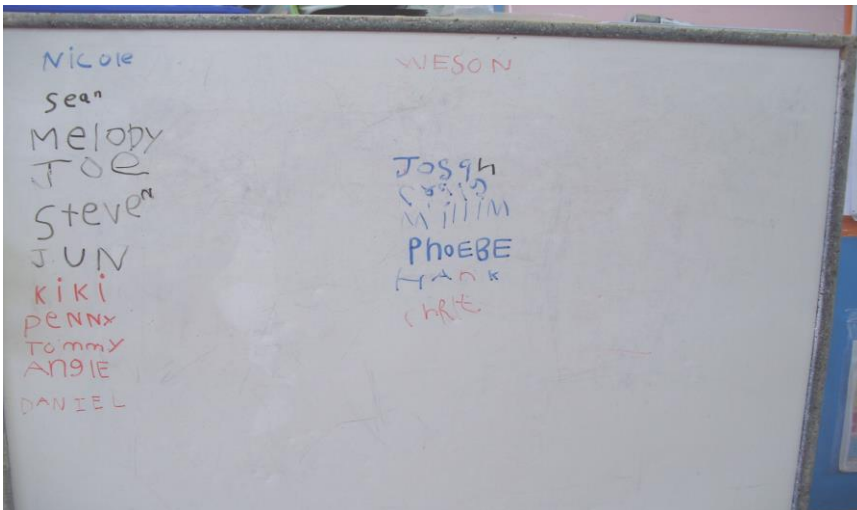
pic. 32 Penguin group – pre-test



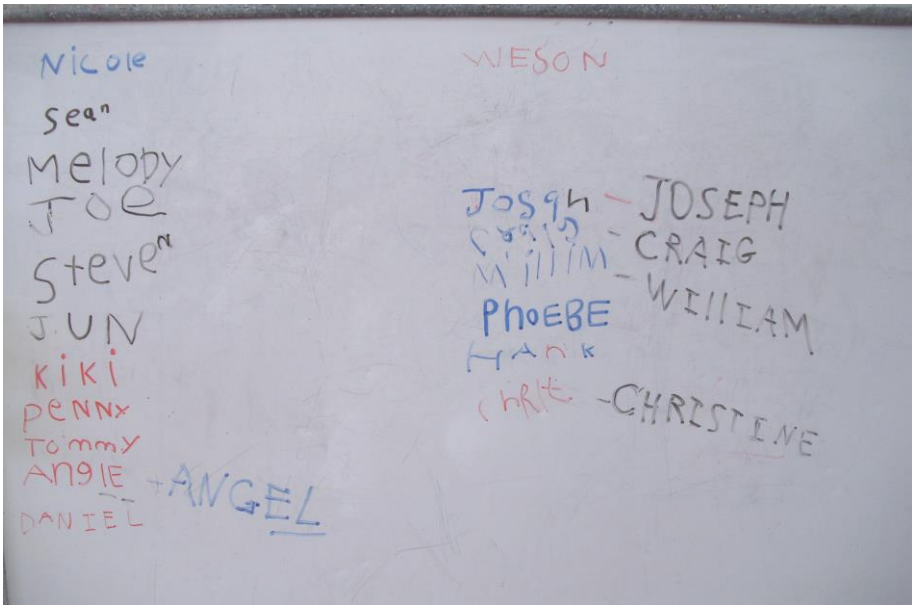
pic. 33 Penguin group – post-test



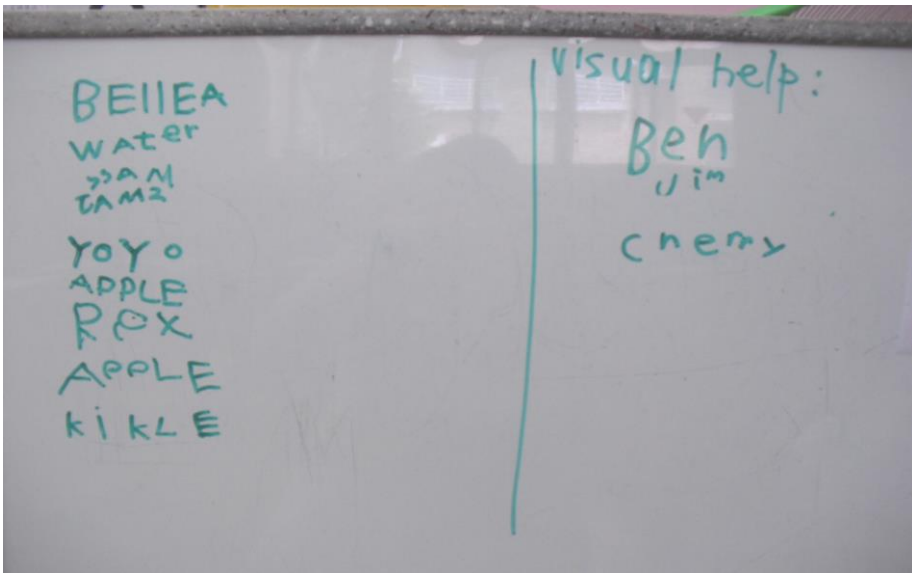
pic. 34 Penguin group – post-test's correction (elder group)



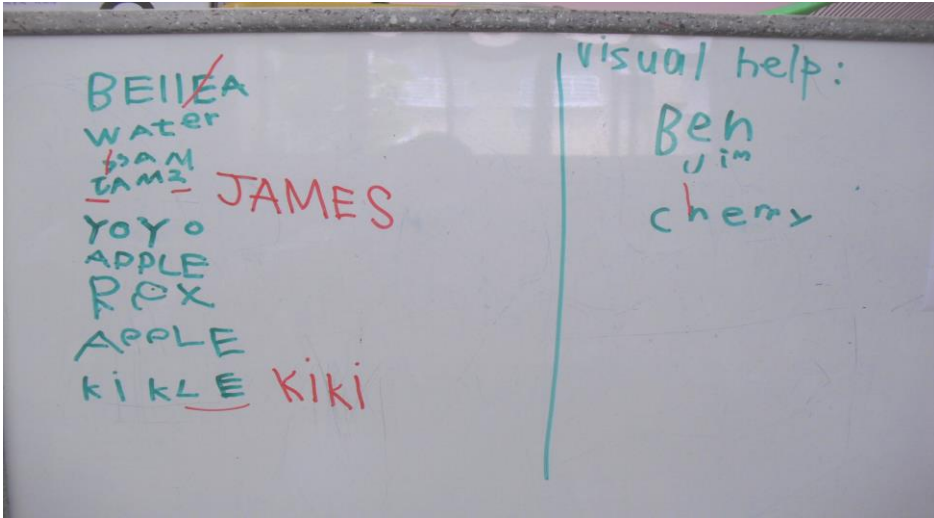
pic. 35 Dolphin group – post-test (elder group)



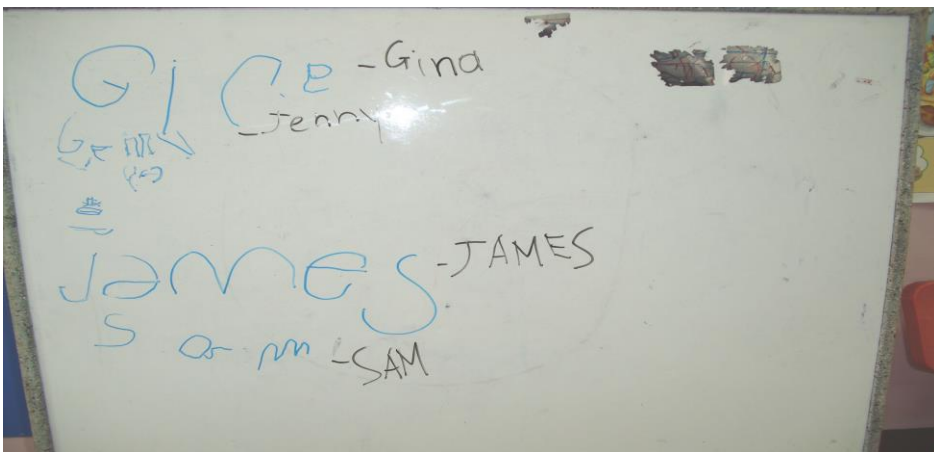
pic. 36 Dolphin group – post-test’s correction



pic. 37 Elephant group – post-test (middle group)



pic. 38 Elephant group – post-test's correction (middle group)



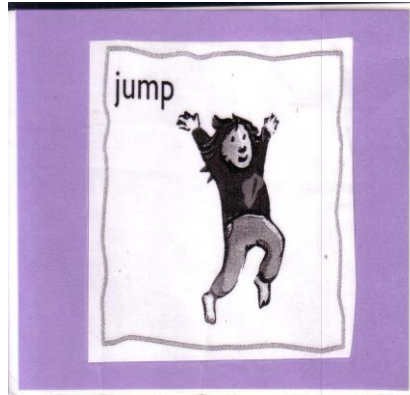
pic. 39 Ladybird group – a try (younger group)



pic. 40 compounding English name



pic. 41 Written Action Words



pic. 42 Written action verbs and its image



pic. 43 ABC English Songs



pic. 44 Contents of the book *ABC English Songs*