

BLENDED LEARNING AND IT'S BENEFITS



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I. BLENDED LEARNING (BL) AND ITS BENEFITS

Blended Learning is an educational and instructional method that uses digital technology in combination with face to face (F2F) classroom methods. It requires both teacher and student involvement, grants learners a more personalized approach to learning,

BL also gives learners control over time, place, path and pace of their learning, combining multiple teaching techniques, learning styles, and delivery methods.

Blended learning is more effective than purely face-to-face or purely online classes and its methods can also result in high levels of student achievement. The following are some of the advantages of Blended Learning.

- BL can be adjusted to individual learning styles. By using a combination of digital instruction and one-on-one face time, students can work on their own with new concepts which gives teachers time to monitor and support individual students who may need individualized attention.
- The use of information and communication technologies have been found to improve student attitudes and approaches towards learning. Students get more engaged into learning and also expand their social interaction.
- Blended Learning allows for personalized education, replacing the model where a teacher stands in front of the classroom and everyone is expected to stay at the same pace. "Blended Learning allows students to work at their own pace, making sure they fully understand new concepts before moving on."
- BL builds learner autonomy. A classroom environment that incorporates Blended Learning naturally requires learners to demonstrate more autonomy and independence in order to succeed. In such a context, teachers should offer a form of initial program orientation before introducing Blended Learning strategies, which can better prepare students to feel confident navigating the different components and developing a stronger sense of independence.

II. PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Teachers of languages should pay special attention on the communicative aspect of language teaching by building their work on the following principles:

- Focus on communication. Language is a tool for communication. The most fundamental reality of language learning is that language is a tool for communication, which will strengthen students' communicative competence. When English is presented to students as an important tool for establishing communication with a new world, it is potentially more appealing to them. Communication can be of different forms; such as sharing ideas face to face with someone from another country or gaining access to the knowledge and information of the world's vast library of material published in English. The more often teachers give students the opportunity to communicate with each other in class, the more quickly they will be comfortable in their new teaching role. Students must be given the opportunity to experience language as communication as early as possible in their early years of learning starting with preschool years. In an English class, this means using speaking or writing practice as often as an opportunity for students to share what they really think, feel, or believe. It also means that when students say or write something, teachers should respond to the ideas students expressed and convey rather than only to the grammatical accuracy of the language.
- Learning a language means mastering both skill and knowledge – another important truth of language learning is that it requires mastery of a skill as much as acquisition of knowledge. Hence, it is not enough for students to learn and know word meanings and grammar and structure rules; students need to be able to apply this knowledge quickly and effectively so as to express themselves fluently and clearly, read competently, and comprehend spoken English rapidly. Building such skills asks not only for studying the language but also practicing it in real life situations. Teachers should be aware that students do not need to study English to perform well in tests, but to use it in actual conversation. Consequently, teaching and learning should be activity based, participatory and cooperative.
- Students need to give serious consideration to the impact of feelings on language study- A third fundamental reality of language learning is that feelings play a major role in language study. It is the duty of teachers to encourage students grow a strong desire to learn since the early years of life. This can be reached by providing a welcoming and safe learning environment. Students who feel good about their progress are far more likely to

continue working hard in the long term. It is common knowledge that learning the basic rules of English grammar and a survival vocabulary can be learned within a few months, but mastering the language and communicating ideas in that language takes much longer. Students need endless practice to develop effective listening and speaking skills, not to mention reading and writing. What is more, students can benefit from a good understanding of the cultures of English, which is difficult for students at an early age to achieve because they have few opportunities for practice and contact with English speaking cultures.

- Learners vary considerably in their preferred approaches to learning. – students have different approaches to language learning, and there is no reason for teachers to believe that they should all learn English language in the same way and using the same language learning strategies.

III. LEARNING STYLES

Students vary dramatically in the way they process and understand information. These differences, called “**learning styles**”, refer to students’ preferences for some types of learning activities over others. A student’s learning style has to do with the way he or she processes information in order to learn and apply it. Students who understand their own styles are likely to be better learners. Teachers who understand their students’ learning styles are better able to adapt their teaching methods appropriately. Most people exhibit some combination of learning style or prefer one style to another depending on the type of learning task they are undertaking.

- **Visual learners**- prefer to study graphs, look at models and pictures, and take notes to review later.
- **Auditory learners**- prefer to listen closely in class, read aloud when studying during lectures in class, or confer with peers in class to confirm information.
- **Verbal learners**- likely to absorb reading materials and lectures easily, prefer written materials over visual materials such as graphs and illustrations.
- **Tactile/ kinesthetic learners**- learn through moving, doing, touching (hands-on methods), manipulating materials and objects (realia).
- **Logical / mathematical learners**- *Learning is easy for them because they use logic, reasoning, systems and sequencing.*
- *Social learners - like to learn new things as a part of a group. Explaining their understanding to a group helps them to learn.*

- *Solitary learners - like to work alone. they use self-study and prefer their own company when learning.*

Rief (1993)¹ emphasizes that students learn and retain information from:

10% of what they read;

26% of what they hear;

30% of what they see;

50% of what they see and hear;

70% of what they say; and

90% of what they say and do.

‘An understanding of students’ learning styles is of crucial importance for a successful teaching. *Teachers should provide opportunities for all learners to present and practice language in different ways and with different senses. This is the basis for using varied styles of learning with the students*

Advice for Visual Learners

- Use visual materials such as pictures, charts, flashcards maps.
- Use color to highlight texts and own notes.
- Take notes or use handouts; look carefully at headings and patterns of topics.
- Brainstorm using illustrations, mind maps and models.
- Use multi-media where possible (computers; tablets, mind maps)
- Study in a quiet place away from visual disturbances.
- Visualize information as a picture.
- Skim-read to get an overview before reading in detail.
- Use Akelius platform visual materials

Advice for Auditory Learners

- Participate frequently in discussions and debates.
- Make speeches and presentations.
- Use an audio recorder if possible, instead of (or as well as) making notes.
- Read text aloud.
- Discuss your ideas verbally.
- Dictate to someone else while they write your ideas down.

¹ https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Learning_theories_in_practice/Integrative

- Speak onto an audio recorder and listen to your own ideas played back.
- Create musical jingles and mnemonics* to aid memory
- Use Akelius platform for listening

Advice for Tactile Learners

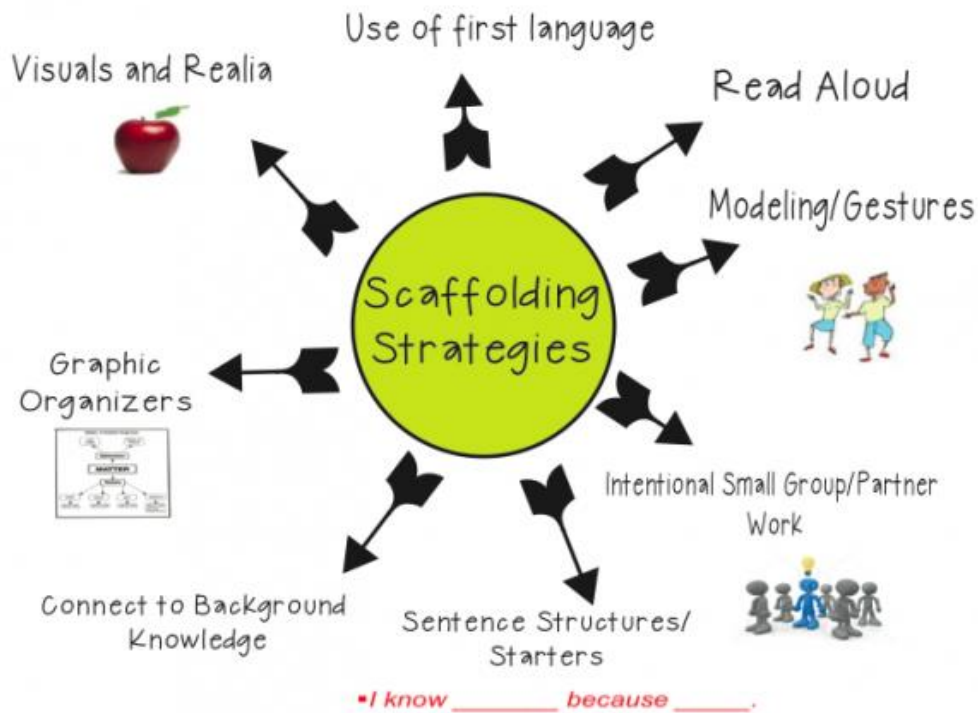
- Take frequent study breaks.
- Move around to learn new things (e.g., read while you are using an exercise bike; model in clay to learn a new concept).
- Stand up to work.
- Use different working stations
- Combine online and F2F
- Use bright colors to highlight reading material and turn it into posters or models.
- Skim-read before reading in detail.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING

Instructional scaffolding is a process through which a teacher models or demonstrates how to solve a problem, and then steps back giving supports for students in order to enhance learning and help them in the mastery of tasks. The teacher does this by systematically building on students' experiences and knowledge as they are learning new skills.

Scaffolding in language teaching and learning means paraphrasing, giving examples, providing analogies, elaborating student's response etc.

The following are some scaffolding strategies



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Modelling

Through explicit teacher modelling, the teacher provides learners with a clear example of a skill or strategy. The teacher provides a structure to guide learners by:

- Describing the skill or strategy
- Clearly describing features of the strategy or steps in performing the skill
- Breaking the skill into learnable parts
- Describing/modelling using a variety of techniques
- Engaging learners in learning through showing enthusiasm, keeping a steady pace, asking good questions, and checking for learner understanding
- Provide visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile ways to illustrate important pieces of the concept/skill.
- Check for learner understanding along the way and re-model the steps that might be causing confusion.

Connect to background knowledge (bridging)

Teachers should consider what background knowledge students might have before introducing the new topic or concepts and they plan for the “hook” to make the lesson more engaging. For example, they might show them a picture of something related to the lesson and ask them a

² <https://www.mshouser.com/teaching-tips/8-strategies-for-scaffolding-instruction>

question about it. Connecting previous knowledge/learning to new learning is always a great support for students.

Graphic organizers

Teachers may create their own graphic organizers or use many free ones found in different websites, or even ask students to create their owns. Teachers should be aware that graphic organizers may not be an appropriate scaffold for every lesson, but graphic organizers can be used as a tool to help students organize their thinking when responding to a text. The key to successful use of graphic organizers is not to make them too complicated or then they may end up being exactly the opposite of a useful thinking support.

Visuals

Teachers can I include realia, or real life, tangible objects in their lessons whenever possible. They can use Akelius platform for including different visuals in their lesson. Visuals are super supportive for vocabulary development and engagement. For example, when dealing with a text about coral reefs students might not know what “coral” is, so teachers can bring in an actual piece of coral to pass around. If they don’t have realia available for a lesson, they can use visuals or images which can frequently be found on Google images or Akelius platform, looking for that just right visual to support the lesson.

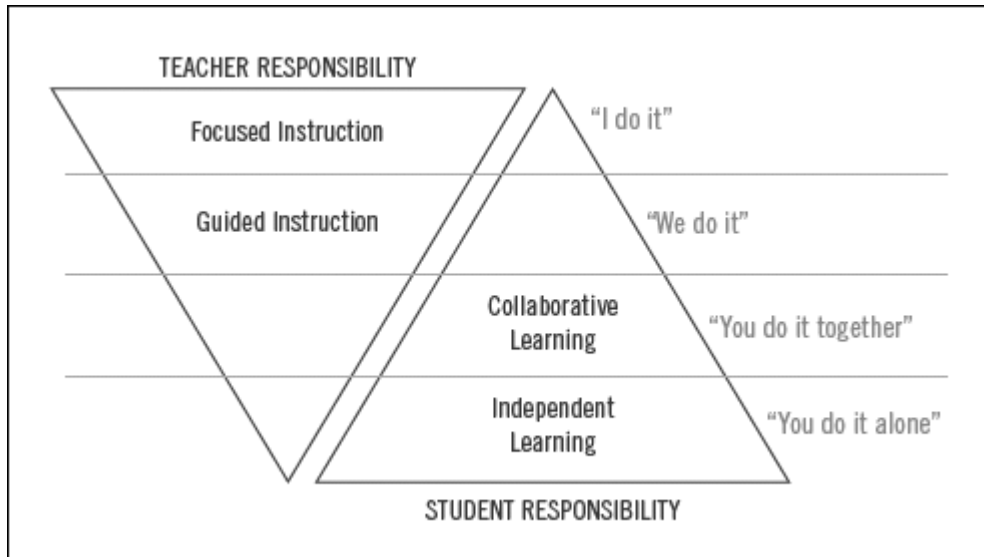
V. THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY (GRR) FRAMEWORK³

The gradual release of responsibility instructional framework purposefully shifts the cognitive load from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility of teacher and learner, to independent practice and application by the learner (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). It gradually releases the responsibility of teaching and learning from the teacher to the student which may occur over a day, a week, a month, or a year supporting students to become competent and independent learners.

The moto of this framework is “*I do it; we do it together; you do it*”.

In the following figure, the three phases of learning, indicating the share of responsibility that students and teachers have in each, are mapped out.

³ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/113006/chapters/Learning,-or-Not-Learning,-in-School.aspx>



It is suggested that teachers should not always start every lesson with focused instruction (goal setting and modeling). They may begin a lesson with an independent task, or a quick-write, or engage students in brainstorming activity est.

Focused Instruction

One of the most important parts of the overall lesson design is focused instruction in which the teacher includes establishing a clear lesson purpose. This phase of the lesson, which usually lasts about 15 minutes or less, also provides students with information about the ways in which a skilled reader, writer, or thinker processes the information. However, focused instruction does not have to come at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers might reassume responsibility several times during a lesson to reestablish its purpose and provide additional examples of expert thinking.

Typically, this is done through using different strategies such as direct explanations, modeling, or think-aloud in which the teacher demonstrates the kind of thinking required to solve a problem, understand a set of directions, or interact with a text. For example, after reading aloud a passage about butterflies to 4th graders, a teacher might say:

Now I have even more questions. I just read that butterflies don't have mouth parts, so I'm wondering how they eat. I can't really visualize that, and I will definitely have to look for more information to answer that question. I didn't know that butterflies are found all over the world—that was interesting to find out. Now, that is something I need to know more about.

Guided Instruction

The guided instruction phase of a lesson, which should be planned carefully and in advance, is almost always conducted with small, purposeful groups that have been composed based on formative assessment data, with students who share a common instructional need that the teacher can address.

It is during this phase that teachers can differentiate their instruction, content, process, and product. Small-group instruction allows teachers to vary the instructional materials they use, the level of prompting or questioning they employ, and the products they expect.

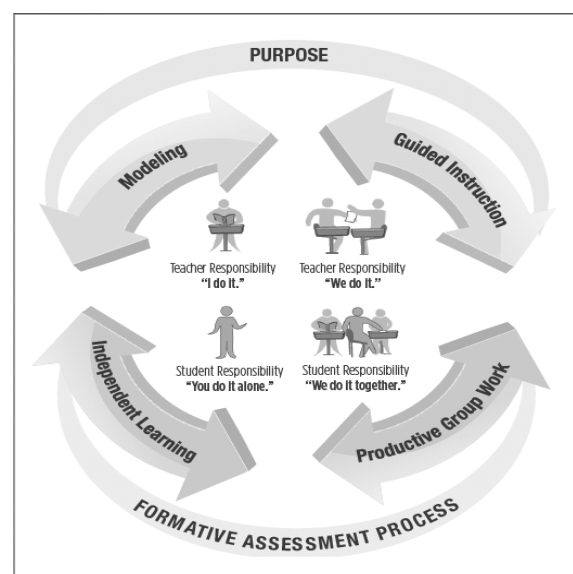
Collaborative Learning

The collaborative learning phase of instruction should never be neglected. Collaborative learning is a way for students to consolidate their thinking and understanding. Negotiating with peers, discussing ideas and information, and engaging in inquiry with others gives students the opportunity to use what they have learned during focused and guided instruction.

During this phase, teachers should not introduce new information to students because it is time for students to apply what they already know in new situations or engage in reviewing previous knowledge. It is suggested that teachers allow collaborative learning to be a little experimental providing them with opportunities to interact meaningfully with the content and one another, by encountering tasks that will reveal their partial understandings and misconceptions as well as confirm what they already know.

Independent Learning

Applying information, ideas, content, skills, and strategies in real life situations is the ultimate goal of GRR instruction framework. Teachers should always have in mind that their greatest achievement is educating learners who are not dependent on others for information and ideas. The success and effectiveness of independent learning, however, depends on students' readiness to engage in it and when students are ready to apply skills and knowledge to produce new products, there is a range of independent tasks that might be used. It is suggested that the more authentic a task is, the more likely the



student is to complete it. For example, a primary English teacher might ask a child to read a familiar story to three adults.

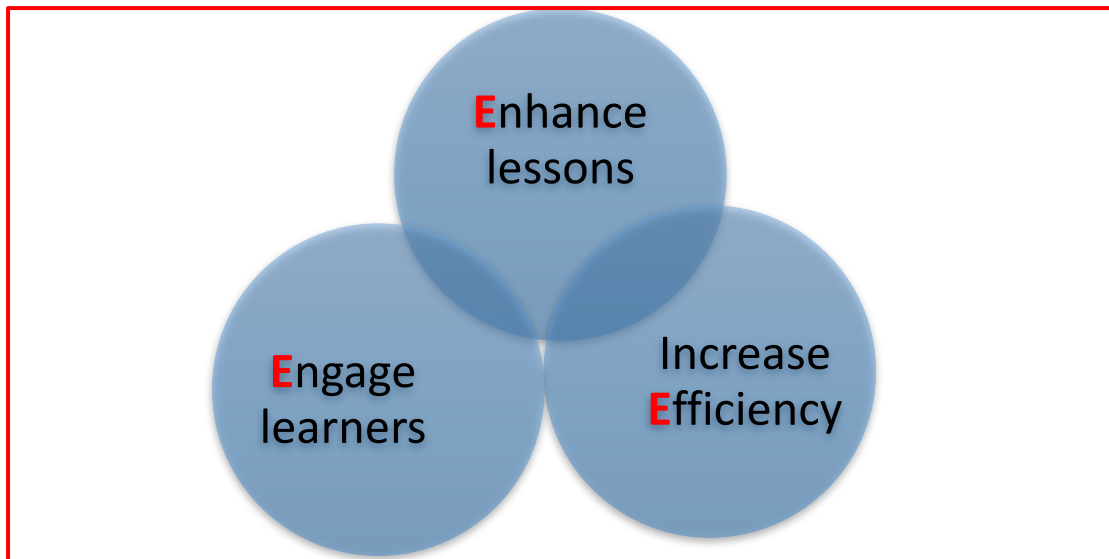
VI. MENTORING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	Teacher	Student
Pre organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seeks pre-existing knowledge (F2F or Akelius)</i> • <i>Helps students use existing skills related with the new topic</i> • <i>Make connections to the platform content</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Responds to questions</i> • <i>Interacts (with T- with other Ss)</i> • <i>Make connections from the Akelius platform</i>
I do it Direct instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provides direct instruction</i> • <i>Establishes goals and purpose</i> • <i>Models ((F2F or Akelius)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Actively listens or follows on the Akelius platform as instructed</i> • <i>Takes notes</i> • <i>Asks for clarification</i>
We do it Guided instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Interactive instruction using Akelius</i> • <i>Works with students</i> • <i>Checks, prompts, clues</i> • <i>Provides additional modelling (F2F or with Akelius)</i> • <i>Meets with needs-based groups</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Asks and responds to questions</i> • <i>Works with T- with other Ss (hands on activities or using Akelius)</i> • <i>Completes process (hands on or using Akelius)</i>

<p>You do it Independent Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provides feedback</i> • <i>Evaluates</i> • <i>Determines level of understanding</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Works alone (Hands on or Ak)</i> • <i>Relies on notes, classroom learning to complete tasks</i> • <i>Takes full responsibility for outcome</i>
<p>you do it together Collaborative learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moves among groups</i> • <i>Clarifies confusion</i> • <i>Provides support</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Works with classmates, shares outcome (hands-on activity)</i> • <i>Collaborates on authentic tasks (hands-on activities or using Akelius)</i> • <i>Consolidates learning(hands-on or using Akelius)</i> • <i>Competes process in small groups ((hands-on activities or using Akelius)</i> • <i>Looks to peers for clarification</i>

VII. THE THREE E`S OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

The Three E's are excellent for keeping consistency within the classroom. They reward the teachers with the flexibility and the freedom to consider what works best for them and their students.



Engage Learners (why and how)

Student engagement is the most important element in the success of any blended learning program. If students aren't engaged, the program will not succeed. Engagement is crucial at all levels. The level of interaction between learners with the teacher, the curriculum, and each other. Therefore, the teacher must focus on strategies that encourage active learning, communication, and collaboration.

Enhance Lessons (why and how)

Enhancing lessons is not about completely changing the lesson, it is about enhancing and increasing opportunities for interaction and learning. Lessons can be enhanced through small adjustments and improvements like incorporating digital learning by working on activities from the Akelius platform that matches the learners' level, interest or style. Learning new vocabulary words would be more fun and would make more impact, if it is embedded with videos, games, and songs.

Increase Efficiency Over Time (why and how)

When increasing efficiency over time, the teacher should try to increase learning opportunities, while decreasing the effort and time spent reaching the goal. Effective instructional time provides opportunities to teach smaller groups of students and promote individualized learning.

VIII. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an inseparable aspect of the English language learning and teaching process. It has an essential role in the development of students' communicative competence.

Characteristics of Effective Assessment Strategies

In order to measure students' progress through the stages of the language learning process it is essential to follow effective assessment strategies such as:

- Have a clear purpose that is readily communicated to students and parents
- Measure how well students perform in the four skills listening, reading, listening and writing.
- Have clear and concise criteria
- Include instruments that provide representative samples of what students know and are able to do
- Integrate the 4 language skills in assessing students progress
- Include a wide range of strategies that allow for a variety of responses
- Provide students and parents with ongoing information on the students progress
- Allow students to monitor and adjust their individual learning through self- assessment documents
- Employ various forms of assessments

1. Types of Assessment

Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment is the most powerful type of assessment for improving student understanding and performance. This type of assessment of students learning at different levels provides information that teachers can use to design lessons plans, conduct classes to suit the students' needs by utilizing the English language curriculum effectively. This occurs in the short term, as students are in the process of making meaning of new content and of integrating it into what they already know. Feedback to the student is immediate (or nearly so), to enable the learner to change his/her behaviour and understandings right away. Formative Assessment also enables the teacher to rethink instructional strategies, activities, and content based on student understanding and performance. Formative Assessment can be as informal as observing the student's work or as formal as a written test.

Progress Monitoring Assessment, gathers evidence about students progress toward achieving objectives as measured in relation to the stages of language learning process. These ongoing assessments may occur at any point during the teaching process except at the end of the course of the study. This kind of assessment serves to:

- give important info about students' progress
- help teachers make periodic adjustments in instruction and planning

Examples: an interactive class discussion; a warm-up, closure, an on-the-spot performance; a quiz.

Interim Assessment, as part of formative assessment, takes place occasionally throughout a larger time- period. Feedback to the student is still quick, but may not be immediate. Interim Assessment tends to be more formal, using tools such as projects, written assignments, and tests. The student should be given the opportunity to re-demonstrate his/her understanding once the feedback has been digested and acted upon. Interim Assessment can help teachers identify gaps in student understanding and instruction, and ideally teachers address these before moving on or by weaving remedies into upcoming instruction and activities.

Examples: Chapter test; extended essay; a project scored with a rubric.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment evaluates students' achievement at the end of the term or school year with a grade and is usually comprehensive in nature.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of a large amount of learning, with the results being primarily for the teacher's or school's use. Results may take time to be returned to the student/parent, with feedback for the students who will not be reassessed. Thus, Summative Assessment tends to have the least impact on improving an individual student's understanding or performance. Students/parents can use the results of Summative Assessments to see where the student's performance lies compared to either a standard (language levels according to CEFR) or to a grade-level group. Teachers/schools can use these assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses of curriculum and instruction, with improvements affecting the next year's/term's students. In addition to being developed by teachers or school executives, summative assessment instruments are also developed by local, national or international institutions.

In addition to these classical forms of assessment the competence based curricula can focus on two forms of assessment: (a) achievement tests; (b) performance- based assessment.

- a) Achievement tests are the most familiar type of assessment that classroom teachers use. These tests use specific materials to assess what students have learned by measuring student's mastery of specific knowledge, structures, vocabulary, content etc. Students are able to study for achievement tests and test results can be used to compare students' performances on criterion –referenced tests.
- b) Performance based assessment measures what students know and how they apply their knowledge when communicating in various situations and different people. Completing performance based tasks may require more sophisticated communication skills than taking an achievement test. This assessment is often used at the end of a period of instruction.

Examples of performance assessment include:

- Group projects enabling a number of students to work together on a complex problem that requires planning, research, internal discussion, and group presentation.
- Essays assessing students' understanding of a topic through a written description, analysis, explanation, or summary.
- Portfolios allowing students to provide a broad portrait of their performance through files that contain collections of students' work, assembled over time.

One key feature of all performance assessment is that it requires students to be critical thinkers and active participants. They also focus attention on looking at an issue from multiple perspectives and how students arrive at their answers and require students to demonstrate the knowledge or skills needed to obtain a correct answer. Teachers need to take advantage of the resources designed with critical thinking and problem solving in mind especially when knowledge of English is integrated with that of other subjects (CLIL) and assessment needs to shift to evaluate these skills as well.

Having reviewed various forms of assessment we need to consider the affect this process has for learning and as learning.

a) Assessment for learning

In the new conditions of a competence based curricula assessment is not considered as “teaching to the test” although students are expected to do well on national exams. This relates to the new policy in education which makes the shift from an exam-driven assessment approach to one that is more student-centered. To address such issue at school or classroom level, creative solutions to institutional assessment and grading system are initiated. The objective is to empower teachers to use classroom assessments for their intended purpose:

giving students feedback on their learning performance that can be used to improve subsequent learning.

In the context of language learning, the result may often be that students are able to solve common exam question types (e.g., grammar or vocabulary gap fills, multiple-choice reading comprehension questions), but not necessarily be able to use English for actual communication. When assessment aims at supporting student learning, rather than directing it, teacher and students use information gathered via different assessments to measure how students are progressing towards content and language-learning goals and to determine whether additional instructional time or leaning support is needed for students to achieve those goals. In such a process teachers empower through developing skills so that they are able to:

- design classroom assessments that go beyond grammar and vocabulary quizzes
- give substance feedback that goes beyond error identification and direct correction
- give in-depth qualitative feedback on student performance and progress towards content and language learning objectives
- guide students in developing effective peer- and self-assessment skills.

Assessment occurs in many contexts and is done for a variety of reasons that is why teachers should consider how they use assessment in their own teaching.

Traditionally, the most common way to measure achievement and proficiency in language learning has been the test. Even though alternative forms of assessment are increasingly becoming more frequent, most teachers still use the test hence it is necessary to support them in constructing fair and reliable language tests as well as reinforce the role of progress testing in the classroom and the importance of matching testing to instruction viewing testing as a tool that can help teachers identify student strengths and weaknesses and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. Teachers should ensure that they design or choose tests that are practical, reliable, and valid.

b) Assessment as Learning

Assessment as learning develops and supports students' metacognitive skills. This form of assessment is crucial in helping students become lifelong learners. As students engage in peer and self-assessment, they learn to make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge and use it for new learning. Students develop a sense of ownership and efficacy when they use teacher, peer and self-assessment feedback to make adjustments, improvements and changes to what they understand.

European Language Portfolio as a Self-Assessment Tool

Students' Language Portfolio is an assessment tool which students use for judging their own proficiency level in English, motivating and raising their awareness, helping them to appreciate their strengths, recognizing their weaknesses and orientating their learning more effectively. It also encourages autonomous learning in order to give students greater control of their learning and to inform them of their learning process.

European Language Portfolio (ELP) is used as a self - assessment tool as well as another classroom indicator to the teacher of students' progress and growth. It provides information that can be used for assessing students' areas of comprehension, fluency, vocabulary and grammar.

It consists of three parts:

1. Language Passport - It records language skills, qualifications and intercultural experiences. Language skills are defined in terms of levels of proficiency presented in the document" CEFR for languages, learning, teaching, assessment"
2. Language Biography - It records personal language learning history. i.e. includes information of linguistic and cultural experiences in and out formal educational context; helps the learner to set learning objectives to reflect and assess his learning process.
3. Dossier - It holds documents to illustrate achievements and experiences related to the foreign language(s) learning. It offers students the opportunity to select and document students work as an evidence of their competence in the languages they are learning. It will help them to reflect on their progress in these languages. The dossier demonstrates what students are able to do in different languages. In their dossier, they can keep any of the following items listed below:
 - Examples of good written language work
 - Personal correspondence (emails, letters, postcards)
 - Final report of Group projects
 - Journals, diaries
 - Poems, essay
 - Translations
 - Tests
 - certificates, diplomas
 - audio –video recordings

Students can update the dossier as often as they like and replace older work with more recent work but they may want to keep it so that they can reflect and show others the progress they have made. This dossier may be a good example of showing their skills in different languages.

IX. METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES

Choosing the right instructional methodology is important and crucial for effective teaching and learning.

It is the duty of teachers to update their knowledge on the new instructional methodologies, strategies and techniques so as to help students develop their desire for learning foreign languages and become lifelong learners and successful in their lives.

The following techniques and strategies: pair work; group work; brainstorming; think-pair – share; debate; role-play; jigsaw; graphic organizers, semantic mapping; projects etc, give students the opportunity to work with others and see different points of view and learn more effectively when working together rather than apart, and also help improve self-confidence in students.

English Language instruction bases on the following methodological guidelines and principles:

Student-Centered Instruction (SCI)

The National Curricula Framework emphasizes the importance of student-centered instruction with the ultimate goal for students to gain independent minds, higher order/critical thinking skills and the capacity to make decisions about their life-long learning. In such an environment the teacher acts as facilitator to help students access and process information. SCI also focuses on effective learning strategies where learning is recognized as an active and dynamic process and students construct their own meaning of what they are learning. Teachers recognize that students learn in different ways and have different learning styles thus providing students with practical and continuous feedback through authentic assessments.

Examples of student-centered instruction include discussion, games, simulation, discovery and problem solving. Although students appear to “drive” their learning, teachers are responsible for planning and facilitating the arrangements that put students at the center of learning.

Differentiated instruction (DI)

Every student is unique, and therefore each student learns and understands information differently. DI allows teachers to engage each student by accommodating to their specific learning style. Differentiating instruction offers a way to meet all students’ needs encouraging them to express what they have learned in varied ways.

It also allows for various working arrangements (for example, working alone or as part of a team to complete the task) and use of diverse types of resources in preparing assignments, projects etc.

Collaborative Learning (CL)

CL is a method of teaching and learning in which students team together to further explore concepts learned, create meaningful projects, and the like. It encourages collaborative behaviors among groups of students where learning is highly social and influences the development of the brain. Students are individually accountable for their work. Also, whole group cooperation is assessed. Cooperative Learning is a form of collaborative learning and students work cooperatively in small groups which has benefits for the students preparing them for the world of work where jobs increasingly depend on cooperation.

Cooperative group learning increases students' retention, enhances student satisfaction with their learning experience, helps develop skills in oral communication, develops students' social skills and promotes students' self-esteem.

Integration of language communicative skills

The four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) should be thoroughly integrated with the focus of strengthening subject area and key competences. For example, a reading passage can lead to a small group discussion, which can further lead into a related writing task.

Utilizing Technology in the Classroom

Integrating technology into the classroom is a great way to empower students to stay connected in this technological era. Technology-rich and challenging lessons keep students motivated and engaged longer. Some examples of utilizing technology in the classroom are: using Akelius Platform for learning languages, creating web-based lessons, multimedia presentations such as a video, animation, or some type of graphic, utilizing a tablet or an I Pad, taking students on a virtual field trip, participating in an online research project, or even creating a class website. Any of these technology integration strategies will have a positive impact on student learning.

Project-based learning (PBL)

PBL involves a dynamic classroom approach and a teaching method through which students acquire a deeper knowledge by active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. It helps the students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem solving skills, self-directed

learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation. Students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or task.

Project Based Learning creates new instructional practices that reflect the environment in which children now live and learn. It places new demands on students and teachers that challenge the traditional practices in English language instruction. Learning from doing complex, challenging, and authentic projects requires resourcefulness and planning by the student, new forms of knowledge representation in school, expanded mechanisms for collaboration and communication, and support for reflection and authentic assessment.

X. PEDAGOGY

To teach 21st century skills and the joy of learning, the foundation of language learning is laid from an early age through a greater focus on accuracy and fluency in oral communication and enjoyment of language learning. Teachers should pay attention to create early literacy skills to children and put emphasis on learning-focused interaction at class and group levels.

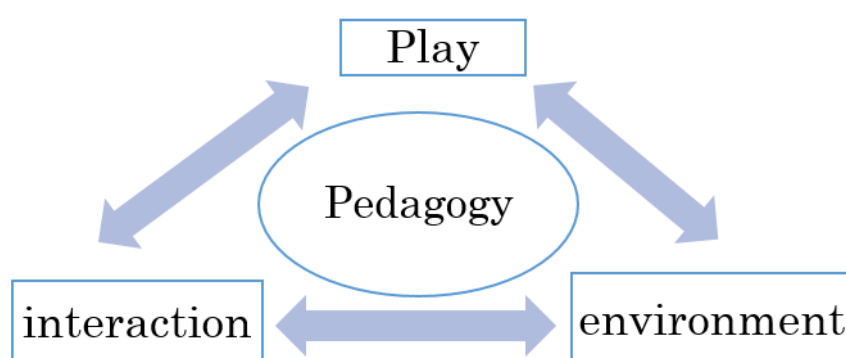
Pedagogical practices that teachers use in the classroom must include activities and experiences for all domains of development such as-cognitive, socio-emotional, language and literacy etc. Teachers should provide opportunities for children to explore, understand, experiment, experience and transform in formation into meaningful content and skills. Teachers are facilitators of children`s learning and they should very carefully:

- plan and design age appropriate learning experiences for children to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and beliefs. Teachers should identify the learning outcomes based on the ELS as well as on children`s interests, needs and their prior knowledge and experience;
- facilitate children`s learning process and extend their thinking by engaging children in learning through games and providing authentic learning and quality real life interaction;
- prioritize and support children of vulnerable social situation and disabilities;
- observe and assess children`s learning and progress by collecting, documenting and interpreting information to find out what children know, understand and can do;
- reflect on and enhance professional practice by engaging in reflective practice and professional learning;
- collaborate with families and the community to enhance children`s learning.

1. Pedagogical Processes

Pedagogical processes are the strategies teachers are recommended to use in order to implement the curriculum in such a way that children construct their knowledge and learning by exploration, investigation, problem solving and critical thinking.

It is important for teachers to keep in mind that there are three components of pedagogy in early childhood: play, interactions and the environment. These components must be addressed fully during curriculum implementation:



Play is at the heart of how young children learn. Through play, children demonstrate what they are learning, what they are interested in, and what they are concerned about. Play is universally regarded as child's way of learning. They love to play and are happy when they are given freedom to explore and experiment through play.

Interaction, most importantly peer interactions that is engaging with other children in play, provides an important context for learning where children observe, imitate and build on what they observe. They gain social and emotional skills when they share, problem solve, coordinate with other children, create their own games. Children learn self-regulation when they learn to wait for their turns, play games based on rules etc.

Children are in constant interaction with their **environment**. They want to touch everything they see. This is how they learn. Through a variety of activities and material children explore the physical, social and natural environment by manipulating objects, asking questions, making predictions and developing generalization. The learning environment for the children should be welcoming, safe and predictable, offer variety of developmentally appropriate material for children to explore and experiment independently. All children especially those with special needs develop positive self-image and self-confidence when they are appreciated, encouraged and responded to.

XI. AKELIUS DIGITAL LANGUAGE LEARNING PLATFORM

The Akelius digital language learning platform has been co-developed by the Akelius Foundation and UNICEF in collaboration with UNICEF's implementing partners. Though still in the process of development, the platform offers rich interactive multimedia that is accessed through authentic video, audio, texts, visuals/graphics, songs and games providing meaningful content relevant to learners' needs and interests, either pre-selected by the teacher (for lower level learners) or discovered by learners when surfing digitally (higher levels). This rich, interactive input is one of the major elements which helps students' motivation, and teachers to devise a lesson that can respond to different learning styles and learning levels, as mentioned above, not leaving out the face-to-face learning.

1. Key principles of the Akelius platform

Communication

The Akelius platform prioritizes on practical language understanding and communication. It aims for students to understand spoken and written language - the aim is to get users familiarized with conversational skills as a first step towards language acquisition. The student learns lexical items through interactions with the online platform and discovers how to form these into phrases and sentences while interacting with written text in a variety of formats—audio, visual and video, through games, songs, text and conversations.

Learning at one's own pace

Within the Akelius digital platform, the learner can choose their own way through the platform components according to their own needs and interests, at their own pace, knowing well that they can go back to refresh their knowledge if need be before moving forward. When the learner is able to go through the components of the digital platform, whether it is a video, or auditory or plain text, as many times as possible without feeling inadequate or taking his/her time to reflect on a text without feeling slow) makes for deeper learning. The teacher may also assign chapters or lessons based on learners needs, especially for beginner levels while advanced learners could navigate on their own or as needed.

State of the Art Digital Pedagogy

The platform is kept simple. There is no confusing terminology or grammar instruction. The Akelius A1 level language follows the ‘lexical approach’. Lexis (words) and grammar are closely related, so the platform uses vocabulary and small phrases to teach morphology and syntaxes at the same time. Students learn to produce language by learning words in groups commonly found together. Students get a deeper understanding of grammatical structures through repeated interactions with these phrases. They will understand individual words as well as word order. Students will also get a stock of immediately usable phrases. Then, they can start to use those phrases to predict meaning and process new language content.

Thematic, Vocabulary-Focused Content

The Akelius platform is aimed at users of all ages. Therefore, vocabulary that is specific to particular age-groups has been avoided. Vocabulary is grouped thematically into around thirty individual chapters. The platform introduces language content gradually, in a logical and systematic way. There is a pre-defined thematic progression. Students should be able to understand and use basic phrases and expressions connected with each topic by the end of each chapter. They gain this understanding by following interactions linked to each theme or situation.

Immediate feedback and support

An assessment/test is present within every lesson for learners and the teacher to monitor progress. Moreover, through the ‘test’ function of each lesson, learners can see their own scores, and choose to repeat the same ‘test’ until they reach satisfactory scores. This motivates and empowers the learners. When using the Akelius digital platform, the technology gives immediate feedback, allowing the learner to reflect and self-assess directly. When the learner is working through the chapter or performing the “test”, he/she will get direct feedback of correct or wrong answers and can directly adjust answers. In addition, the teacher can support, guide and give direct feedback to the learners.

Thousands of Small Steps

Each chapter has some seven lessons. Lessons introduce a few new words at a time. Teachers using the platform should adopt a similar method to the one used in the teaching of the alphabet, keeping the number of unfamiliar items to a minimum. You progress from the most basic vocabulary to more complex structures and expressions. The user discovers new material

gradually, moving from basic words and phrases to more dialog-heavy interactions. Each lesson lasts no longer than ten minutes and is focused on a particular communicative goal.

Freedom to Choose Chapters

Later chapters in each theme build on what students have learned in earlier chapters. However, while the progression of the course content is linear, there is nothing to stop students from following a different order. If they feel confident enough, they can move ahead. Equally, there are no barriers to prevent students from repeating content as they progress.

Choose Different Learning Methods

People learn in different ways. The freedom to choose a learning method is also a key part of the Akelius concept. Chapters will contain a mixture of activities. There are games involving chance, time pressure, trial-and-error, memory and skill. There are also math activities, songs, puzzles, guessing- and bingo-type games. We have commissioned a story that will accompany the course. Students can follow a set of characters and a narrative that unfolds as they progress.

User Engagement, Interactivity and Fun

A key principle is that learning should be fun. It should be active, inspiring and encourage a sense of discovery. Language content has therefore been presented in a way that is as varied, accessible and engaging as possible. The course includes a range of multi-sensory inputs and outputs, involving sound, music and speech as well as a visual element. Moreover, the platform includes multiple interaction methodologies such as: clicking, dragging, selecting, typing, prioritizing, interacting with photos and pictures, sequencing objects, such as months, weekdays, words, combining things, matching, filling crosswords and building images

Blended Learning Environment

The Akelius platform shall function as a standalone product for individual user. At the same time, it is intended to be used in a blended learning environment. Teachers will be able to supplement the digital course with direct instruction and analog supporting material such as study cards, memory cards, exercise booklets and printed books. The course structure and thematic approach makes it easy for teaching professionals to link their own lessons to the course.

2. Planning with Akelius

Teachers study the following table and then design lesson plans for their own specific classes.

Topic: "What time is it?"	
LEVEL:	A1
Duration: 90 min	
Overview and Purpose	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of the time and parts of the day• Introduction to verbs that describe daily routines• Presentation of new vocabulary	
Students are expected to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• connect their knowledge about time and parts of the day with daily routines• use the new vocabulary in a dialogue about daily routines, produce questions and answers• describe the daily routine of themselves or a classmate• learn and understand the different endings of the verb in the singular	
Language elements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary items - time, parts of the day, basic verbs of daily routine (wake up, go to school, eat, drink, sleep, have lesson)• Grammar<ul style="list-style-type: none">endings of the verbs (1st, 2nd, 3rd person of singular and plural)• Phrases that express time	
Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening, understanding oral speech and writing• Taking notes of new information, Reviewing concepts• Speaking practice with a classmate in class (role-play)• Writing practice, presenting	
Process and Duration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of the platform: at the beginning of the lesson for the review of concepts of time and introduction to new vocabulary (daily routines verbs) > 30'• Processing new information through flashcards of common daily actions: Students describe them and put them in order according to the routine of the day > 10'• Experiential activity > 15'	

- Worksheets: (prior to the lesson) Prepare different sets of worksheets for half the number of students. Each one should have a different schedule with missing information. Students work in pairs, and have to ask questions in order to fill the blanks > 10'
- Written and oral presentation of daily routines: After filling in the missing information, students write a paragraph describing their partners' daily routine and present it orally to the group > 25'

Akelius Destination	Chapter 15 'What time is it?' Lesson 3,4,5
Material Needed	Tablets/Headphones, flashcards, worksheets (2 different schedules for each pair)

Group work

In groups teachers navigate through Akelius platform and fill the following table:

Level -----	Chapter -----
Theme	
What should the user learn in this chapter	
Which elements are included and why	
What methods and interaction are included and why	
Words used	

