

НОВОСТИ БРИТАНСКОГО СОВЕТА

A First Experience of Shared ELT Curriculum for Young Learners

(Estonia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine)

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This paper, like undoubtedly many others, looks at a broad reform context and several East-European countries in the period of transition. Alongside economic reforms which entail creating new visions and setting new priorities, educational reforms pursue similar aims and proceed from similar premises. There are two main issues the authors focus on: a) the introduction of a comprehensive ELT curriculum for young learners (primary school students), b) measuring students' achievements in terms of outcomes.

In this paper we'd like to introduce a first experience of creating a shared ELT curriculum for young learners (YL). Currently, most of the countries in our region are in the process of major educational reforms aimed at changing common ELT practice and improving the level of foreign language proficiency.

The British Council in its continued support of the educational reforms in the region, launched an initiative aimed at joining experience to design a new generation of ELT standards. These standards are aimed at meeting the demands of a modern, opened up world. For this reason the twelve representatives of four countries, Estonia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, met in Moscow in August 2003 for the first workshop on sharing experience and designing a mutual approach to an outcome-oriented curriculum. The work started at this workshop is going to continue and after further discussions involving wider audience a draft of a core curriculum will be issued.

Beside the general principles of an outcome-oriented curriculum, the article provides background information and a description of the current situation in these four countries that allows the readers to get a holistic picture of the situation (Appendices 1–4).

1. Background information and current situation.

Most of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe are introducing changes into their foreign language teaching (FLT) curriculum to increase the amount of teaching time available and to improve the quality of learning. A popular solution is an early start. Until recently FLT in primary schools has been taught predominantly in cities as either part of a compulsory curriculum in language specialised schools or as a non-compulsory discipline in regular schools. The amount of schools taking this second option increases each year in response to parental requests. However the level of quality varies quite considerably due to a lack of trained teachers, poor teaching materials and unclear curriculum requirements.

In recent years Estonia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine have introduced a compulsory course of English (or another foreign language) for children in primary grades. It has been realised that an early introduction allows more time for foreign language teaching / learning; it also maximises the opportunities for school kids at this very sensitive age, so children can learn languages to a much higher standard of quality. However, at the same time creating an appropriate methodology is still a challenge.

For these reasons there is a great demand for new sets of standards, so the governments in these countries are in the process of developing these new regulating documents.

In Ukraine and Estonia the New Curriculum for Foreign Languages in Secondary Schools was prepared and approved by their national ministries in 2001 and 2002 respectively (see Appendices 1, 4).

The educational reform in Poland (started in 1999) does not prescribe obligatory introduction of foreign languages (FL) in grades 1–3 (primary stage 1, age 6/7–9) and introduces FL only in grade four. (Before that it was obligatory only from the fifth grade.) Yet due to strong social pressure the tendency in many schools is to begin earlier than that (see Appendix 2).

In Russia a new federal curriculum is being created. Several drafts have been prepared by FLT specialists and are available for open discussion. Within the wide-scale experiment to modernise the content of education, FLT in primary grades became compulsory in 2002. According to the reform plan, it will become mandatory to all schools in 2005 (see Appendix 3).

The regulating documents aim at changing the situation in the field of FLT in these countries according to the requirements of the day, but in practice teaching policy in most cases remains input-based rather than output-based. So the documents that describe the desired level of language proficiency and skills either do not exist, or the instructions are too general and do not support teaching / learning process. In accordance with that, the four countries representatives underline some other problems: lack of YL specialists and quality textbooks,

insufficient number of FL hours per week, teachers' overload, oversized classes (see Appendices 1–4).

Beside that, tools for internal and external assessment are also either unmentioned or under-developed. There is a danger that unless there is a proper guidance for teachers, the FLT course in primary grades will be of doubtful quality and poor outcomes, and schools may reject its results and start FLT anew in secondary school.

Furthermore, the specified outcomes and tools developed for assessment will hopefully lead to the creation of a kind of summative assessment at the end of primary school. This will not necessarily be a standardised external exam but it should provide effective and easy-to-use testing tools for teachers, school administration and local educational authorities, and furthermore be easy-to-understand for parents. In addition, it will ideally include pupils' self-assessment of their FLT profile.

2. YL curriculum workshop. Moscow, 25-30 August 2003.

This workshop was organised through the joint enthusiasm and commitment of the British Council in the four countries where the BC has been supporting educational reforms. It was assumed that sharing knowledge and expertise about YL materials developed by YL specialists from the four countries with roughly similar educational backgrounds may be useful and result in the drafting of an output-based core curriculum for English in the primary school, which can be used as a prototype by the four countries. It is also supposed that such a curriculum developed by the four countries' experts working together will be a more reliable product than relying on the expertise and experience from just one country.

Twelve materials designers, teachers and teacher trainers from Estonia (2), Poland (3), Russia (3) and Ukraine (4) participated in the seminar. The facilitator of the course was Daf Pawelec, ELT and Education officer from the British Council, Estonia, who also worked in Poland and whose work there in the area of YL teacher training was awarded a European label 'Innovation in ELT'.

The activities of the workshop included:

- presentations of TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) policy / statement / curriculum in each country;
- discussions with focus on YL development (cognitive, linguistic etc);
- discussions with focus on curriculum problems, approaches, beliefs, issues;
- considerations in curriculum development;
- development of a rationale statement and approach towards aims, outcomes and assessment.

Two main results achieved during the workshop were: twelve people underwent training were trained in curriculum design, and an approach towards the design of an output-based ELT curriculum for primary schools was developed.

3. General principles of an output-based ELT curriculum for young learners.

The rationale for an output-based ELT curriculum for primary schools designed within the Moscow workshop can be summed up as follows:

- This curriculum is intended to meet the growing demands for introducing ELT in primary school (age 6–10).
- Assuming that children of that age perceive the world holistically and acquire language in a context, school learning should also follow the holistic approach¹, giving a child the integral picture of the world.
- The learning content should be contextualised, communicative and meaningful.
- Teachers should take into account cognitive abilities of children at that age and foster their development. Although they are starting to develop abstract thinking, they still need the support of concrete experiences, visual aids and realia.
- Young learners have a shorter concentration span and get bored quickly, so they need varied challenging activities.
- As children learn quickly and forget quickly as well, the effective teaching-learning process should be organised in a spiral way with regular recycling of material.
- The emphasis is made on communication, interaction, negotiation and undertaking risks of speaking in English, so that error correction is not the priority at this level. In other words, the focus is on fluency and connected speech rather than on accuracy.

The above points assist the children in becoming successful, self-confident, reflective and creative learners, starting to work independently and in co-operation with others, with a positive attitude and motivation towards continuing foreign language learning at other stages of education.

This curriculum differs from the teacher-input based varieties by presenting clear, easily measured outcomes accompanied by a variety of assessment means.

The aims of teaching foreign languages to young learners formulated in terms of their appropriateness and relevance to a child of that age are as follows:

- communicate in the target language in different socio-linguistic contexts;
- socialise and co-operate with peers and adults;
- form a positive attitude and raise motivation to learning foreign languages;

- develop awareness of cultures different from their own;
- acquire reflective skills to aid self-assessment and develop learning-to-learn strategies to become independent learners;
- develop their cognitive abilities.

The main innovation attractiveness of the outcome-oriented curriculum is that it describes not only the course content (topics), as was done traditionally, but the individual child's achievements and ways to assess them.

In such a curriculum the outcomes are given in terms of students' achievements: e.g., *by the end of the primary school stage students will be able to understand and use familiar everyday expressions to satisfy their basic needs; introduce themselves and others; answer questions providing information about personal data (name, address, people around them, things they have), etc.*

The outcomes in the four skills should also be formulated in a clear, specified way: e.g., *by the end of the primary school stage students will be able to follow speech which is clearly and slowly articulated (listening); produce 3–4 sentences giving personal details (speaking); get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short simple descriptions (reading); write personal details: name, address, nationality, country, date of birth (writing), etc.*

Defined in such a way, the outcomes could be easily measured, and the document will provide ways of effective assessment, including self-assessment, testing and evaluation (lesson observation, parents' questionnaires, etc.). It may also be reasonable to suggest some assessment techniques and examples of their implementation.

Moreover, these outcomes refer to the levels, which correspond well with the levels of Basic User in terms of the European Framework of References. Following this curriculum, students will be able to reach a Basic User level by the end of 180 hours of English (three years of study with two hours per week).

To conclude, the five-day workshop in August launched a long complicated process of YL curriculum development. After the workshop the participants came back to their countries for wide-scale discussions at the national level of the curriculum approach created. The next step will be another meeting of the four countries' representatives in Estonia, in December 2003 that will focus on the results of these national discussions and the development of a draft core curriculum shared by these countries.

¹ Holistic (Whole-language/Top-down/Gestalt style/Global learning) approach is a communicative approach based on the idea that the language is learnt/acquired holistically, i.e. by language 'chunks'. Later individual learners start analysing these chunks and identifying the grammar and vocabulary items the chunks consist of. That is why the approach is also called analytic. This approach is focused on the learning process rather than the learning product. The main emphasis is on interaction, so pair and group work are widely used. The holistic approach is more appealing to young learners as children of that age easily acquire language (in the same way as a mother tongue), they are eager to communicate and are not afraid of taking risks, their cognitive and study skills are only in the process of development. For these reasons the holistic approach has become very popular in the area of TEYL all over the world.

Appendix 1. Estonia (Sirje Lepik, Juta Jaani)

1. Introduction.

In Soviet times, Russian was taught as a second language from the first grade and either English or German (or, in some schools, French) was introduced in fourth grade as a first foreign language in Estonian-language schools. After the regaining of Estonian independence in 1991, these roles changed, as a rule. Due to the ever-growing importance of English in every-day life, it soon gained prevalence among foreign languages and by the end of the 1990s it was the first foreign language in most Estonian-language schools and the second after Estonian in most Russian-language schools.

During the 90s, the need for English has grown remarkably in the whole society. This has increased the proportion of learning English as well as changed the emphasis in teaching it: while formerly the main emphasis was on grammar and translation, i.e. passive learning, now more emphasis is placed on communication, i.e.

language as a mean of interaction rather than as a goal in itself. In the National Curriculum of 1996, the introduction of the first FL was prescribed starting from grade 3.

A new Estonian curriculum was accepted by the Estonian government in January 2002. However, it must be admitted that in reality the current National Curriculum contains but minor changes compared to the previous (1996) National Curriculum.

The new curriculum consists of a general section and subject. In the previous curriculum the foreign language syllabus for young learners was not specified. In the current one the difference between levels 1 and 2 is very small. The syllabi have been and still are input-based.

2. *Percentage of children learning English (as A language, since 2000/2001 the first foreign language — see point 3)².*

In 1991/1992 classes specialised in learning English are included.

Table 1

Year / class	1991/92	92 / 93	93 / 94	94 / 95	95 / 96	96 / 97	97 / 98	98 / 99	99 / 00	2000/01	01 / 02	02 / 03
First grade	0.7%	0.3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%
Second grade	0.7%	1%	6%	6%	4%	8%	10%	12%	12%	15%	16%	19%
Third grade	1%	33%	46%	50%	51%	57%	62%	68%	69%	74%	78%	79%
Level 1 total	0.8% 3.5%*	12% 13%*	18% 20%*	19% 21%*	19% 21%*	23% 24%*	26% 27%*	29% 31%*	31% 34%*	33% 36%*	36% 37%*	36% 39%*
Fourth grade	0.6%	2%	38%	48%	50%	56%	59%	65%	68%	73%	77%	81%
Fifth grade	6%	3%	9%	40%	48%	55%	58%	62%	66%	73%	78%	82%
Sixth grade	68%	10%	11%	14%	41%	61%	58%	61%	62%	71%	75%	80%
Level 2 total	25% 29%*	5% 30%*	20% 46%*	34% 57%*	46% 63%	57% 66%*	59% 69%*	62% 74%*	65% 79%*	72% 83%*	77% 86%*	81% 90%*

* Including B language — see point 3.

² Data taken from the Estonian Ministry of Education.

3. Stages of education according to the standard.

Table 2

SCHOOL STAGE/TYPE	LEVEL	GRADE	STUDENTS' AGE	HOURS PER WEEK		
				A	B	C (non-compulsory)
Primary	1	1	7	3		
		2	8			
		3	9			
Basic	2	4	10	9	3	
		5	11			
		6	12			
	3	7	13	9	9	
		8	14			
		9	15			
Upper-secondary	4	10	16	6	6	At the school's discretion
		11	17			
		12	18			

The 1st foreign language (A language) must be introduced in the third grade.

The 2nd foreign language (B language) starts in sixth grade.

In upper-secondary school students may choose a third (C) foreign language.

The foreign language taught maybe either English, German Russian or French, depending on what the school can offer. They all have the same status.

Other foreign languages can be studied as 'Foreign Language C', again depending on what the school can offer.

4. Reality of teaching a foreign language to young learners.

Since 1992 class sizes are normally about 25 students. If it exceeds this amount, the group can be divided in two for foreign language tuition but this is not obligatory.

In Soviet times there was only one fixed coursebook, which all teachers (and pupils) had to follow. Now there is a great choice of approved coursebooks.

In reality some schools (mostly in towns) start teaching a foreign language in first grade and parents usually pay for it. On level one there are seven additional hours, which may be used according to the school (director)'s discretion. In our school (Kose-Uuemoisa Primary School) three of these additional hours are given to teaching English. So we can start in grade 2.

5. Description of the current curriculum governing primary grades.

In Estonia children go to school at the age of seven. Current curriculum consists of the general framework of education (called 'basics') and the subject curricula ('syllabi') which are attached as appendices.

Structure of the FL curriculum:

1. General introduction and learning goals

2. Foreign Language Syllabus for grades 1–3

2.1. Learning process — rationale for young children learning foreign languages

2.2. Learning content, i. e. topics:

- Me
- Family & home
- Friends
- Environment, habitation, place, Estonia
- Countries of the language being learned
- Daily activities
- Learning and working
- Hobbies and culture

2.3. Learning outcomes

These are described in terms of the four skills. By the end of grade 3 the student should be able to:

listening:

- Recognise the learned language from among others
- Understand the instructions of the teacher and respond appropriately
- Understand simple words, short texts and songs known to him / her, etc.

speaking:

- Greet and say good-bye
- Ask and thank
- Wish happy birthday, etc.

reading:

- Understand short written instructions
- Read learned dialogues, short stories and poems with correct intonation, stress and rhythm, etc.

writing:

- Write one's own name
- Copy correctly a text from a book or blackboard, etc.

3. Foreign Language Syllabus for grades 4–6

3.1. Learning process

3.2. Learning content

- a) Topics (identical to those of grades 1–3)
- b) linguistic knowledge (grammar / language

structures, orthography etc.)

3.3. Learning outcomes

Again they are related to the 4 skills. E.g., for reading, the outcomes expected by the end of grade 6 are that the student should be able to:

- Find the main idea in a text
- With the help of pictures, context or dictionary, understand short texts containing up to 2% unknown words
- Possess a variety of reading strategies

The goal of foreign language learning in primary grades is that the student:

- acquires the A language on a level which enables him / her to communicate in everyday situations;
- is interested in learning a foreign language and in broadening his / her knowledge through this;
- acquires skills for further learning of foreign languages;
- is interested in countries speaking the language and in their culture;
- acquires different learning strategies;
- through reading develops his / her abilities of independent thinking and analyzing;
- develops skill to express his / her own attitudes and those of a group;
- learns to obtain necessary information (also for other subjects) from lexica, dictionaries, Internet and other information sources in foreign languages.

6. New National FL Curriculum: implementation problems.

- In the syllabus, communication is pointed out but in reality there are few possibilities for children to use the foreign language.
- The syllabus is too general.
- No assessment criteria are given.
- Lack of affordable, good coursebooks.
- Large classes.
- Teachers are overloaded with paperwork.
- Supplementary materials are available but they are very expensive.
- Teachers don't understand the implications of the curriculum.
- The previous curriculum has been analysed but the weaknesses have not been taken into consideration.

7. The workshop.

We think that the course was very useful, because it has been a problem for teachers to work out the school curriculum. It has not been explained or taught how to do it. Our curriculum has aims, topics for teaching the four skills and outcomes but nothing is said about assessment and the outcomes are not graded into levels. The course has given new ideas for looking through our EFL curriculum at school. I think it is very important that different people (curriculum experts, authors and teachers) work together.

In conclusion, we'd like to add that the workshop was very productive — no such cooperative work between these four countries (with similar historical background and experiences) has ever been done before.

Opinion of experts from the Finnish Ministry of Education on the Estonian Foreign Language Syllabus³

STRENGTHS

- Oral language ability and communication are stressed;
- The aim is to develop language ability for communication and to advance interpersonal skills;
- The development of language skills demands new teaching methods.

WEAKNESSES

- Foreign language learning is little related to out-of-school activities;
- Pupils' self-assessment and responsibility for learning processes are not mentioned;
- The time for language learning is not clearly defined;
- The integration of English teaching with other subjects (ICT included) is weak;
- Teachers are not well trained to assess pupils' language skills (assessment criteria, evaluating, etc.);
- As well as knowledge, the syllabus should consider pupils' skills, attitudes, motivation and self-direction;
- Instructions for teachers are too general and do not support the teaching process;
- The freedom of schools is not clearly defined;
- Pupils' previous knowledge and experiences are not mentioned;
- It is not stressed enough that language learning does not stop with the end of school, but rather gives a base for lifelong language learning;
- The goals of foreign language learning should be itemized in a different order: first, interest must be awoken, then the learning skills are developed and at the end the students are encouraged to use the obtained knowledge in everyday life.

³ Ritva Jakku-Sihvonen et al., Opetushallitus (National Board of Education), 1999, available at www.ut.ee/curriculum/.

Appendix 2. Poland (Anneta Sadowska, Barbara Tittenbrun, Katarzina Nicholls)

1. Introduction.

The reform of the educational system in Poland introduced on 1st September 1999 aimed to eliminate the drawbacks of the educational system at that time. It increased the age of compulsory schooling in Poland from 14 to 18 years of age in order to reduce the number of people in Poland possessing only a primary school diploma. This reform act also changed the organisational structure of the school system, including teacher training, career

patterns and financing methods. According to the reform agenda, one of the foreign languages (Russian, German, French or English), previously obligatory from the fifth grade (age 11) is now introduced in grade four (age 10).

2. Percentage of children learning English.

The table below shows how the popularity of English taught in Polish schools has grown, reaching 51.9% of the whole school age population in 1999⁴.

Table 1

Language	1990	1991	1992	1996	1997	1998	1999
English	13.7%	17.4%	22.6%	34.7%	37.7%	40.7%	51.9%
German	12.6%	15.0%	17.4%	23.5%	25.2%	26.6%	32.2%
Russian	51.6%	42.7%	34.0%	21.6%	19.7%	18.1%	16.0%
French	2.7%	3.1%	3.4%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.4%

These numbers are still growing. There is also strong social pressure to start English from the first grade of primary school, which in many schools is already a common practice.

3. Stages of education according to the standard.

Table 2

School stage/type	Grade	Students' age	Hours per week ⁵
Primary:			
Stage one	I, II, III	6/7–9	
Stage two	IV, V, VI	10–12	8
Gimnazjum	I, II, III	13–15	9
Liceum	I, II, III	16–18	9 for FL 1 6 for FL 2

4. Reality of teaching FL to young learners.

Although English language teaching is not obligatory at stage one, parental pressure very often results in starting foreign language instruction as early as in the first grade of primary school. This is done either as regular classes, or as after-school activity and the cost is usually covered by parents. In the majority of schools children have one English lesson a week with class sizes ranging from 25 to 30 pupils.

The growing demand for teaching English to young children has been addressed by ELT publishers who have brought a vast number of ELT course books, aimed at young children, onto the Polish market. Many Teacher Training Colleges have already introduced modules on teaching English to young learners. The INSETT (In-Service Teacher Training) project organises many teacher training courses both for English teachers teaching in the lower grades of the primary schools and for early years teachers who wish to teach English together with all the other subjects that they teach in the first three grades.

⁴ Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej — o nauczaniu języków obcych in BIBLIOTEKAZKA REFORMY 27, Warszawa 2000, page 15.

⁵ At every stage there is a number of extra hours left to the head-teacher's discretion. These can be used to increase the number of foreign language lessons per stage or introduce FL instruction in stage one.

5. Description of the current curriculum governing primary grades.

At present, since English starts as an obligatory subject at the age of 10/11, there is no common curriculum for primary grades I–III. Schools that introduce English in early years have to prepare their own curriculum and have it accepted by the Ministry of Education, which is a long and expensive process, or use the one commissioned by a publisher of a given textbook. There are quite a few curricula currently accepted by the Ministry of Education, which teachers can use. Many of these curricula are topic-based, reflecting the general early years curriculum.

The fact that teaching English to YL is not formally regulated by the Ministry of Education results in the following problems:

- Lack of a national curriculum that would describe the conditions (number of hours a week, class size, etc.), content and attainment targets for stage one⁶;
- Lack of control over the level of proficiency of YL English teachers (in spite of the fact that the Ministry clearly states the qualifications requirements, there are still very few English teachers qualified to teach YL, so schools often have little choice);
- Lack of entrance requirements for stage two (age 10–12) in the case of continuation of English language instruction.

6. New National FL Curriculum: implementation problems.

The main problems in implementing the new National FL curriculum are the lack of legislation governing the

introduction of foreign languages to early years of the primary schools, as well as the difficult financial situation of education in general. The Ministry of Education encourages the teaching of foreign languages by giving head-teachers extra hours that can be used for foreign languages as well as financing teacher training courses preparing teachers to teach English to young learners. However, the number of hours is usually not sufficient (in the majority of schools it is only one lesson a week) and in many places, particularly in the countryside, there is still a shortage of qualified language teachers.

7. The workshop.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet YL specialists and curriculum writers from other countries of similar historical background and experience.

The specific situation of our countries made it possible to understand limitations of our educational systems and negotiate best possible solutions compromising when necessary.

We realise that the final product, the common YL curriculum is by no means complete and requires further work, especially in the area of testing and assessment.

We hope to be able to meet again after a period of consultation at a national level with YL specialists and educational decision makers in order to compare feedback and draw from different experiences.

Finally, we would like to thank Daf Pawelec who has proved to be a highly professional trainer and a great help.

Appendix 3. Russia (Marina Lagutocnikina, Ludmila Sokolova, Larisa Strukova)

1. Introduction.

The importance of earlier language introduction in state schools has been the focus of attention of Russian scholars since the sixties. There were attempts to introduce foreign languages in kindergartens and primary school at that time although neither methodological approaches nor teaching materials were developed at that time. The techniques used for teaching older learners were directly transferred into young learners' classroom. In the seventies-eighties, research in the area of foreign language teaching to YL was carried out, specific approaches based on the assumptions of sensitive period, age-relevance, cognitive and communicative principles were developed. In the middle of the eighties a wide-scale experiment in YL FLT started. During that time local authors created a number of textbooks. The results of

this experiment failed to meet expectations due to the following reasons: most of the courses neglected opportunities of the existing system (too much material for the classroom time available), or were too propedeutic and were under-developing learners' language skills. There was an overuse of mother-tongue and cultural stereotypes as well. Furthermore, FLT teachers were not specifically trained for teaching young learners.

Nevertheless, in late eighties and nineties social processes such as democratisation, market society orientation, and integration into the global world community provoked the growth of interest in foreign language learning. It was assumed that one of the vehicles for delivering a working knowledge of foreign languages was starting learning it in primary school. That is why under parental pressure many schools launched teaching

⁶ At the moment there are a number of EFL curricula for YL, commissioned largely by coursebook publishers, that have been approved by the Ministry of Education.

FL for young learners on their own, without waiting for a new national curriculum to be created.

In 2000 the Russian Government developed the Russian Education Modernisation Programme which set foreign language teaching as one of the key priorities.

Within the educational reform framework, a new federal curriculum (*standard*) in the Russian educational system is going to be created. In FLT terms it is considered to be a required minimum providing a possible level of functional literacy in all four skills: reading, speaking, listening and writing, not only in reading as it used to be in the previous Russian FLT standards, to each secondary school graduate (a threshold level according to the Council of Europe classification). The new curriculum will demonstrate a learner-centred, competency-based approach towards language learning and will focus on social adjustment of learners to the changing world and on developing their communicative skills by means of foreign languages.

Table

SCHOOL STAGE	GRADE	STUDENTS' AGE	HOURS PER WEEK
Primary	1	6/7	2
	2	7	
	3	8	
	4	9	
Secondary	5	10	3
	6	11	
	7	12	
	8	13	
	9	14	
Upper-secondary (basic/profile) ⁸	10	15	2 (basic)
	11	16/17	5 (profile)

4. Reality of teaching FL to young learners.

Until the National Curriculum is approved, the situation of FLT in primary grades remains as follows: schools teaching FL in primary grades are guided by the temporary ministerial content requirements for FLT. The Basic School Curriculum does not include mandatory YL FL teaching but schools can choose in what grade to start FLT, the amount of weekly classes and class sizes.

In reality FLT can be introduced in any grade from one to four, the amount of hours may vary from one to five per week, large classes are normally divided into two groups of 12–15 pupils. School authorities also choose one of the two options: they either use the so-called 'school component' (a number of lessons which a school is free

to use as a resource to meet the school's needs), or organise extra classes, which parents usually pay for.

That is why according to the new curriculum, FL should be taught to all students of primary schools starting from the second grade. Within the framework of the widescale experiment, FLT in primary grades became compulsory in 2002/03. According to the reform plan, it will become mandatory to all other schools in 2005.

2. Percentage of children learning English.

In spite of the fact that the curriculum has not been approved yet, there are many schools all over Russia, especially in the cities, where FLT for YL is provided. The statistical data of the Ministry of Education⁷ show the evident dominance of the English language: out of 73009 primary schools providing FLT, 61340 (84%) provide English.

3. Stages of education according to the standard.

According to the latest drafts of the curriculum it will include the following stages.

to use as a resource to meet the school's needs), or organise extra classes, which parents usually pay for.

In spite of a quite substantial number of lessons in some cases, the FLT results revealed in most cases are not always appropriate. This can be explained by the lack of a systematic approach towards FLT in primary grades, including the absence of prescriptive documents (YL FL curriculum), a shortage of qualified, experienced YL teachers, the inaccessibility of good coursebooks which reflect the modern approach to YL teaching, and a lack of consistency between primary and secondary schools. As a consequence, many students in the fifth grade (the beginning of the secondary school level in Russia) start learning FL from the very beginning, losing motivation and time.

⁷ Official data of the Russian Ministry of Education statistical department.

⁸ The curriculum also makes learning FL in the tenth and eleventh grades obligatory and provide an opportunity for both basic and profile (at a more advanced level) learning of FL in these grades.

5. Description of the current curriculum governing primary grades.

As mentioned above, there is only a draft of the YL National Curriculum (as part of the Secondary School National Curriculum) available in Russia at the moment⁹.

The document spells out *goals, content of education and FLT attainment targets*. The goals are set in accordance with the Council of Europe FLT framework and are established as follows:

- To contribute to the development of child's personality, language awareness, attention, thinking, memory and imagination.
- To form the basic skills for communication in a foreign language (elementary communication competence) thus the development of four skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing (considering YL language abilities and needs).
- To create the conditions for early communicative-psychological adaptation of YL to a new language, for overcoming psychological barriers in using foreign languages in the future, for the development of motivation for further FL learning.
- To raise the awareness of elementary linguistic phenomena, to develop language, intellectual and cognitive abilities, learning-to-learn skills.
- To help children obtain a new social experience using a FL: to introduce the world of YL abroad, foreign children's folklore, adapted fiction texts, to develop a friendly attitude towards other countries.

According to this curriculum, these goals can be achieved through 'mastering' the content of education, which consists of topics (Getting Acquainted, Family, My House, My Birthday, New Year, My Friends, Toys, Clothes, etc.), four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) development and language knowledge and skills development (spelling, phonetics, lexis, grammar).

The FLT attainment targets are identified in terms of 'children should know' and 'should be able to do':

Children should know:

- The ABC, letters, basic letters combinations, sounds of the target language
- Basic reading and spelling rules
- The name of the country of the target language and its capital
- The names of the most popular characters from the children's books
- Children's simple rhymes, chants and other rhythmic texts

They should be able to:

- Observe, analyse, provide examples of linguistic phenomena (e.g. long and short vowels, international

words, short affirmative and negative answers, etc.)

- Distinguish the basic types of sentences according to their intonation and communicative aims
- Build an elementary monologue statement on the given sample, analogy, etc.
- *Use acquired knowledge and communicative skills in practice. That means to:*
 - understand the teacher/partner in the process of conversation, get a gist of simple texts with visual support
 - participate in a simple 'etiquette' conversation (acquaintance, greeting, thanking)
 - ask simple questions (who, what, where, when) and answer them, etc.

6. New National FL Curriculum: implementation problems.

As the national curriculum in the educational area is only a draft, it is impossible to speak about implementation problems at this stage. However the draft reveals a move towards an outcome-based curriculum. In order to make this document more useful for teachers, the methodological approach could be described in more detail, outcomes could be more clearly-stated and measurable and means of assessment could be included.

Other implementation problems of may be the following:

- lack of teachers specialised in TEYL;
- lack of quality textbooks meeting the demands of the new curriculum;
- insufficient number of FL hours per week;
- teachers' overload;
- oversized classes.

7. The workshop.

The opportunity to collaborate in the international team gave each country a chance to move forward in understanding what ELT for YL is, agree upon basic notions and terms, compare each situation in terms of the national curriculum, reveal strengths and weaknesses in each national curriculum. What is more, collaboration helped to build a common vision on further perspective co-operation in this educational area.

We agreed that YL curriculum should be output-rather than input-focused. In our approach we tried to tie the achieved outputs with verified ways of assessment and evaluation of YL progress.

There is a need to link the curriculum to coursebooks. Most of the coursebooks available at the moment are either too expensive (the foreign ones) or methodologically out-of-date and don't relate to the principles identified for a modern curriculum.

⁹ This draft may be found at www.informika.ru, the official website of the Russian Ministry of Education.

Appendix 4. Ukraine (Alla Datsko, Tatiana Karpova, Olga Kolominova, Natalia Koltko)

1. Introduction.

Since independence, the Government and Parliament of Ukraine — Verkhovna Rada have shown a significant commitment to strengthening education provision and professional development to adjust them to the new realities of the global market. The development of education and training has been seen as directly contributing to the economy’s growth, competitiveness and to employment. The Government has issued new laws and regulations, and has recently initiated an education reform strategy — the National Doctrine for Development of Education in Ukraine in the XXI Century (2002) — which defines new priorities for the sector with a view to improving service delivery from pre-school through to tertiary education.

Ukraine’s independence has created a rapidly growing demand for the English language. With the country opening up to the global market and establishing closer relations with its European neighbours, a proficient language user stands a better chance of getting a high profile job and a better career structure. English has increasingly been recognised as a major language of international communication in various fields of social activity. It has become the key language of information exchange, including the Internet.

Following the Ministry of Education and Science requirement for state schools to begin offering foreign language training in the second grade, it is expected that the number of primary English students will rapidly increase. To meet the demand, the Ministry envisages the recruitment of university students majoring in English to teach public school classes. The implication of the above is that there will be a serious lack of qualified teachers of English, especially those teaching English to young learners.

2. Percentage of children learning English.

The number of students going to secondary schools in Ukraine is currently 5,254,378. The overwhelming majority of students (83.6% - 4,392,496 students) learn English. 21.8% (959,024 students) of all English language learners are in primary school.

3. Stages of education according to the standard.

Children in Ukraine start school at the age of 6 and go to school for 11 years (12 years in the near future). The table below shows the division of school into stages, age of children for each stage and the number of hours allocated for teaching English.

Table

SCHOOL STAGE	GRADE	STUDENTS’ AGE	HOURS PER WEEK
Primary	1	6	
	2	7	1 (+ 1) ¹⁰
	3	8	2
	4	9	3
Basic secondary	5	10	4
	6	11	
	7	12	
	8	13	3
	9	14	
Upper-secondary	10	15	
	11	16	2

4. Reality of teaching FL to young learners.

According to the Education Reform initiatives, secondary schools started offering foreign languages from the second grade (to 7-year-olds) in September 2002. The New Curriculum for Foreign Languages in Secondary Schools was prepared and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in 2001.

Teachers are allowed to use only teaching materials recommended by the Ministry. (The list of main and

additional materials is published every year.) As a rule, textbooks on the main list are given to schools free of charge. Sometimes the quantity of books is insufficient to satisfy school needs. Besides, locally produced teaching materials often lack quality and focus mainly on the linguistic competence of learners. That is why some teachers encourage parents to buy additional course-books, mainly foreign. They are usually more modern and of better quality. However, the problem with foreign

¹⁰ The number in brackets is an additional hour schools are recommended to allocate for FLT from the so-called ‘school component’ (normally schools have 2 or 3 hours which they can use at their discretion). In practice many schools (especially rural) do not use this additional hour for English.

coursebooks is that they are rather expensive and don't include what the Ministry calls 'a national Ukrainian component'.

Other problems are inadequate planning, lack of support from the state and inappropriate assessment.

5. Description of the current curriculum governing primary grades.

As mentioned above, the New National Curriculum for Foreign Languages was published in 2001. It defines the aims, objectives and content of language learning at secondary schools.

According to the Curriculum, children start learning a FL (English, French, German, Spanish or oriental languages in some schools) at the age of seven in the second grade.

The Curriculum consists of:

- Introduction
- Aims of learning
- Content description
- Methodological, Evaluation and Assessment principles
- Programme of Study, setting out the minimum knowledge and skills for each grade

The main aim of English language learning is to develop a certain level of communicative competence, which includes speech, language, sociocultural, sociolinguistic and strategic competences.

The most practically oriented part of the Curriculum is the Programme of Study, which identifies the content of learning and describes the range of competences and skills to be acquired by a learner by the end of each grade.

It includes:

- domains and themes of communication
- language functions and functional exponents
- required levels of language, sociocultural, sociolinguistic and strategic competences
- descriptors for listening, speaking, reading and writing

6. New National FL Curriculum: implementation problems.

As with any reform, the Education Reform in Ukraine has brought about a number of problems that have to be solved in the near future. Here are some of them:

- a lack of trained teachers able to face the challenge of the New National Curriculum requirements
- teachers' overload
- national textbooks, which neither hold the principles, nor meet the requirements of the New Curriculum
- insufficient financial support, the consequence of which is a lack or even a complete absence of supplementary materials and equipment
- a gap between the curriculum requirements to the outcomes of learning and the existing system of assessment (testing in particular). This implies the necessity of creating a new procedure and format of testing, which will assess learners' language proficiency
- oversized groups of learners
- little opportunity for learners to use a foreign language as a means of communication
- absence of appropriate pilot, revision and improvement procedures

7. The workshop.

We think that this shared workshop was a good opportunity to exchange information with the representatives of different cultures, to find out similarities and differences. We tried to create our own approach towards YL FL curriculum design based on the modern principles reflected in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CUP 2003).

The workshop helped the participants to:

- become more aware of the strong and weak points of ELT in our countries
- find out more about prospects of ELT developments in the countries
- become more confident about the necessity of introducing a New Curriculum for primary level
- specify rationales, aims, outcomes, assessment principles of the New Curriculum
- get new ideas for in-service and pre-service teacher development
- look at materials for primary English teaching and learning from a different perspective.