TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ONLINE: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT TEACHING REMOTELY

Ensinando Inglês para crianças pré-escolares online: desafios e perspectivas sobre o ensino remoto

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RESUMO: *A pandemia do novo coronavírus impôs desafios aos sistemas educacionais ao exigir ajuste ao ensino remoto de emergência. Este artigo tem como objetivo fazer uma análise dos recursos disponíveis para professores no ensino de inglês online para crianças em fase pré-escolar e o tipo de atividades que os professores podem utilizar e criar para atender a faixa etária, adotando os recursos tecnológicos disponíveis. A proposta da análise é verificar como os professores podem ensinar inglês adequadamente à distância para crianças em tal estágio. Com uma breve revisão da literatura sobre alguns pressupostos teóricos básicos abrangidos pelo tema, propomos alguns planos de aula baseados em pesquisas teóricas e sugerimos atividades adequadas ao ensino online para aulas síncronas e assíncronas. Por fim, realizamos uma análise e discussão de ideias atuais com base em pesquisas teóricas, que revelam o quão desafiador é ensinar inglês para pré-escolares em um contexto de pandemia.*
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Inglês como L2; Aprendizes crianças; Ensino/aprendizagem online; Aquisição de linguagem; tecnologia

ABSTRACT: *The novel coronavirus pandemic has posed demanding challenges to the educational systems trying to adjust to the new emergency remote teaching. This article aims at conducting an analysis of the resources available for teachers to teach English to preschoolers online and the kind of activities that teachers could use and create to suit the age group adopting available technological resources. The proposal of the analysis is to verify how teachers can properly teach English to illiterate children remotely. Along with a brief literature review on some basic theoretical assumptions encompassed by the topic, we propose some lesson plans based on theoretical research and suggest activities that suit online teaching for synchronous and asynchronous classes. Lastly, we conduct an analysis and a discussion of current ideas based on theoretical research, which reveal how challenging it is to teach English to preschoolers in a pandemic context.*
KEYWORDS: EL2 preschool learners; Online teaching/learning; Language acquisition; Technology

1 INTRODUCTION

The modern world has been facing challenges with the novel coronavirus pandemic, SarsCovid-19, firstly spotted in China in November 2019 and, since then, spread to the world with tragic consequences. Society had to abruptly adjust their lives to the new reality of social isolation. Consequently, the educational systems were also affected. Schools had to shut and suddenly shift classes from face-to-face to remote teaching. However, schools were not prepared to deal with the impacts and rules enforced by social isolation and distancing. Teachers were untrained to teach online and had to learn how to use new tools and adapt their classes while teaching remotely and literature about this emergency teaching format, especially for young children, was scarce by the time the pandemic broke out. The same situation was faced during the SARS epidemic, when teachers had to use an improvised online educational platform (ECKHOLM, 2003). The educational systems have been adjusting to this new pandemic context, and there are concerns about the learner's development during the remote teaching as it presents a new way of social interaction.

This article aims at analyzing, through research, the available resources for teachers to teach English to preschool children online and the kind of activities teachers could use and create to suit the age group in technological issues. The lack of physical as well as social interaction and routine in a traditional educational environment have presented a challenge for teachers of preschool learners since children lose interest more quickly, need social interaction and demand concrete interaction with objects. As Vygotsky highlights (1962), the child is an active learner and social interaction for language learning is crucial. It is through playing, talking about playing, reading stories, and asking questions that the child develops language.

When teaching a foreign language to children, teachers may use different approaches and strategies in their classes, such as games, songs and stories, in order to integrate the child into the language and to promote cognitive development. Through theoretical research, we analyze how to teach English to preschool children online and what approaches teachers might use to perform this task successfully.

The online environment works differently than the face-to-face classroom, thus, new tools are needed in order to teach young learners remotely as well as adapting activities to such approach. Accordingly, this study presents, firstly, a literature review on language acquisition, second language acquisition and teaching English to young learners. It is divided in two subsections which explore strategies and approaches used to teach young children, and how to use them on online teaching. Secondly, the methodology used to develop this paper is presented. Along the article, we were guided by some research questions, namely: How to effectively teach English to preschool children online? What kind of activities teachers can use and create to teach children remotely?

In an attempt to offer answers to those questions, a few lesson plans were developed, featuring activities that are suitable to the online environment, and might be applied in a synchronous or asynchronous interaction. Next, we propose the analysis of the main current ideas that support the researched authors and theories. The discussion reveals how challenging it is to teach English to children remotely. We present some suggestions and issues teachers may face while teaching remotely and suggest some further studies.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents some relevant theoretical assumptions about preschool children learning a foreign language and elicits the approaches that teachers could use in the online environment to teach English to preschoolers according to their language acquisitions process. It is divided in two main parts. The first one presents strategies and approaches used to teach young children and the second presents different tools and activities to teach online.

2.1 Strategies and approaches used to teach young children

Producing language is a natural process for children, they learn to construct and understand sentences without teaching language to them (FROMKIN; RODMAN; HYAMS, 2003). Lightbown and Spada (1999) emphasize that, most children, are able to produce fifty different words by the age of two and to form sentences called as 'telegraphic', due to their lack of words such as articles, prepositions and auxiliary verbs. The combination and relation of words forming such sentences makes them more than just a list of words (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 1999). Three-and-a-half year old children are able to ask questions, report real events, give commands and create imaginary stories with grammatical morphemes correctly, and they become aware of the basic structures of the language or languages they were exposed to by the age of four (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 1999). The ability to comprehend and to use language to express themselves promptly grow when children begin the pre-school years (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 1999).

Child second language acquisition is associated when a second language is introduced after the age of two due to the child's ability to build a reasonable system of the first language (PINTER, 2012). When the child is exposed to two languages during the first two years of life is defined by bilingualism (PINTER, 2012).

Nowadays, schools and parents have been putting a lot of time, effort and money on children acquiring a second language in early age (DIAS, 2019). Thus, there are some aspects to be considered when teaching children a second language, such as the fact that children do not analyze the language input, they learn the new language by chunks and the main support for the child's input is the teacher talk (PINTER, 2012). Children may mix languages as a result of the two grammars operating simultaneously

(FROMKIN; RODMAN; HYAMS, 2003). Children who are exposed to a second language in early age have cognitive benefits, but it is important to highlight that it depends on extralinguistic factors, such as social, economic and the educational situation of the child (FROMKIN; RODMAN; HYAMS, 2003).

How children learn and how to teach a foreign language depends on their growth level. Phillips (1993, p. 7) stresses that:

> Young learners respond to language according to what I does or what they can do with it, rather than treating it as an intellectual game or an abstract system. They respond to the fundamental meaning of the language used and do not worry about individual words or sentences, but they do not make the analytical links that older learners do (PHILLIPS, 1993, p. 7).

Cameron (2001) highlights Piaget and Vygotsky theories to present how we think of the child as language learner. Piaget sees the child as an active learner – action is essential for the child to develop cognitively, because their learning takes place by taking action to solve problems presented in the environment they interact with (CAMERON, 2001).

Lev Vygotsky's theories debate on how social interaction and language in the child's development play an important role as children construct knowledge through this interaction (CAMERON, 2001). For instance, by communicating with an adult or older sibling the child is learning language as he/she listens to a fluent speaker (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017). Conboy and Kuhl (2011) point out that "it is not enough for babies to hear language sound from electronic devices. In order to learn or retain the ability to distinguish between sounds, they need to interact with a human speaker". Language provides the child opportunities to do new things and for organizing information through the use of words and symbols (CAMERON, 2001).

Adults use language to support children to solve their problems. For instance, when a child says "water" this word means a full sentence and it is through the interaction with a fluent speaker responding to their utterance that the child is learning a language. Such intervention is called scaffolding (WOOD; BRUNER; ROSS, 1976). Scaffolding has been applied to the classroom and teacher-student talk. Bruner (1983) also highlights the use of routines which allow scaffolding to take place, a useful example of routines is parents reading story books to their children. Routines allow the child to understand and learn the new language from family experience and contribute towards developing language skills (CAMERON, 2001).

Puchta and Elliott (2017) stress out a few components of language that are important cognitive tools in early child development and are also relevant approaches to teach English to young learners.

Rhyming and chants - Children enjoy hearing the rhythms and rhymes of language many times, and it helps them to remember pieces of language. Playing and

being exposed to rhyme and chants promote children's phonological awareness (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017).

Creative thinking and images - For children, specially toddlers, reality and imagination are close to each other. The knowledge of words and the ability to create mental images are necessary to understand oral language. This imaginative process contributes to the child's understanding of language, for instance, learners who create images while listening to a story remember more language from it (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017).

Storytelling - It is an important and effective approach in class. Telling stories is fun and engage children's attention. It also plays an important role in class as it helps children to develop an understanding of the environment they are in and their experiences in life. When we are reading a story, it provides information which helps us to understand our feelings about it. Stories are a powerful tool to develop the child's language skills (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017).

Conversation - It holds a valuable place in the child's cognitive development. Being recognized by their teacher and classmates is an important experience for the child. Additionally, for a child the opportunity to participate properly in a conversation gives him/her the feeling of security and acceptance in society (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017).

Listening activities are an important aspect in the classroom in order to teach English to children, as such task is a meaningful source of language data for children to start developing their knowledge of how language works (PHILLIPS, 1993). Listening activities are not only the ones in the CD player from the course book. When the teacher is organizing the daily routine of the classroom and providing instructions to tasks children are practicing their listening skills, the teacher is a powerful and authentic listening resource. Thus, it is important for teachers to speak in English in class as much as they can (PHILLIPS, 1993).

A valuable tool to be used with toddlers in class are songs, chants and rhymes. Children enjoy learning through music, as it is fun and brings movement to the class, which motivates them to participate in a way that is natural (PUCHTA; ELLIOTT, 2017). Toddlers demand action and interaction, therefore, songs are a positive and favorable instrument to learn and improve language.

Stories are an important approach to teach children languages as they provide learners with an imaginary world created by the use of language. Children can participate along the story and enjoy learning language as they progress (CAMERON, 2001). Stories entertainment, the scenarios, events and language work to support the listener to understand the unfamiliar words – these are the elements through which stories offer space for growth in vocabulary (CAMERON, 2001). Stories and storytelling are not only an important part of children's education but also contribute to build a connection between a child and an adult (PUCHTA; ELLIOT, 2017).

Young children are full of energy; thus, it is essential to integrate movement into activities for children as it makes language meaningful for young learners (PUCHTA;

ELLIOT, 2017). A useful teaching technique to young learners is Total Physical Response (TPR), in which the children listen to the teacher telling them what to do and they have to repeat it. This technique enables toddlers to understand better what is being learned (PHILLIPS, 1993). The teacher also needs to use movement in order to help children to make sense of the language, such as gesturing, miming and facial expression. Games are another effective tool to convey new language and making learning enjoyable. "When children play, they are emotionally engaged and multiple sensory channels are activated in their brain. This emotional and sensory involvement makes language all the more memorable" (PUCHTA; ELIOTT, 2017, p. 53).

2.2 Online Teaching

As aforementioned, there are some strategies and approaches that we can use to effectively teach a new language to toddlers. Now we are going to explore how to adapt and use them on the online environment using technological tools.

Historically, the world has faced big epidemics and pandemics that have affected people's lives, including the educational system. In the recent years there were outbreaks such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 in Asia, in 2009 H1N1 spread globally, and in 2015 the Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) spread in the Middle East and South Korea. When such widespread diseases expanded, schools were shut for a few weeks and, in some cases, holidays were anticipated, or the school year ended later in order to recover the days missed. During the SARS epidemic, schools closed for two weeks and students were orientated to study at home, using a newly improvised online educational service and the internet to post assignments and review materials (ECKHOLM, 2003). Since late 2019, we have been facing the coronavirus pandemic, schools were shut and as we have evolved in technology, teaching has been administered through online platforms and tools.

In order to adapt activities for the online environment, or create new ones, teachers must take into consideration that in this setting there are some aspects that will work differently from the classroom. Teachers cannot simply transfer their classes to the remote teaching without accounting for the number of factors that can be impactful to this adjustment: adaptations will be required, such as parents' help in some activities, especially if the child is very young. Learners are not able to have social interaction with their classmates the same way as in the school. Teachers must adapt their classes to the tools they choose to work with in the online environment. When working with young learners, it is important to use platforms in which there are options for live classes (synchronous) and sharing computer screens – this enables learners to follow the content of the class, see and have contact with the teacher. It may be an assurance for the child to be able to see the familiar face of the teacher, especially during uncertain times.

When teaching remotely, it is pivotal to assume that the teacher will count on resources in order to conduct their work as best as possible. There are a number of variables that impact on this kind of transitioning, that range from teachers' preparedness and willingness to design and perform class plans to minimum technological resources that have to be available. Teachers are also encouraged to provide learners and parents with tools which they can access at their own time (asynchronously), such as pre-recorded video lessons.

Given the fact that the use of routines helps children to develop language skills (CAMERON, 2001), it is important to establish routines in the online classes too. Establishing similar or equal routines as in the face-to-face classroom will help learners to shift more easily into the new setting (MARTÍNEZ, 2020).

Phillips (1993) highlights the importance of listening activities in English classes and how meaningful it is for children language growth. Songs are a great approach to use in online classes, as teachers can find English songs for children on websites like "YouTube" and learners are able to watch the videos while singing to it. Children engage with language through touch and movement at the same time as they are using their sight and hearing (PUCHTA; ELLIOT, 2017), such approach allows teachers to use songs as Total Physical Response activities.

Stories and storytelling are an important tool to teach children in what they offer images and creative time, and listening and speaking opportunities (PUCHTA; ELLIOT, 2017). On the online environment, teachers may use this tool in different ways by reading a picture book and showing the pages on the webcam or using free resources, like websites which contain story and pictures books, teachers may share their screen with learners as they read the story (SIGSWORTH, 2020). As stressed previously, children are full of energy and it is important to integrate movement into activities (PUCHTA; ELLIOT, 2017). In order to add some action to the story, teachers may encourage learners to make movements similar to a character or every time an animal appears, they have to make its sound. Thereby the learner participates into the story, keeps listening and it may help them to release some repressed energy (SIGSWORTH, 2020).

Children need action and social interaction to develop cognitively in order to learn effectively. When learning online young learners need physical activities as much as in the classroom. Thus, in order to get learners involved, it is necessary for teachers to integrate Total Physical Response in their remote classes by encouraging children to use non-visual responses, such as standing up, putting their thumbs up, waving hands, etc. This helps to have more of a two-way interaction between the children and the teacher through the webcam by doing actions (VALENTE, 2020).

Games in the language classroom are an enjoyable and rewarding approach for children to learn English (PHILLIPS, 1993). In order to integrated games in online classes, teachers may use online games proper for the learners' ages, such as memory games, with pictures and sounds or create new ones. The use of slides or PowerPoint Presentations are a useful tool for remote classes, as teachers may combine content and

playing in the same tool. For instance, there is an addition to Google Slides called "Pear Deck" (https://www.peardeck.com/googleslides), designed for schools and teachers, allowing teachers to create slides through which learners are able to interact with by clicking, circling, drawing, and the teacher sees their responses immediately.

An activity that teachers may use to teach English in online classes, as already suggested before, is storytelling. Sigsworth (2020) advises teachers to choose a story of about 5 to 10 minutes to prevent learners from losing concentration. Teachers may use a story available online, thus, they are able to share their computer screen and learners can follow the story as they read the it. Puchta and Elliot (2017) stress that it is important to integrate movement into activities. Hence, teachers might ask for children's participation by making sounds, movements, saying a word every time a character appears or is mentioned in the story.

This activity may be a reasonable idea to use in the online environment as it is an important approach to teach children languages (CAMERON, 2001). Such method offers not only imaginative thinking time, listening and speaking opportunities, but also action and social interaction.

3 METHOD

This is a qualitative exploratory study which was conceived mainly from questions about how to properly teach English to illiterate children online and the kind of activities teachers can use and create to suit this age group (3 to 5) in technological issues.

- How to effectively teach English to young children online?
- What activities are appropriate to teach English to preschool children in the online environment?
- How to develop activities to teach English to preschoolers remotely?

With the purpose of offering answers to those questions, we investigated which resources were available online and which activities are appropriate for teachers to teach English to preschoolers online in their synchronous and asynchronous remote classes.

To develop this study, we performed a theoretical research, which was based on the following books about language acquisition:

- How Languages are Learned, by Patsy M. Lightbown and Nina Spada;
- Teaching Languages to young Learners, by Lynne Cameron;
- An introduction to Language, by Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman and Nina Hyams.

Additionally, we analyzed the following resource books:

- Young Learners, by Sarah Phillips;

  – Activities for Very Young Learners, by Herbert Puchta and Karen Elliot, for Language teachers of young children[1].

We also searched for online teaching resources and suggestions on the website Cambridge.org.

We suggest some lesson plans, authored by us, based on the Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) technique (SPRATT; PULVERNESS; WILLIAMS, 2011). In short, this technique consists of three basic steps: (i) the teacher presents the new language, (ii) the teacher models the target language for learners to repeat and (iii) the teacher moves on to a practice and production of the language.

The lesson plans present activities that suit the remote learning, according to theoretical research, which propose how to use the activities in synchronous and asynchronous classes, and explore different approaches to develop the child's language skills.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section we present our tentative lesson plans which will be analyzed and discussed in the light of the main current ideas that support the researched authors and theories.

Cameron (2001) highlights the use of routines in class as it helps toddlers to develop their language skills and it allows scaffolding to take place (BRUNER, 1983). Establishing routines in the online classes will help learners to have an easier adjustment into the new environment, as Martínez (2020) points out. Therefore, the following lesson plans present a routine to support the teacher which they may adhere to in their remote classes.

4.1 Suggested Lesson Plans

4.1.1 Time for a story

Age: Preschool (3-5 years old)
Aims:
– To introduce and practice new vocabulary by listening to a story.
– To develop listening, speaking and pronunciation skills.

Greetings: The teacher sings a familiar "hello" song and ask students how they are feeling today.

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[1] The books referred in the Methodology section have served as a theoretical support to the study and, therefore, have also been, in due course, mentioned in the previous section.

For a synchronous lesson, the teacher may ask students one by one, calling out their names. For an asynchronous lesson, the teacher should use gesture such as point to their ear and allowing time for students to answer it while watching, in order to get students participation.

Presentation: The teacher presents the story they will listen by reading the title and exploring the book's cover, providing clues and instigating learners curiosity about the story.

Story Time: For a synchronous lesson, the teacher may read a picture book and shows the pages on the webcam, or the teacher might use a story available online and share the computer screen with learners, thus, they are able to follow the story as the teacher reads it.

For an asynchronous lesson, the teacher may read a picture book and shows the pages on the webcam or may insert a video available on the internet which shows the pages of the book and the teacher records their voice reading it over the top.

In both synchronous and asynchronous ways, the teacher should ask for learners participation by making sounds or a movement related to a character when it appears or ask what is happening in that moment of the story.

Practice: In order to practice the new vocabulary learned previously and seen in the story, the teacher may use flashcards or the picture book to elicit from students what they saw and the words they learned in the story.

For a synchronous class, the teacher may ask learners one by one or as a group, calling out their names.

In an asynchronous class, the teacher shows the pictures/flashcards and ask learners to answer it by making gestures and allowing time for them to answer. They may use gestures such as touching their ear as a cue for learners to say the words.

Production: The teacher shows some flashcards one by one, and asks students to make a sound or a movement related to it.

For a synchronous class, the teacher may ask learners one by one or as a group, calling out their names.

In an asynchronous class, the teacher shows the flashcard, makes a sound or movement related to it and asks learners to join them.

Ending the lesson: The teacher might briefly review what was covered in the lesson by showing objects, flashcards or the picture book in order to remind learners of what was learned in the lesson.

For a synchronous class, the teacher may ask students what did they learn on that day.

For an asynchronous class, the teacher should say what was learned.

Good-bye: Sing a familiar "bye-bye song".

It should be noted that this class plan features a number of aspects that were mentioned in the literature review discussed previously. Cameron (2001) assumes that an essential approach to teach language to children is storytelling. The language, images, settings and events in a story, provide vocabulary growth to young learners.

Puchta and Elliot (2017) also stress out that it helps to raise a relation between the toddler and the adult. Thus, this approach benefits children to develop their language and listening skills, and to raise relation with the teacher even in remote classes.

Stories are a ludic approach to work with children. As said before, they provoke the child's imagination. The elements comprehend in the lesson plan, namely images and vocabulary can be related to what is suggested by the authors we reference.

As a suggestion, it might be a better option for teachers to use in their remote classes a story available online to share in their computer screen or a video showing the pages of the book while they read it. This approach may draw children's attention more to the story and involve them in a more playful way as it allows them to see the story more clearly.

4.1.2 Sing and dance along

Age: Preschool (3-5 years old)
Aims:
– Introduce and practice new vocabulary.
– Develop listening, speaking, pronunciation and memory skills by listening and singing a song related to the new vocabulary.

Greetings: The teacher sings a familiar "hello" song and asks students how they are feeling today.

For a synchronous lesson, the teacher may ask students one by one, calling out their name.

In an asynchronous lesson the teacher should use gesture such as point to their ear and allowing time for students to answer it while watching, in order to get students participation.

Presentation: In order to present the new vocabulary, the teacher might use a "Mystery box or bag" to provoke learners curiosity and attention. The teacher fills in the Mystery box with objects or flashcards of the vocabulary to be taught in the lesson.

For a synchronous class, the teacher might reveal the objects or flashcards that are inside the Mystery box one by one and have learners repeat them after the teacher, as a group.

For an asynchronous class, as the teacher reveals the objects or flashcards, they may use gestures such as touching their ear as a cue for learners to repeat the words.

Practice: The teacher announces to the learners that they are going to listen to a song related to the new vocabulary just learned.

In a synchronous class, if available, the teacher may play the video of the song for the learners to listen and watch, or just play the song, in order to get learners familiar with the song.

For an asynchronous class, the teacher might teach the gestures related to the song before playing it or, if available, they may insert the video of the song on the pre-

recorded lesson, thus learners are able to follow the choreography/gestures from the video. It is important, before playing the song/video, the encouragement from the teachers to the learners to do the gestures/dance while singing the song.

Production: The teacher plays the song a second time.

In a synchronous class, the teacher may teach learners some gestures to make during the song or tell them to follow the gestures/choreography from the video, encouraging learners to sing and dance along before playing it again.

In the asynchronous class, learners can listen to the song as many times they want, thus, the teacher may encourage learners, to sing along the song and to make the gestures taught before listening the song. If there is not a video available, the teacher may encourage learners to sing along the song and to make the gestures as learned previously.

Ending the lesson: The teacher might briefly review what was covered in the lesson by showing objects, flashcards or saying the name of the song they sang in order to remind learners of what was learned in this lesson.

For a synchronous class, the teacher may ask students what they learned on that day.

For an asynchronous class, the teacher should say what was learned.

Good bye: Sing a familiar "bye-bye song".

Phillips (1993) claims that beyond improving listening and speaking skills, listening activities also are a great tool to integrate action into the class, thus it allows teachers to apply the Total Physical Responde (TPR) technique through the songs. In this lesson plan, such activities could be illustrated by encouraging learners to make gestures according to the song while singing it.

In the classroom, teachers of young learners use songs and chants related to the subject of the class as a resource to teach and practice the new language. They stimulated the child to sing and dance while learning and practicing the language. In remote classes the parts that demand movement might work differently - perhaps the teacher does not have much space at home (if it requires) or the best tech tools to film them moving along the song. Therefore, the video song works as an assistant for the teacher as it helps the child to understand and follow the movements and gestures of the song. It is important to highlight that teachers should use the video songs as a resource of the class and not as the class. For this reason, the teacher, firstly pre-teaches the new vocabulary and plays a song about or related to them, by teaching gestures and movements, encouraging learners to make them while playing the song. This way, the child is already familiarized with the new words and comfortable to sing and dance along it.

4.1.3 Mime and guess

Age: Preschool (3-5 years old)

Aims:

– To introduce and practice new vocabulary by playing games.
– To develop speaking and pronunciation skills through games and movement.

Greetings: The teacher sings a familiar "hello" song and ask students how they are feeling today.

For a synchronous lesson, the teacher may ask students one by one, calling out their name.

In an asynchronous lesson, the teacher should use gesture such as point to their ear and allowing time for students to answer it while watching, in order to get students participation.

Presentation: In order to present the new vocabulary, the teacher might use a "Mystery box or bag" to provoke learners curiosity and attention. The teacher fills in the Mystery box with objects or flashcards of the vocabulary to be teach in the lesson.

For a synchronous class, the teacher might reveal the objects or flashcards that are inside the Mystery box one by one and has learners repeat them after the teacher, as a group.

For an asynchronous class, as the teacher reveals the objects or flashcards, they may use gestures such as touching their ear as a cue for learners to repeat the words.

Practice: In order to practice the vocabulary just learned, the teacher proposes a miming game in which the teacher says a word from the vocabulary presented before and learners have to mime it, e.g. "Happy" learners make a happy face or "scarf" learners gesture the movement of putting on a scarf on their neck.

In a synchronous class, the teacher begins the game saying the words and then may ask for one learner at a time to say it too.

For an asynchronous class, the teacher says the word and asks learners to mime it with them.

Production: Learners will now play a guessing game which they have to look at the gesture/mimic and say what it is.

For a synchronous class, the teacher begins the game and afterward allows one learner at a time to mime/gesture a word for their classmates to guess.

In an asynchronous class the teacher mimes/gestures a word, asks learners what that is and points to their ear as a cue for learners to guess and say it. The teacher confirms what it was and praise s learners.

Ending the lesson: The teacher might briefly review what was covered in the lesson by showing objects, flashcards or miming the language taught in order to remind learners what was learned in the lesson.

For a synchronous class, the teacher may ask students what they learned on that day.

For an asynchronous class, the teacher should say what was learned.

Good-bye: Sing a familiar "bye-bye song".

Puchta and Elliot (2017) assert the importance of playing games. They affirm that when children are playing the language learning become more significant. Through playing games children learn to follow rules which is important for them to practice social behavior and learn to cooperate. Children retain lots of energy, thus, teachers may use games to help children to release that repressed energy by integrating movements and making the learning process pleasant. This was what this lesson plan tried to feature.

Teachers need to be more enthusiastic and energetic about what they are doing when teaching online than they were in the classroom as their classes are competing with the TV and streaming. On that note, it is pivotal that teachers use plenty of visual aids and a variety of strategies in their remote classes. Nowadays, there are websites and cartoons available through which children are able to learn English vocabulary for free and by themselves. But they do not offer the same interaction as the classroom. Teachers should know how to work and stimulate the child in the target language, thus, these services are great resource tools to use in class as the teacher knows what is appropriate for the child at the moment and how to properly use the resource. As mentioned before, Vygotsky (1962) claims that the child learns language through interacting with an adult or an older person. Therefore, when learning a language with the help of a teacher, the child is more likely to produce and practice the target language by having a mutual communication, and in the proper pace for him/her.

As for the advantages and disadvantages of synchronous and asynchronous classes, one could say that the asynchronous online learning might be a better approach to teach toddlers as this approach provides more flexibility, they are able to access classes at their own time and to watch it as many times as they need. When teaching young children, parents assistance is often necessary, but parents are usually working during school time. Therefore, the asynchronous approach allows parents to help their children to execute the school activities and to participate after their work schedule.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, we discussed alternatives on how to effectively teach English to preschool children online and some available resources for teachers to use in their remote classes.

Firstly, we presented theoretical strategies and approaches to teach language to young children. Secondly, we identified some activities and tools for English teachers to use in their online classes to teach young children remotely. Thirdly, we proposed some lesson plans based on theoretical research and suggested activities that suit online teaching for synchronous and asynchronous classes. Lastly, we analyzed and discussed current ideas that support the researched authors theories.

The pandemic showed that the schools were unprepared to work with technological devices as a promoter of the learning process. The majority of schools did

not have the necessary tools to offer remote teaching properly and few teachers had the proper training to teach online.

School's closure enforced children to homeschooling, something which they were not familiarized with. Learners did not have the maturity and the autonomy given by the remote learning to follow their school routine at home. Some families were apart from the school and their children's learning process. The remote learning forced families to follow closely the school routine, parents may have noticed that it is necessary for them to beware of their children's learning process and the methodology adopted by the school. For young children and toddlers, remote learning is more challenging, especially for their families. As said before, children need routines and in order to continue their studies parents had to add their child's school routine at home while working from home too.

Due to its format, online classes may present some challenges that teachers must be prepared for. As they are working with young children, parents' assistance is necessary for the child to effectively access the class. Therefore, teachers might need to help parents in some issues, such as technological problems or limitations. It is important for teachers to keep a good communication and rapport with parents as their help and participation are in great need during remote teaching.

Children may present an agitated behavior during live classes, particularly during the first month, as they are not used to the new format of the class and are adjusting to the new routine and habits. They may be reluctant to participate or to do the activities at home as their home routine changed, thus, it is important to provide asynchronous classes to learners because they can help parents and children to get adjusted as these classes are more flexible and they can access them any time.

When teaching through asynchronous classes, teachers may avoid videos longer than 10 minutes as children lose interest quickly. If the teacher chooses to use a platform to host their videos, there might be problems with copyright when using songs or videos available on the internet.

Teaching live classes requires an online platform and good internet connection, thus, occasionally teachers might face problems with connection or even in the platform. Teacher must be prepared to deal with this kind of issues and to present solutions or alternatives to manage these situations.

Over the years, technology has been gradually integrated in the classroom, but it was the first time that we faced a situation which remote teaching was mandatory in order to continue the school year. As put before, teachers were not prepared to teach online and they faced issues while adapting their classes to the remote mode, such as the lack of literature about the subject, especially concerning online teaching to toddlers. While investigating literatures about teaching children remotely, we could analyze that

there are e-books available about the subject, but they were written during the emergency remote teaching. Thus, teachers started teaching online without much literary support as they had later access to those materials.

With the lockdown, the inequality between public and private schools can be more observed than before. As for further studies, we would suggest an investigation about how to remotely teach English to children that have limited access to technological tools. Additionally, it would be proper to analyze and explore alternatives for teachers to teach such group in the currently situation. Another suggestion would be trying case studies in public and private schools' contexts, in order to measure children's learning after the remote emergency teaching.

As previously stated, the approaches and tools suggested in this paper were based on theoretical backgrounds and researched books and websites for language teachers of young children. It should be noted that this is not intended to be an applied study, that is, it is not meant to test which techniques work best. It is supposed to be a tentative project with activities that can be used in the online teaching environment for children supported by theoretical assumptions from areas such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Teaching Young Learners, Online Teaching and Remote Teaching. We firmly believe that in complex times, as the one comprehended by the Coronavirus pandemic, collaborative work through sharing suggestions as the ones featured in this paper can be a good strategy to ensure quality in education.

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