

ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ НАУКОВІ СТУДІЇ

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**BILINGUAL YOUNG LEARNERS “READ” THEIR PICTUREBOOKS:
A MULTIDIMENSIONAL RESEARCH IN GREECE**

In the current research, the reactions of young learners, who come from a migrant background, are investigated in connection to their involvement with picturebooks. In order to accomplish this goal, a sample group consisting of fifty children aged five years old who were L1 speakers in Albanian and Bulgarian and were receiving their preprimary education in Greece was chosen to take part in this research study. The children's interactions with a picture book were watched by their instructors while it took place in front of them in the classroom. The study put an emphasis on providing analytical replies relevant to the following four major areas: a) Narrative Meaning; b) Illustrations; c) Context of Book Development; and d) Linguistic Codes. According to the findings of the research, pupils take an active role in their interactions with picture books. As a consequence of this, suggestions have been made for the conduct of more study and the use of educational practices.

Ключові слова: *bilingual young learner; context of book development; foreign language; illustration; linguistic code; narrative meaning; picturebook; teaching method.*

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Introduction

In the modern world, the issue of cultivating another language to young learners takes on a new significance. It is explained by certain societal challenges, in particular young learners who are migrants. Supporting newly arrived migrant children to acquire the language of instruction, while also sustaining and expanding their personal linguistic repertoire, is essential for their successful reception

and integration, as well as for effective instruction (Papadopoulos, 2020; European Commission, 2017, p. 1). According to the data of the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2023), the mosaic of European languages includes not only the official state languages of countries but also the regional or minority languages spoken on European territory for centuries, not to mention the languages brought by migrants. Unlike their native peers, newly

arrived children frequently have complex, multi-country trajectories and varying levels of proficiency in multiple languages; this linguistic diversity is a rich and frequently underutilized source of social and cultural capital (European Commission, 2017, p. In order to accomplish the desired positive outcome — the formation of foreign language communication skills — it is crucial to discover such methods and technologies for teaching foreign languages to young learners.

In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in initiatives aimed at promoting an optimal teaching and learning environment for young learners of a second language. In addition to its application in the pedagogical setting of instructing foreign languages to juvenile pupils, Greece has functioned as a host nation for immigrants and refugees for over thirty years. This circumstance has amplified the scholarly investigation into adolescent learners of a second language who possess a background of migration or refugee status. Papadopoulou (2018a) asserts that Greece serves as a significant intersection of geography and culture, thereby promoting research inquiry and the discovery of solutions for the advancement of a proficient and robust language teaching approach. Additionally, Greece encourages the flexible adaptation of education to new circumstances.

After analyzing the theoretical foundations of effective other language instruction for young learners, picturebooks are demonstrated as an effective tool for teaching languages to younger learners, particularly when the teacher's focus should be on native speakers and migrants.

The idea of using picturebooks in language instruction for young learners was conceived by specialists in children's literature and educators: Gail Ellis, Tatia Gruenbaum, Sandie Mouro, and Annetta Sadowska, who developed a virtual resource for primary teachers of English called PEPELT — Picturebooks in European Primary English Language Teaching. PEPELT was a finalist in the British Council's 2020 ELTons awards for Innovation in Teacher Resources (PEPELT, 2017). Therefore, the article's proposed research is founded on practical experience in this field.

The latest analysis in the field of researching.

It is widely acknowledged that picture books are valuable instructional resources that may meet the requirements of poor language users, particularly in circumstances in which the weak language users are unable to create spoken discourse in the target language. There have been proposed various terms to refer to picture-books such as 'storybooks' (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Ghosn, 2013), 'real picture books' (Dunn, 2003), however, a picture-book is commonly seen as "...a text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial

product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a [reader]. According to Bader (1976), the efficacy of this specific type of artistic expression is dependent on the interconnectedness between visual and linguistic components, the display of two opposing pages concurrently, and the dramatic impact of page-turning.

Sandie Mouro (2016), in researching the use of picturebooks in the primary English as a foreign language classroom, cited Barbara Bader's (1976) definition of a picturebook as text, illustrations, total design; a manufactured and commercial product; a social, cultural, and historical document; and, most importantly, an experience for the [reader]. As a form of art, it depends on the interdependence of images and text, the simultaneous display of two confronting pages, and the spectacle of the page turn (Barbara Bader, 1976, p. 1).

The fact that the practice is a kind of creative expression makes these aspects absolutely necessary for its execution (Ghosn, 2013).

As it is noted in Collins Dictionary, a "picture book" is a book with a lot of pictures and not much writing, and many picture books are intended for children.

In a picturebook, the meaning is created by a combination of the images and the words, as American artist Shulevitz explains (Shulevitz, 1985, page 15). He explains that this is because pictures show and words tell which two distinct forms of communication are.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, teachers of second and foreign languages have been using picture books as supplementary educational tools in their classrooms. These books are often used for younger learners. Because these works represent a viable sort of literature in their own right, it is possible to make this difference between them and other types of literary works. In addition, the context of academic study has given birth, over the course of such a long period of time, to the employment of a number of distinct terms. "Storybooks" (Ellis & Brewster, 2014; Ghosn, 2013), and "real picture books" (Dunn, 2003) are some of the phrases that are included in this category. Other terms that are included in this category include "real picture books" (Dunn, 2003).

It is a multimodal text, which means that it provides a dual presentation of information by combining visuals and words to build meaning (Kress, 2003). This gives the reader the ability to come to their own inferences on the significance of the material. Because of this, it is possible to have a grasp that is more in-depth of the subject that is now being discussed. The children's book with illustrations has found its way into schools; where it is now used to educate pupils to simultaneously analyze both of these points of view.

According to Lewis (2001b), the creation of meaning is the result of dependence between what is seen in the visuals and what is communicated by the words. This is the case because what is seen in the visuals depends on what is conveyed by the words. This is the case because integrating the two elements results in the creation of meaning.

In addition, picturebooks, as a genuine form of literature, have the potential to enhance the imaginative faculties of young learners and promote a more contemplative demeanour. The examination of picturebooks from various viewpoints can enhance the interpretative abilities and emotional intelligence of learners, as suggested by Hismanoglu (2005), Van (2009), and Khatib, Rezaei, and Derakhshan (2011). Utilizing picturebooks can contribute to the comprehensive linguistic advancement of learners in the instructed language. Furthermore, this approach can provide a highly conducive setting for the implementation of translanguaging techniques by the learners.

Given the aforementioned, it is imperative to acknowledge the importance of learners' reactions to picturebooks in the context of language instruction. To be more precise, learners are actively involved in multifaceted reading procedures and are perceived as individuals who generate significance and construct meaning from a given "text."

In this theoretical framework, as posited by Wolfgang (1978), an "implied reader" is presumed to possess the requisite knowledge and contextual understanding to supplement the gaps or uncertainties that may be present in a given "text" authored or produced by an individual. The process of communication between the reader and the text commences when the reader endeavours to complete the lacunae left by the author.

The layout of the picture book, in addition to the peritextual components that it includes (Genette, 1997), is positioned at the heart of the visual tale, and the layout of the picture book itself serves a specific function. This is done so because the layout of the picture book itself serves a particular purpose. Endpapers (Bosch & Duran, 2011) and title pages (Sotto Mayor, 2016) have both been the subject of a significant amount of study; nevertheless, the emphasis of attention right now is on the peritextual components of the picture book within the context of language instruction (Mourao, 2013).

There is no doubt that the use of pictures affects the development of speech (Nezhyva, Palamar, Marienko, 202). It helps bilingual speakers interact with their environment (Papadopoulos, 2020). The teacher, who correctly applies the methods and techniques of working with the book, also plays an important role. Therefore, this issue is complex and directly related to the practical training of a future teacher (Kosahrna N., Petryk L., 2021).

The study

The rationale behind the study's underlying thought process.

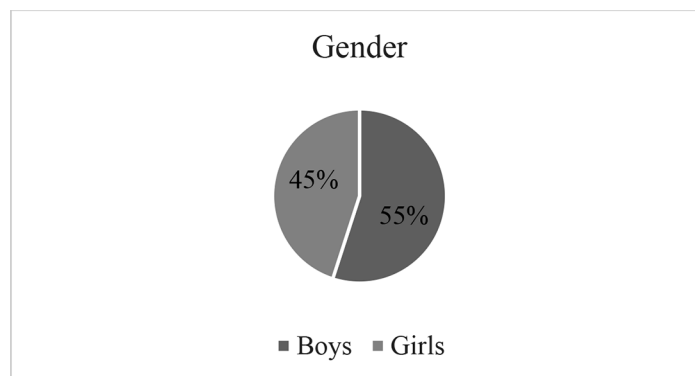
The study was motivated by the emphasis of literary theory on the role of the reader as a meaning maker, wherein the process of constructing meaning from texts is multidimensional and extends beyond words. Specifically, the research focused on the responses of immigrant toddlers to picture books, as this theory served as the driving force behind the investigation. In addition, a multitude of reader response theories exists that encompass various perspectives on the functions of the reader, the text, and the sociocultural environment that influences the interaction between the reader and the text (Beach, 1993, p. 2). With the objective of investigating the responses of multilingual immigrant pupils in the context of Greek, it is important to acknowledge that researchers have been studying reactions to picture books since the 1990s, as evidenced by the works of Arizpe & Styles (2003), Evans (1998), Kiefer (1993), Pantaleo (2008), and Sipe (2000; 2008). This action was taken in acknowledgement of the fact that scholarly investigation into the reception of picture books has been a prominent area of inquiry since the 1990s.

The present study aimed to examine the reactions of youth immigrant pupils towards picturebooks with a focus on:

- a. The "narrative meaning", which pertains to the actions of children in predicting the pre- and post-scenes of a story, as well as their perspectives on the protagonists, their behaviours, and the resulting consequences.
- b. The visual representations, with emphasis on the imagery, the objects portrayed within each image, and the responses elicited from the children towards them.
- c. The book, as a physical artefact, is intricately linked to the broader context of its creation, encompassing the author's creative process, the illustrator's contributions, and the rationale behind the development of each individual image.
- d. The linguistic codes pertain to the linguistic resources and codes utilized by toddlers when engaging with picturebooks and providing corresponding responses.

Participants in the study

The study's participants consisted of 50 toddlers, who had Albanian and Bulgarian as their first languages. All of the subjects under consideration were five years of age. According to the data provided, the aggregate length of time that they spent in Greece was between three and four years. With regard to their distribution on the basis of gender (Graph 1), 45% of the children were girls, while 55% of the participant were boys. Concerning their country of origin, 68% of the children came from Albania, while 32% of the participants were from Bulgaria.



Graph 1. Children's distribution based on gender.

Research Instruments and Design

The present study utilized research instruments and procedures to collect data. To enhance comprehension of the responses provided by the participants, the investigator employed two distinct research instruments.

To accurately document the responses of children upon being presented with a customized picture book specialized recording methodologies were employed. More precisely, the investigators devised an innovative record-keeping procedure that focused on three key elements: a) Narrative Significance, which pertained to distinct scenarios and components of the narrative in the illustrated book, b) the Depiction of the illustrated book and its utilization by individuals, and c) the Context of Book Creation, which pertained to the author of the specific book and other authors that pupils are acquainted with, either from Greece or their respective homelands.

Regarding the methodology employed in this investigation, the investigator observed ten distinct pedagogical sessions in which migrant minors engaged with a visual narrative in the company of their corresponding instructors. The researcher observed ten distinct picture books and employed record procedures during each teaching session to obtain a comprehensive

understanding of the children's reactions and behaviors while engaging with the picture books.

The researchers used the record procedures as a guide to watch the children's behavior and reactions while they interacted with picture books. Their goal was to get a comprehensive understanding of the student's responses and behavior. The instructor did not provide the pupils with any particular directions but rather encouraged them to freely engage in the activity.

Findings

Several findings have been drawn from the analysis of data collected through observation sheets on children's responses to picture books.

Table 1 reveals several findings regarding the narrative meaning processes based on the analytical responses furnished by the toddlers. They appeared to engage in conjecture regarding the occurrences depicted in the picture book, while concurrently offering plausible antecedent and subsequent scenarios derived from the visual representation contained within the book. Finally, it was shown that pertaining to the characters, assessing their potential as the central protagonists of the cinematic work was among the most commonly observed responses of the children.

Table 1.

Analytical Response — Narrative Meaning

Analytical Response	Narrative Meaning
	Children appeared to: 1. Formulate hypotheses on the events shown in the picture book. 2. Based on the image, describe probable situations that take place before and after it. 3. Draw their own conclusions about the characters.

With regards to the depiction of images, Table 2 displays the responses of the toddlers in accordance with it. In particular, the toddlers identified and labelled various objects portrayed

in the image. Additionally, the participants delineated an object that left a lasting impression on them and deemed it crucial for the progression of the narrative.

Table 2.

Analytical Response — Illustrations

Analytical Response	Illustrations
	The toddlers demonstrated the ability to 1. Identify and label items depicted in the image. 2. Elucidate an article that left a lasting impression on the individual.

Regarding the domain of “Context of Book Development,” Table 3 displays the array of answers provided by toddlers. They made reference to both the creator of the illustrated publication and other

plausible identified writers. The individuals also engaged in a discourse regarding the illustrator of the literary work and conveyed their opinions in relation to other illustrators and artists.

Table 3. Analytical Response — Context of Book Development

Analytical Response	Context of Book Development	Toddlers appeared to: 1. Make reference to the author of the book. 2. Cite established authors in the field. 3. Make reference to the individual responsible for creating the visual content. 4. Make references to other artists or painters.
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Finally, the discipline of Linguistic Codes was also brought to the forefront of the research focus. Specifically, when encountering a picturebook, the toddlers exhibited a tendency to spontaneously translate a word or expression into their native language, while they demonstrated a preference for translating their peers’ words into the Greek

language. Finally, it appeared that the individuals in question opted to rephrase any content that they were unable to articulate in the Greek language. Additionally, they took it upon themselves to rectify their peers’ mispronunciations or erroneous usage of Greek words, with instances of neologisms being occasionally observed.

Table 4.

Analytical Response — Linguistic Codes

Analytical Response	Linguistic Codes	Toddlers appeared to: 1. Spontaneously translate a word or expression into their first language. 2. Render the utterances of fellow toddlers into the Greek language. 3. Express the intended message in different words. 4. Use techniques for creating new words or terms. 5. Provide corrective feedback to peers in instances where they mispronounced or misused a Greek word.
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Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the reactions of young learners towards picturebooks. The findings indicate that investigating toddlers’ responses is a valuable pursuit and should be prioritized in the development and execution of instructional strategies. Teaching a language to bilingual young learners by means of picturebooks has many benefits. It help preschoolers to learn more about the narrative. Pictures show certain points and context in general that encourage understanding the foreign language narrative. It is also important to pay attention to authors and illustrators of the picturebooks, thereby fostering further discourse on other Greek or home-country authors.

The toddlers appeared to rely on visual cues from book illustrations to formulate hypotheses regarding the narrative and protagonists. In this particular context, it was observed that the toddlers were able to generate oral communication, as they successfully recognized and categorized various items depicted in the images from the books. We support the idea that the use of the picturebook also affects young learners’ understanding of such categories as “good” — “bad” within the feelings of love, joy, fear, sadness and anger (Yilmaz S., Yüke M., Canel A.N., 2015).

A crucial element of this investigation pertained to the linguistic codes employed by immigrant

pupils. The participants were observed to employ diverse compensation strategies, including translation of a word or phrase into their native language and paraphrasing of incomprehensible content. Additionally, it was observed that they utilized various methods of currency exchange. Furthermore, they acted as intermediaries for their peers when encountering difficulties with Greek terminology.

Based on the aforementioned, it is recommended that educators capitalize on the reactions of their pupils when interacting with picturebooks, as they offer significant prospects for generating oral discourse. Recognizing that the aforementioned strategies and actions implemented by toddlers have served as objectives for educators of bilingual immigrant pupils, it is evident that visual aids such as pictures and picturebooks can provide a calming atmosphere for individuals learning a second language. This allows learners to utilize not only the target language, but also all of their linguistic capabilities to construct meaning, engage in communication and interaction, and ultimately, acquire knowledge.

Practical Implications and Further Research.

Studying a question of teaching a language to bilingual young learners by means of picturebooks (on the example of Greece), we recommend to use picturebooks as an effective way of teaching

a language to children of preschool age primary and also primary school pupils. It also educates and provides such children's characteristics as kindness, openness, communication. Considering that, society

is developing in the direction of digitalization, in further research it is worth considering the issue of using the picturebook through augmented reality and virtual reality (Rudnik, 2023).

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**НАВЧАННЯ МОВИ БІЛІНГВАЛЬНИХ УЧНІВ ЗАСОБОМ КНИЖОК-КАРТИНОК:
БАГАТОВИМІРНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ У ГРЕЦІЇ**

Анотація. У статті розглянуто питання навчання іноземної мови дітей, які є іммігрантами, по відношенню до країни, в якій вони перебувають. Розглянуто документи та рекомендації Ради Європи у цьому питанні; виокремлено позитивний досвід ефективного навчання дітей-іммігрантів другої мови як іноземної; представлено теоретичні розвідки щодо ефективних методів / технологій навчання мови тієї країни, в якій вони є іммігрантами. Практичною складовою статті стало багатовимірне дослідження, проведене у Греції. Аналіз досліджень, на які спиралась автори означеної статті, доводить ефективність застосування саме книжок-картинок у навчанні іноземної мови означеної категорії дітей. В дослідженні брали участь п'ятдесят дітей 5-річного віку (рідні мови — албанська та болгарська), які отримували дошкільну освіту в Греції. Результати дослідження спонукають до важливості створення та застосування подібних книжок-картинок як візуальних посібників з вивчення іноземної мови. Крім того, вони створюють позитивне середовище для білінгвальних учнів, що позитивно впливає на досягнення навчальної та виховної мети.

Ключові слова: білінгвальний учень; ілюстрація; іноземна мова; лінгвістичний код; нарративне значення; книжка-картинка; навчальний метод; розвивальний зміст книжки.

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