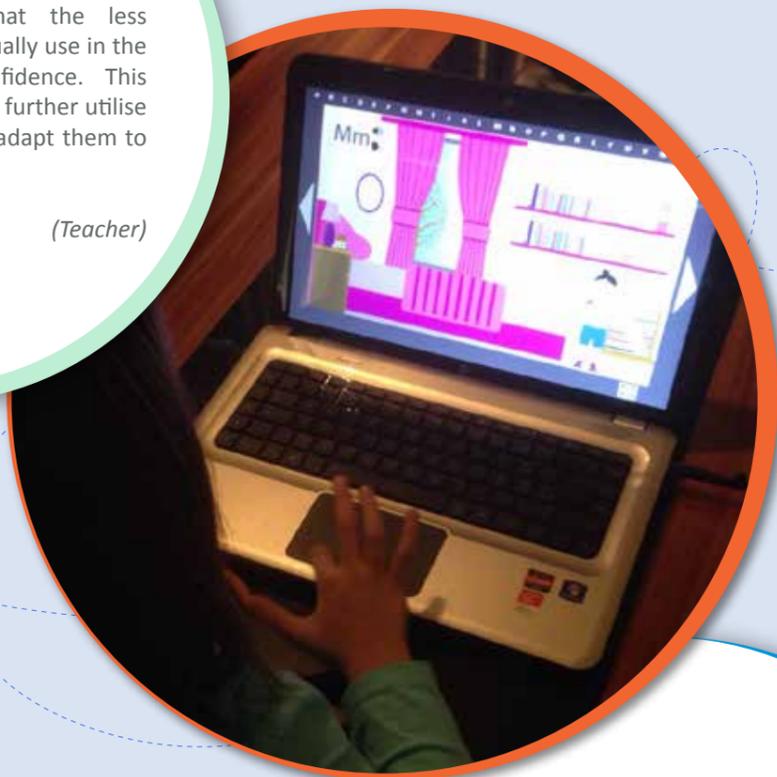


QUOTES

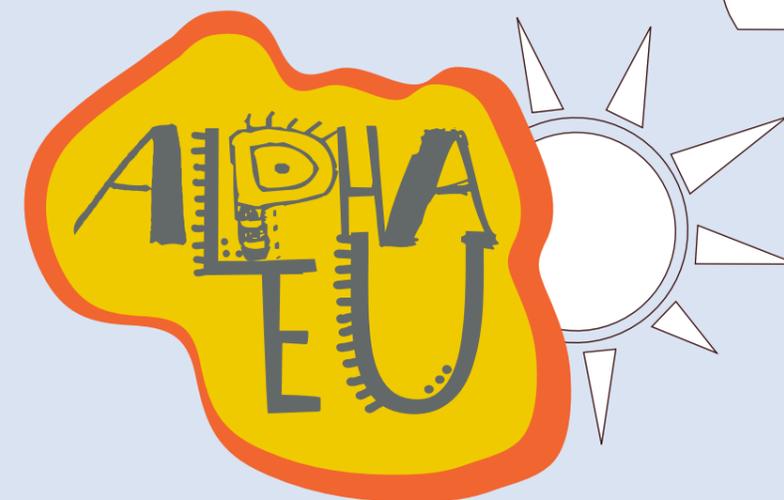
"At first glance I would definitely say there should be more printouts and practical applications, something that the less experienced teacher can actually use in the beginning with more confidence. This would encourage teachers to further utilise the materials and of course adapt them to suit their own needs."

(Teacher)



"Both the Alphabet Books and the Test Your Memory activity could be perfectly implemented in the home environment. It was simply fun to use them; all the tasks were easily explained and engaging attention. The games were flexible, interesting and would be used over again. Basically, this is just excellent blending of entertainment and education, perfectly applicable in every household coping with the second language learning challenges."

(Partner)



Alphabets of Europe

www.alphaeu.org
CASE STUDY - AUSTRIA



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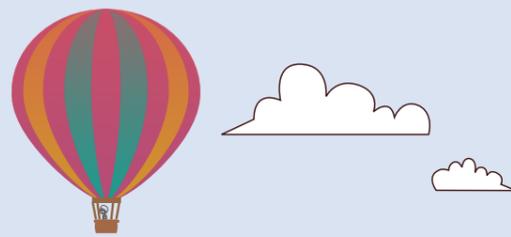
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Studies have shown that phonemic awareness is closely associated with reading ability in the early and later years of schooling, while letter-sound correlation is proved to play an important role in learning how to read and write a language. The Alphabets of Europe (AlphaEU) project focuses on the European Commission's priority of "Promoting early language education." It aims to promote the acquisition of multilingual awareness, and to foster language learning and language skills of pre-schoolers in various European countries, by developing, piloting, and implementing digital alphabet books and alphabet-related interactive activities. Targeted alphabets/languages include: English, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.

The innovative aspect of AlphaEU is that active and creative language learning is channelled through digital media that encourage children to approach European languages and alphabets in a comparative manner. An AlphaEU guide introduces stakeholders to the project's approach and material, while eLearning modules inform and train adult mediators in utilising the digital material. The project encourages involvement of family members in supporting language learning and is expected to have a positive impact on pre-primary language education across the EU.

The AlphaEU project aims to:

- Develop an AlphaEU ELL approach.
- Pilot, design, and develop 30 digital alphabet books and 30 interactive activities in relation to 6 different European languages.
- Provide free access to these materials, by incorporating them in an online platform.
- Provide eLearning training for at least 20 adult mediators in each participating country, bringing teachers and parents in contact through blended learning environments.
- Implement the AlphaEU approach and materials in collaboration with 10 pre-primary teachers and 10 parents in each partner country.
- Author and publicize at least one case study from each country, in order to evaluate, valorise, and demonstrate the AlphaEU approach and materials.
- Pursue intense dissemination and exploitation, in order to make stakeholders aware of the AlphaEU resources, as well as the general value of playful and creative ELL.



IMPLEMENTATION OF BOOKS AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the AlphaEU materials took place primarily in three kindergartens in Vienna and involved teachers and parents, all of whom were engaged with young children between the ages of 3 to 6. The group experimented with the material over several weeks, though actual screen time was quite small due to lack of infrastructure in the institutions. Nevertheless, the group actively implemented and further developed the activities and ideas conceived during and after the relevant training that they had completed.

The most commonly used language pairs in the activities were German and English, followed by German and Italian. As expected, the most commonly used themes were the Farm and the School. The Country books were not used so much, though it would appear that this was more of an age-related and timing issue. The books themselves were mostly used to introduce words and sounds, and of course to familiarise the learners with the characters, Alpha and Zara. The most popular online activity was, as anticipated, the memory game, due to the fact that this is a very common game among pre-schoolers in Austria.



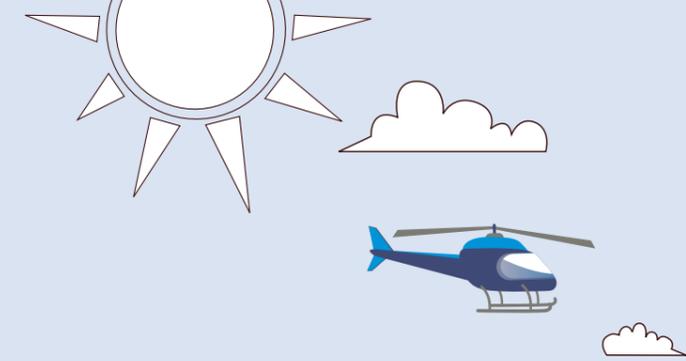
RESULTS

Benefits

- The colourful images, ease of navigation, playful sounds and child-friendly characters make the materials quite appealing to young learners. Such materials are invaluable when introducing (foreign) languages to children in pre-school, or simply raising the language awareness of young learners in general.
- The availability of the activities in "offline" or "off screen" mode in addition to the online mode, make the materials suitable for those with limited infrastructure or those who do not wish to increase their child's screen time.
- The books and activities can be used to complement the existing curricula in the form of introductory/supplementary material. Using the materials at home also ensures some continuity on activities that have already been introduced or completed in the school environment.
- The books are designed for use with a mediator (teacher/parent/guardian), thereby increasing the time spent together while using the materials.

Challenges

- There is limited infrastructure in most facilities, making the main material only suitable for small groups of 3-4 children at a time. Making the materials available for touch screen applications would also ease this problem, as this would increase the mobility and hence motivation for using the books.
- The materials require a more comprehensive reward system, i.e. a visual reward (star) or audio ("Well done!") should be seen or heard upon completion of a task.



TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Teachers

- Integrate books and activities in the curriculum, as they help reinforce language awareness, vocabulary recognition, and cross-cultural awareness.
- Study thoroughly the material before implementing it in the classroom.
- Encourage role-play based on the characters and storyline of the books.
- Create Alpha and Zara puppets.
- Integrate the story line in the lesson and ask the students to come up with alternative development in the storyline, or ending, or continuation.
- Use flashcards and a poster to play a game on it with letter and flashcards beginning with that letter.

Parents

- Learn a new language along with your child; make this a shared experience!
- Play WITH your child!
- Build on what is done at school and extend on it at home.
- Explore different languages and compare vocabulary between them.
- Do not focus on mistakes; the important aspect is that children are daring to learn a new language!

