

QUOTES



"I liked the software very much. I feel that it is very useful and I will definitely use it again during my lesson. I think that there is not similar software in Greek. It is an excellent program which gains the interest of students and attracts them."

(Teacher interview)



"My son wanted to try the difficult level. He played four times the same game and he didn't do any mistakes. He was really excited!"

(Parent Interview)

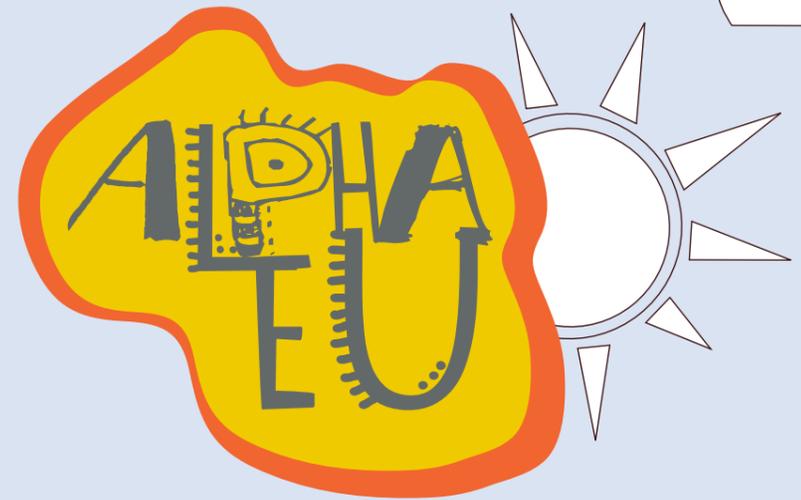


"I believe that it has to do with computer and technology in general. Students are excited because the software combines sound and pictures. I think that the fact that the software is in Greek helps us a lot as there is not much material available for kindergarten."

(Teacher interview)

"She asks to play without being reminded by me. This is an indication that she is entertained by the books and games. Today, she played memory games on her own."

(TParent's Log)



Alphabets of Europe

www.alphaeu.org
CASE STUDY - CYPRUS



Lifelong Learning Programme

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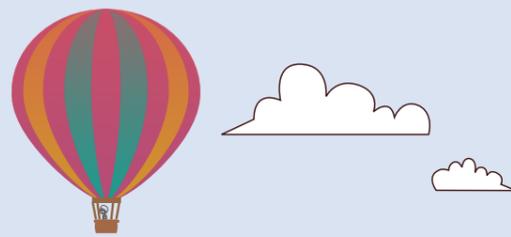
PROJECT OVERVIEW

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, faster language learning and language skills of pre-schoolers in various European countries, by developing, piloting, and implementing digital alphabet books, as well as alphabet-related games and interactive activities. Targeted alphabets/languages include: English, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. 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 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. E-learning modules will inform and train adult mediators in utilising the digital material. The project encourages involvement of family members in supporting language learning. The digital alphabet books and activities will be implemented with pre-school children in all participating countries. The AlphaEU project 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 comparative activities in relation to 6 different European languages.
- Provide free access to these materials, by incorporating them in an on-line platform.
- Provide e-learning 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.
- Pursue intense dissemination and exploitation.



IMPLEMENTATION OF BOOKS AND ACTIVITIES

The AlphaEU digital books and activities were implemented with 10 kindergarten teachers and teacher assistants and 10 parents of children aged 2-6 in Cyprus, most of whom had participated in the Adult mediators' training. Regular observations were conducted by the research team in the classes of the teachers, most of whom taught at the private kindergarten "Heidi Land" in Nicosia, Cyprus and in the homes of the parents. The teachers collaborated with the research team to design lesson plans that complied with the National Curriculum, while the parents followed a more flexible approach in terms of when and how the children used the books and activities. Both groups of participants - teachers and parents - explored all of the alphabet books in Greek and most of them also explored the ones in English as well. Some of the parents explored with their children all the books in all the languages, as a means of sharing with their children the experience of learning vocabulary in multiple languages. The teachers and parents also integrated all of the interactive activities in their implementation, with the "Match the language" and "Spell the word" activities being the most popular.

The data collected from the implementation included a participant profile survey, the teaching material delivered, semi-structured interviews with the teachers and parents, completed teachers' logs and parents' logs, photos from the implementation, researchers' observation notes, and interviews with teachers and parents.



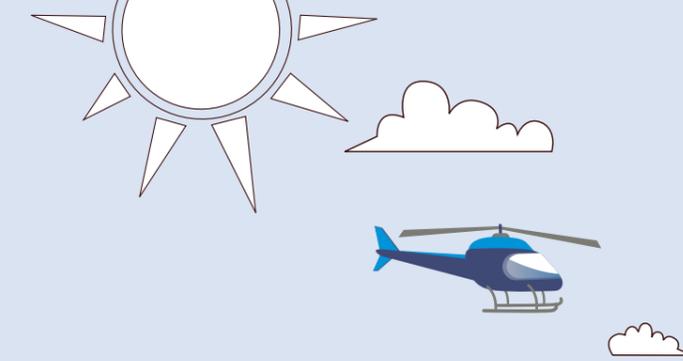
RESULTS

Benefits

- Excitement about the availability of instructional material for this age group
- Material can support and reinforce what children learn in class and can be continued at home
- "Fun learning" for children, while constructive and well-structured
- Promotion of awareness of other languages and matching of words between them
- Awareness of multiculturalism; similarities and differences
- Active participation, enthusiasm, excitement for material by students
- Children looking forward to next session with books/activities
- Collaboration and interaction among students

Challenges

- Availability of computers at school
- Students getting used to equipment at school (keyboard, mouse)
- Some design shortcomings (e.g. too many items on one page, suggestions for more items)
- Novelty effect of digital material; the more the students practice, the more the novelty effect wears off and real learning outcomes are achieved



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 from that letter.

Parents

- 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.
- Learn a new language along with your child; make this a shared experience!
- Do not focus on mistakes; the important aspect is that children are daring to learn a new language!

