

QUOTES

This tool helped them become more sensitive to this diversity and interested in the difference compared to their own language which they had not contemplated before and become aware of these differences or similarities to other languages.

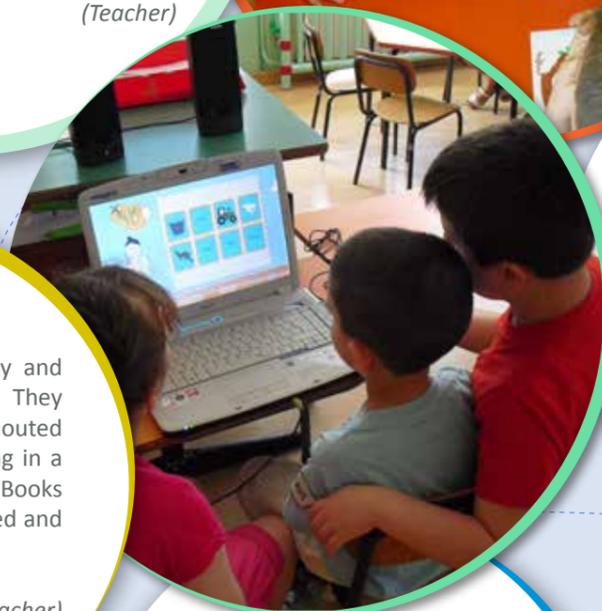
It has definitely added value to the curricular as it allows to consolidate and extend our literacy program in a fun and innovative way.

(Teacher)



The experience has been really and totally involving for children. They fought for the computer, they shouted and so, even if this is frustrating in a sense, still it's a proof that the Books and Activities have been received and accepted successfully.

(Teacher)

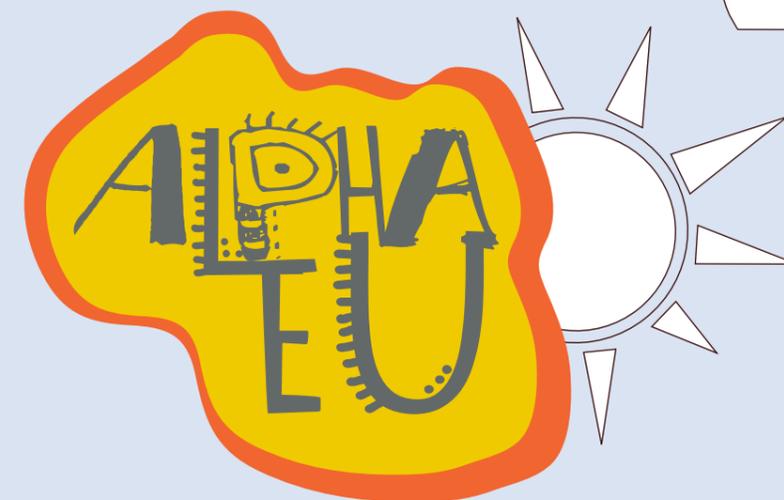


My son used the City Alphabet Books in Romanian and English at school, and was introduced the Greek Alphabet Book so at home he wanted to try and learn especially the Greek Alphabet noticing with enthusiasm differences and similarities with the Italian language.

(Parent)

The introduction of digital devices as Alphabet Books and Activities has been very successful. Children were never tired of using them and kept asking us to use the books or the activities, always showing much interest and enthusiasm.

(Teacher)



Alphabets of Europe

www.alphaeu.org

CASE STUDY - ITALY



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CONTACT US

Dott. Francesca Granieri, The Language Center S.r.l., Via Mazzini, 18, 06059 TODI (PG)
Tel: +390758948364
info@wellanguage.com, www.wellanguage.com



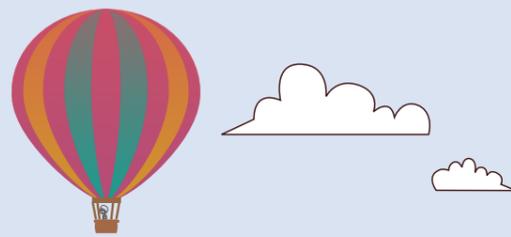
PROJECT OVERVIEW

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 APHAEU alphabet books and activities involved 3 different school districts: Circoli Didattici di Todi, Marsciano, and Orvieto (Istituto Comprensivo Orvieto-Montecchio). The Language Center worked closely with 10 experienced in-service pre-school teachers for the creation of lessons and testing of these online resources with children aged from 3 to 6 over a period of 2 to 4 weeks. The project also involved the support of 10 parents, who tested the material at home to provide independent feedback.

The lessons particularly focused on letter recognition in the native language (Italian) and on exploring alphabets and words in other languages. The teachers implemented different themes from the AlphaEU digital alphabet books and activities; one school chose to work with the Farm and Country Alphabet Books in German and in Portuguese; another with English and Romanian alphabet books on School and City, and the third school focused on the Country and Farm books in German and Portuguese. These themes were often integrated with on-going school projects such as recycling, or "happy farm", and home safety, while other schools tested the alphabet books independently from the curriculum working on diversity and language awareness in their multicultural classrooms.

The project was introduced as a game: the kids helped the characters of Alpha and Zara search for words beginning with the chosen alphabet letter. The kids were then divided into two groups of 15 each, alternating one group at the computer while the other 15 drew the images on the cards. In another activity, they were asked to draw one of the images from the relevant alphabet page. These drawings became their flashcards, which were used during every lesson to review the vocabulary learnt. At the same time the activities "Match the Language" and "Test your memory" were introduced. The teachers organized a kind a competition so the kids were stimulated to learn as many words because they wanted to win! After 6 weeks the kids were able to remember successfully a range of 30 words in both Portuguese and German.



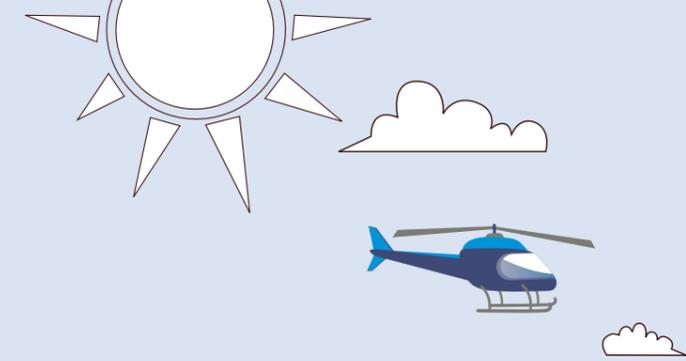
RESULTS

Benefits

- Enhanced phonemic awareness
- Enhanced ICT Skills for children
- Creative exploration of at least two foreign languages
- Pronunciation of familiar words in at least two foreign languages often very different from the children's native language
- The opening of children's minds to multilingualism and cultural diversity

Challenges

- No computer room in pre-schools; teachers had to bring their own laptops, so there were not enough computers in the classroom and kids had to wait for their turn
- Increase the number of activities to consolidate language and apply independently
- More language items on each page



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

- 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!

