D19: Local Implementation Reports [Portugal]

Prepared by IPCB
30/11/2014

Project Title: Alphabets of Europe
Project Acronym: AlphaEU
Project Number: 531092-LLP-1-2012-1-CY-KA2-KA2MP

1. Introduction

This is the implementation report of IPCB, which follows the guidelines set out by the Implementation Guide. The aim of the implementation phase of Alpha EU is to test and document the project's approach and use of the digital alphabet books and interactive activities in an applied setting; and to use this experience to produce a local implementation report and an in-depth case study report.

2. IPCB Contribution

This is a report of an implementation of the Alpha EU digital alphabet books and activities, and a test of the method that is advocated by this project. IPCB identified the following preschool teachers in three local Pre-school centers: Centro Social P. Redentoristas - Infantário Raposinho; Jardim de Infância S. Casa da Misericórdia 1; Centro Infantil nº 2 do CDSS, under direct monitoring of Maria Maria José Infante, herself a preschool educator:

The number of preschool teachers (inclusive of pre-service students) involved in implementation is 21.

The 10 parents and caregivers were identified through the preschool teachers, as it was considered during the training course that this would be the adequate strategy. The preschool teachers would contact directly with parents and would articulate work done in the classroom with work at home.

The aim of the implementation was to develop a series of activities to test the digital tools developed by the project consortium, and to apply the project's approach to their use. The aim of the implementation and of the focus group discussion was also to receive feedback on the use of these digital learning resources, and to gather any suggestions for improvements to be made to the resources.

One of the AlphaEU researchers who is a preschool teacher trainer, Maria José Infante, monitored closely how the preschool teachers and in-service student teachers used the tools and resources in order to gain a full insight into how useful these resources are.

IPCB chose a preschool center and preschool teacher to interview and used the guide to the interview and focus group sessions included in the Implementation guide. Having gathered this information, IPCB compiled a detailed case study report, which will be ready by September 2014, as previewed.

3. Local timeline of implementation

The table below provides an overview of activities leading up to the implementation. Including when notices and invitations were sent out, when teachers and parents were recruited, when the implementation was hosted and the implementation report generated.

DATE	ACTIVITY
January, 2nd, 2014	Planning of implementation with Pre-school Trainer Coordinator at the College of Education (ESE) involving manager Margarida Morgado and researcher Maria José Infante
January, 21st, 2014	First draft of blended-learning training workshop and of the design for implementation
January, 30th, 2014	Final training workshop outline document produced and agreed on
January, 21st to February,18th, 2014	Contacts with pre-school teachers and preschool centers to establish groups where the implementation will take place; Organising student teachers' practices to accommodate implementation of AlphaEU resources and approach
February, 15th to March, 12th, 2014	Posters advertising AlphaEU training module and inviting participants to join it and to know more about the project
March, 12th, 2014	Training workshop – face-to-face – 3 hours
March, 17th to March, 29th, 2014	Training workshop – on line – 4 hours
April, 7th, 2014	Training workshop – face-to-face – 3 hours
April, 28th to May, 23rd, 2014	**Implementation of activities in schools (development and implementation, recording, reflecting)**
June, 11th, 2014	Focus group to reflect on implementation and record best practices for Poruguese case study
June, 11th – 15th,2014	Collect data for case study
June, 31st, 2014	Implementation Report

4. Implementation Notice/Invitation

IPCB created two notices that were disseminated locally and face to face to pre-school teachers and student teachers through its existing educational networks, since IPCB is a teacher training college and networks with pre-school teachers who act as supervisors of trainee students (also referred to as 'student teachers' when they are doing their final practice in pre-school) in pre-school and nurseries.

The first notice is an advertisement for the b-learning training module on AlphaEU (annex 1). The second notice (annex 2) is a more general call for participation and to be involved in implementing the AlphaEU resources:

Both notices are powerful dissemination tools that rendered the AlphaEU project visible for student teachers, visiting teachers and IPCB staff, besides preschool teachers and other end users of preschool centers were it was sent to.

5. Local Implementation Plans

5.1 Overview of local implementation

The local implementation plan was developed during January 2014, after the project's 3rd face-to-face meeting in Rome, and adapted to suit the requirements laid by the Implementation guide published in February 2014.

IPCB AlphaEU manager and researcher Margarida Morgado coordinated with the pre-school teacher trainer at its College of Education (ESE), Maria José Infante, how IPCB would approach pre-school teachers and involve the student teachers during their teacing practice in pre-school classes.

Three pre-schools in Castelo Branco, 2 pre-school teachers who are also supervisors of ESE trainee students, and two to four trainee students in each pre-school were put together as target groups that would receive training and then implement the resources and the AlphaEU approach in preschools with pre-schoo supervisingl teachers.

Other pre-school teachers and trainee students were also invited to take part in the training sessions. See table below on numbers and places where AlphaEu was implemented.

5.2.Local timetable of implementation

The table below provides an overview of implementation activities in preschool centres.

DATE	ACTIVITY
May, 12-15, 2014	**Location and participants:** Centro Infantil Castelo Branco II (Lúcia Belo, Guida Branco, Luzia Antunes, Tânia Luís) Involvement of parents (Rui Paulo) **AlphaEU Resources**: Use of the Farm Alphabet – English and Portuguese versions **Children:** 25 children – 5/6 years old.
May, 7th, 2014	**Location and participants:** Centro Social Padres Redentoristas – O Raposinho (Maria José Carvalho, Ana Cardoso) **AlphaEU Resources**: Use of the farm alphabet in Portuguese **Children:** 26 children – 4 years old
May, 13th, 2014 May, 20th, 2014	**Location and participants:** Centro Social Padres Redentoristas – O Raposinho (Helena Vaz Santos) **AlphaEU Resources**: The farm alphabet in English **Children:** 4/5 years old
June, 2nd-3rd-4th	**Location and participants:** Centro Social Padres Redentoristas – O Raposinho (Maria José Carvalho, Joana Ribeiro) **AlphaEU Resources**: City Alphabet (Portuguese) **Children:** 26 children 4 years old
May 8th, 9th, 2014	**Location and participants:** Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Castelo Branco (Virgínia Barata, Joana Henriques) **AlphaEU Resources**: Farm Alphabet and animals (Portuguese and English); activity memory game to contrast Portuguese and English **Children:** 5 year olds
June, 3rd, 2014	**Location and participants:** Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Castelo Branco (Virgínia Barata, Joana Henriques, Maria João Ferreira) **AlphaEU Resources**: Farm alphabet (Portuguese and Greek) School alphabet (Portuguese and English and Greek) **Children:** 3 year olds
May, 14th	**Location and participants:** Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Castelo Branco (Sandra Custódio, Isabel Antunes, Ana Rita Lourenço, Elsa Antunes) **AlphaEU Resources**: Farm alphabet, Portuguese and English; activity memory game to contrast Portuguese and

	English **Children:**
May, 14th	**Location and participants:** Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Castelo Branco (Virgínia Barata, Maria João Rodrigues, **AlphaEU Resources**: Means of transportation in the City Alphabet (Portuguese and Italian **Children:** 3 years old
June, 11th, 2014	**Location and participants:** Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Castelo Branco **AlphaEU Resources**: School alphabet (Portuguese, English and Greek) **Children:**
May, 14th	**Location and participants:** Patrícia Reis, Vanessa Dias **AlphaEU Resources**: City alphabet and another alphabet (in Portuguese and English) that the children choose to explore road safety. **Children:** 3 years old
June, 3rd	**Location and participants:** Patrícia Reis, Vanessa Dias **AlphaEU Resources**: Imagination and creativity through the Farm alphabet in Portuguese and Italian **Children:**

5.3. List of invited people to take part in the implementation

Preschool centers where AlphaEU was implemented	Groups of children	Number of children	Teachers of English as Foreign Language	Pre-school teachers /educators who supervise pre-service students	Pre-service students
3	5	110	3	5	11

Centro Social P. Redentoristas - Infantário Raposinho

Pre-school teachers /educators who supervise pre-service students	Pre-service students /5
Maria José Carvalho	Ana Filipa Ribeiro Martins Ana Patrícia Leal Cardoso Joana Patrícia Agostinho Ribeiro
Irene Gonçalves	Patrícia Alexandra Gameiro dos Reis Vanessa Sofia Dias

Jardim de Infância S. Casa da Misericórdia 1

Pre-school teachers /educators who supervise pre-service students /2	Pre-service students /4
Virgínia Barata	Joana Rita dos Santos Henriques Maria João Rodrigues Ferreira
Sandra Custódio	Elsa Filipa Sousa Antunes Ana Rita Antunes Ribeiro

Centro Infantil nº 2 do CDSS

Pre-school teachers /educators who supervise pre-service students /1	Pre-service students /2
Lúcia Belo	Tânia Sofia Horta dos santos Luís Luzia Maria Vilela Antunes

In the table below there is information on who IPCB invited to take part in the implementation and reason for inviting these participants.

Name of Participant and Organisation (if applicable)	Role within the field of early education
Maria José Infante, IPCB	Pre-school trainer and coordinator of teaching practices of student teachers
Margarida Morgado, IPCB	AlphaEU manager
Maria José Carvalho, **Centro Social P. Redentoristas - Infantário Raposinho**	Pre-school educator and superviser of ESECB student trainees
Ana Filipa Ribeiro Martins, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Ana Patrícia Leal Cardoso, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Joana Patrícia Agostinho Ribeiro, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Irene Gonçalves, **Centro Social P. Redentoristas - Infantário Raposinho**	Pre-school educator and superviser of ESECB student trainees
Patrícia Alexandra Gameiro dos Reis ESECB,	ESECB student trainee
Vanessa Sofia Dias, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Virgínia Barata, **Jardim de Infância S. Casa da Misericórdia 1**	Pre-school educator and superviser of ESECB student trainees
Joana Rita dos Santos Henriques, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Maria João Rodrigues Ferreira, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Sandra Custódio, **Jardim de Infância S. Casa da Misericórdia 1**	Pre-school educator and superviser of ESECB student trainees
Elsa Filipa Sousa Antunes, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Ana Rita Antunes Ribeiro, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Lúcia Belo, **Centro Infantil nº 2 do CDSS**	Pre-school educator and superviser of ESECB student trainees
Tânia Sofia Horta dos Santos Luís, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Luzia Maria Vilela Antunes, ESECB	ESECB student trainee
Guida Branco	English teacher in pre-primary schools
Helena Vaz Santos	English teacher in pre-primary schools
Rui Paulo	parent
Carla Ponte	parent

AlphaEU Implementation	
IPCB Implementation Report	
Country: Portugal	Date: 31/07/2014
Partner Organisation: IPCB	Staff Member: Margarida Morgado
Description of your implementation	
Participant Profiles Please provide some information about your participants (age, gender, education, profession, etc) : this can be taken from the Participant Profile Form *(200 words)*	The participants are experienced 5 experienced preschool teachers who supervise pre-service trainee students during their teaching practice;1 pre-school teacher trainer: 11 pre-service trainee students doing their internship in pre-school centres; 2 foreign language teachers. They are all female and they all have a degree course in education. All the in-service trainee students are concluding their master degrees. The teacher trainer has a master degree and is concluding her PhD in preschool education supervision. The ages of preschool teachers fall within the age range 36-45 and 46-55; the teacher trainer's age falls within the 46-55 age range and the pre-service trainee students' age range falls within the 18-25 gap. One director of one of the preschool centres involved in the implementation took part in the training and were indirectly involved in the implementation.
Objectives of the Implementation *(200 words)*	The objectives of the implementation were to: • Getting to know and use the AlphaEU pedagogical materials; • Participating in a EU Co-financed multinational project, in the field of early education; • Getting to know pedagogical strategies about multilingualism and pre-school education; • Implementing the AlphaEU digital products in pre-school institutions; • Sharing units and plans for using the products in an educational environment • Trial resources and materials with children and get feedback; • Collect data on how experienced preschool educators use the AlphaEU resources and materials;

- Involve the preschool communities in multilingual and intercultural practices;
- Motivate parents to use these materials and resources with children in tandem with goes on in school and independly;
- Motivate foreign language teachers to use these resources and materials and trial them in class;
- Learn about how these materials can be included in curricular activities;
- Understand the preferred uses of the materials by preschool educators, pre-service student teachers, parents and relate those to AlphaEU concepts and suggested pedagogic approach.

| Format of Implementation

How often were the alphabet books used during the implementation?

(200 words) | In **Centro Infantil nº 2**, there were two stages defined for using the AlphaEU Resources and Materials. During the week from 12 to 15 May, children were engaged in preparing some materials that would be used during the implementation of the Farm Alphabet. The topics they worked on with their educators were: farm animals and writing. Children got to know the graphics of letters c and p. From 26 to 29 May, the children explored the Farm alphabet.

In **Jardim de Infância O Raposinho**, in the 5-year-olds classroom, after a first contact with the alphabet books, on 8th May the children explored the AlphaEu resources by associating the written word to an image or an object within the themes: Professions and Food Processing.The concept behind this task was to match words from the Alphabet book to things and objects of their study visit on the prevous day, such as: cheese, cow, milk, farm, etc., and to learn how they are written in English and in Portuguese.
There was another day for implementing AlphaEu materials in connection with Road Safety on the 14th May.

In **Jardim de Infância O Raposinho**, in the 4-year-olds classroom on the 8th May children exploring animals in the AlphaEU Farm Alphabet by using the computer.

In **Jardim de Infância da Misericórdia 1**, in the 4-year-olds classroom, there were also two stages in exploring AlphaEU resources and materials. In the first stage there was a presentation of some of the Alphaeu resources:
*presenting Alpha and Zara through the farm alphabet in Portuguese; |

	* the children were told that during a visit to the farm Alpha and Zara had a lot of fun photographing some of the animals they saw so that they could show them to others later. * listening to the animals' names and focusing on the butterfly, the pig, the horse and the cat: borboleta, porco, cavalo e gato. In the second stage, the children explored the **Alphaeu project approach:** *reminding the children of the characters Alpha and Zara; *listening to the animals' names in English through the English version of the Farm Alphabet and focusing on (butterfly), (pig), (horse) and (cat); *the children repeat the names of the animals in English. In **Jardim de Infância da Misericórdia 1**, in the 5-year-olds classroom, on the 14th May: • Children spoke about a story they heard in the English session; • They retold the story; • They matched words (in English and in Portuguese) to pictures; • They explored the AlphaEU software through the Farm Alphabet (vowels) • They played the memory game.
Alphabet Books Which alphabet books were chosen for the implementation (including which languages) and why were they chosen? *(300 words)*	Use of the Farm Alphabet – English and Portuguese versions Use of the farm alphabet in Portuguese The farm alphabet in English City Alphabet (Portuguese) Farm Alphabet and animals (Portuguese and English); activity memory game to contrast Portuguese and English Farm alphabet (Portuguese and Greek) School alphabet (Portuguese and English and Greek) Farm alphabet, Portuguese and English; activity memory game to contrast Portuguese and English Means of transportation in the City Alphabet (Portuguese and Italian School alphabet (Portuguese, English and Greek) City alphabet and another alphabet (in Portuguese and English) that the children choose to explore road safety. Imagination and creativity through the Farm alphabet in Portuguese and Italian All these alphabets were chosen because their themes were connected with themes explored during a particular week. The pairing of Portuguese and English was mostly chosen because English is the foreign language being introduced in

	each of these preschool centres.
Activities Which activities were used in the implementation and why were they chosen? *(300 words)*	activity memory game to contrast Portuguese and English animals, connected to the Farm alphabet – animals They were chosen to reinforce learning and to contrast two languages.
Implementation Which elements of the alphabet books and activities worked best together and why? (300 words)	The elements that were best explored were: - the characters: Alpha and Zara - browsing through the alphabets - exploring what you can find on the farm - connecting the animals on the farm alphabet to animals the children had seen on a study visit to a farm - exploring a couple of elements (things) in three different languages using a study visit as a prompt. The children has visited the Higher School of Education and then they explored clock, pen, paper and blackboard in the School Alphabets in Portuguese, English and Greek. - To identify the same word in two languages, eg. Portuguese and Greek, by matching the written words taken from the alphabets. - To draw letters from the same object in two languages - Repeating words to develop good auditory skills - Learn words that are thematically connected such as the animals on a farm in a foreign language - Exploring traffic signs in the city alphabet in any two languages: find those words and name them - Sensitising children to multiculturality through two languages in different languages - Recreating the characters Alpha and Zara as puppets and dramatise stories where objects from the alphabets appear - Train phonetic hearing; - sharing familiar topics from diverse cultural perspectives - Understand the foreign language before producing it - Use the AlphaEU resources to explore cultural, individual and social diversity through the Farm animals theme
Main Outcomes of the implementation? **Key Questions** How were the books actually	Preschool teachers and pre-service student teachers explored the AlphaEU materials and resources and planned how to integrate them into their classes; Lesson plans that introduce AlphaEU resources and materials into curricular topics being explored; Additional materials and didactic ideas for exploring them created by the preschool educators; Coordinated work between preschool teachers and English

used? Where the books integrated into the curriculum or were they extra-curricular? Did the children's language awareness improve? (600 words)	teachers when exploring AlphaEU materials and resources Lesson plan by the English teacher at preschool Experimentation with introducing several other foreign languages besides English with preschool children The alphabet books were all integrated into the curriculum and explored within a thematic, curricular approach to learning, as seen in the table above. They were first explored with the children using a browsing technique; first with a large group of children and then in smaller groups or individually. Children are initially allowed to explore the alphabets and to play. The 3-year-olds explored the sounds essentially, while the 4 and 5-year-olds already looked at the letters. Then they were integrated into curricular topics being explored as one more resource to be explored. They may have been used as an initial trigger for a certain activity or to complement some learning activity. On the whole, children were keen to explore the new languages and the preschool teachers were amazed at how well the children accepted linguistic and cultural diversity. Children showed curiosity for letters, images, the concept of the alphabet; they managed to copy letters from the Portuguese and from the Greek alphabet. They freely drew Greek characters in the sand during the study visit and loved to hear Greek words. Their phonetic awareness was improved because they could differentiate sounds in Portuguese and English while playing the memory game. They recognised the Greek words as totally different from the Portuguese words; they enjoyed the rhythm of Italian and recognized its similarity with Portuguese. They loved to repeat the Italian words.
Feedback from Preschool Teachers (200 words)	They were apprehensive in connection to the available equipment (computer and video projector) and Internet connection. The fact that the AlphaEU resources and materials can only be accessed online as felt as a drawback in the context of the preschool environment. The children were very receptive to the AlphaEU resources and materials when they browsed through them initially, but strategies had to be varied to maintain their interest. Children like to repeat the sounds they hear. Children liked the notion that they did not know which words they would find. The mystery was appealing to them. The characters Alpha and Zara were very well liked by the children and it was felt that they should be more present in the

	alphabet books. The preschool teachers identified that it is important to have all the words translated because if they want to work with a language they don't know the object isn't always obvious. The same applies to the country alphabets: the information should be translated into all languages.
Feedback from Parents *(200 words)*	The children tire easily from this kind of material because it is not as immediate as other available commercial products. Children are used to online games with a lot of song, noise, rhythm and visual advertising and in comparison, the AlphaEU books are slow, more didactic and less entertaining. One should add more rhythm, colour and what else(sic) (this opinion was shared by a couple of parents in several of the preschool centres that implemented the AlphaEU materials). On clicking, the response should be quicker. Children are used to fast paces when playing digital games. Parents do not monitor what children do on the computer; they expect the children will know what is expected. These resources are not children friendly in the sense that they learn by just doing.
Area for Improvements, including design of books and activities. *(200 words)*	The IPCB AlphaEU manager collected a series of suggestions for improving design of books and activities. Most of the problems identified by educators was that there are objects on the screen, but no accompanying word in certain languages. They also identified some mismatches between objects and words in Portuguese. Thirdly, they made suggestions that concern screen layout, size of letters and background colour interference with letter recognition. Lastly, they also made comments on misspellings and preferred spellings. All the details were sent to the coordinator in Cyprus and are currently being dealt with. This included recording more words for the Portuguese alphabet books that corresponded to objects that children identified and that had not been included. 1. Objects on the screen with no corresponding word In what concerns the Portuguese alphabet books, the following objects were identified on the Alphabet book pages for which there are no corresponding words/sounds 1.1.Farm alphabet Letter A there are two trees. That would be in PT: árvores (audio file attached) Letter C there is a house. That would be in PT: casa (audio file

attached)
Letter J there is a jug. That would be in PT: jarro (audio file attached)
Letter J there is a window. That would be in PT: janela (audio file attached) – please alter speech balloon. Where it says 'duas' write 'três' (three words instead of two, if we include window)
Letter V there is a deer. That would be in PT: veado (audio file attached)

1.2. Home Alphabet
Letter C there is a lamp. That would be in PT: candeeiro (audio file attached)
Letter C there is a chair, That would be in PT: cadeira (audio file attached)
Letter J there is jewelry. That would be in PT: jóias (audio file attached)
Letter J there us a jug. That would be in PT: jarro (audio file attached)
Letter N there is a wool ball. That would be in PT: novelo (audio file attached)
Letter S there is a toilet. That would be in PT: sanita (audio file attached)

1.3. City Alphabet
Letter C there is a lamp. This would be in PT: candeeiro (audio file attached)
Letter G there is a fork. This would be in PT: garfo (audio file attached)
Letter N there is a groom and bride. This would be in PT: noivos (audio file attached)
Letter T there is a roof. This would be in PT: telhado (audio file attached)
Letter V there is a sailing boat. This would be in PT: veleiro (audio file attached)

2.   There are wrong words in relation to the pictures seen:
2.1. Home Alphabet
Letter B substitute 'banho' for: 'banheira'
Letter G substitute 'guarda chuva' for 'guarda sol'

2.2. City Alphabet
Letter M substitute 'mercearia' for 'merceeiro' (audio file attached)

	3. Layout size of letters and background colour interference with letter recognition. 3.1. Home alphabet: M and I – you cannot see these letters well because of the background colour 3.2. Home Alphabet: Letters should be bigger and in bold as in the City alphabet 4. Preferred spellings/ misspellings 4.1. Farm Alphabet Letter E- speech baloon. Correct 'Mm' for 'Hum' 4.2. Farm alphabet Letter J: we've used 'Jeep'. Teachers/educators would prefer the alternative PT word: jipe 4.3. Farm alphabet Letter O there is only one sheep. This should be in PT: 'ovelha' and not 'ovelhas' (audio file attached)

Annexes: lesson plans, implementation reports and photographs

7. Focus Group/Interviews and for the Observation

IPCB AlphaEU researcher Maria José Infante conducted the focus group interviews. She had been present at all the implementation planning stages and also during the actual implementation in the 3 preschool centers. She interviewed four preschool teachers and four pre-service student teachers, separately, and used the questions included in the Implementation Guide to facilitate talk about the implementation.

1) How can digital alphabet books actually be used in the classroom?

   The fact that they are a digital resource is a motivational factor for children. They can be used to play and also either to introduce or complement a curricular topic. They are never used to learn a letter per se; they are integrated in a storyline, they are used to tell the story of Alpha and Zara and how they went around taking pictures. They are used to explore different sounds and words in diverse languages.

2) How can digital alphabet books actually be used in outside of the classroom, i.e. at home?

   There are no clear data on this, but it seems that parents propose that they should play with them as they play other online games, with a clear disadvantage, because the alphabet books are not games; they have a didactic purpose and should be explored in particular ways.

   The children will need parents to tell them what they are supposed to do, as in preschool.

3) How did teachers really use the material?

   They browsed through the alphabet books with the children, first; then some of them created a dramatization around the characters Alpha and Zara and explored particular themes: animal farms, places, plants on certain letter pages they had been focusing on. They contrasted Portuguese and English alphabet pages mainly, but also explored the Italian and Greek alphabet books.

When they just stuck to the alphabets in the languages the children already knew (Portuguese and English), the children quickly lost interest. It was important to explore the languages the children were unfamiliar with.

In a second stage, the alphabet books were included as one more resource to explore particular topics: imagination and creativity; road safety; the farm and its animals; means of transportation.

With younger children (3 years old) there's more emphasis on phonetics, while older children are asked to look at the words, copy some letters, play the memory game.

Preschool teachers also explored the Country alphabets contrasting the Portuguese and the Italian.

4) How did teachers integrate these materials into the existing curriculum?

They did so as described above.

5) How do you use these materials to raise phonological awareness and intercultural competence?

On the whole, children were keen to explore the new languages and the preschool teachers were amazed at how well the children accepted linguistic and cultural diversity. Children showed curiosity for letters, images, the concept of the alphabet; they managed to copy letters from the Portuguese and from the Greek alphabet. They freely drew Greek characters in the sand during the study visit and loved to hear Greek words.

Their phonetic awareness was improved because they could differentiate sounds in Portuguese and English while playing the memory game. They recognised the Greek words as totally different from the Portuguese words; they enjoyed the rhythm of Italian and recognized its similarity with Portuguese. They loved to repeat the Italian words.

6) Which are the languages teachers used during the implementation?

Portuguese, English, Greek and Italian. The children also browsed through the German alphabet

7) In what ways can digital alphabet books help to improve:

   a. Cognitive development

   b. Language development

c. Cultural awareness and expression

Preschool teachers do not ascribe a particular cognitive development to the AlphaEU materials because the latter are integrated into a whole learning topic. The same applies to language development, although they acknowledge that the children were very open to different languages and alphabets and loved to hear and play with completely different word/letters/sounds and similar ones. In their opinion, it is difficult to develop cultural awareness – which they think could be done through the country alphabets - because there are no translations into Portuguese and the preschool teachers do not feel confident about what they are teaching.

The pre-service student teachers think that cognitive, language and cultural awareness are interconnected and that the alphabets cater for all those aspects. They also mentioned that it was a pity the alphabets were not available in the language of some of foreign children in class (Brazilian and Spanish).

8) What can be done to improve the designs of the alphabet books?
Introduce more rhythm, sound, and a quicker pace in clicking and getting feedback from the screen images.
Introduce Alpha and Zara characters on more pages because it helps to sustain a story line, a quest, a search.
Correct some of the images so that there is no ambiguity on what they represent.
Translate all the information displayed in the country alphabets into all languages, so that preschool teachers, who are unfamiliar with the language, may be certain of what is represented.
Introduce words started by the letter displayed that children identify in order to avoid frustration.

9) What are the challenges faced by using digital alphabet books?

To compete against existing commercial online games that have little pedagogic value. Children are used to them and may not one to engage with the alphabet books at home.

To respond visually to the expectations of children and teachers of so many cultures.

Sounds are not always audible.

In some of the games, the sounds are not there and take a long time to be heard.

10) To what extent did these activities influence children's language awareness?

The activities influenced children's awareness of different alphabets (eg. Portuguese and Greek); of similar words and different pronunciations and rhythms when contrasting Portuguese and Italian; different language systems when comparing Portuguese and English because they are learning English at preschool.

11) How often were these resources used and were they integrated into the curriculum or were they used as extra-curricular resources?

These resources were used in a continuum during two weeks in May, in two stages: the first dedicated to browsing through the materials and allowing children to play with them in groups and individually; and the second stage through an exploration of some words, or letters, or the characters Alpha and Zara, or words in different language alphabet books. They were always integrated into the curriculum.

List of Annexes

Annex 1
First notice: Advertisement for the b-learning training module on AlphaEU

Annex 2

Second notice: a more general call for participation

Alphabets of Europe (AlphaEU)

CONVITE À PARTICIPAÇÃO

Participe na implementação de novos recursos digitais!

Se é educador de infância, auxiliar de educação, pai, mãe ou encarregado de educação e se interessa pela sensibilização às línguas estrangeiras das crianças que frequentam o pré-escolar aqui fica o convite para participar neste projeto.

A equipa do projeto AlphaEU desenvolveu 5 abecedários temáticos digitais com atividades diversas para crianças, disponíveis em inglês, grego, português, romeno, italiano e alemão que integram imagem, som, vídeo, animação. Pretende-se aumentar a interatividade com a criança, estimular a sua curiosidade e encorajá-la a explorar diferenças e semelhanças entre línguas e culturas.

Aos participantes será facultada formação específica para trabalhar com os alfabetos digitais e com atividades de exploração que os acompanham. Numa fase posterior, os participantes serão convidados a usar estes recursos digitais no seu dia-a-dia ou como atividades extracurriculares.

A implementação terá lugar em abril e maio de 2014, após um pequeno curso de formação, que decorrerá em março 2014. A participação é gratuita, mas carece de registo prévio!

Se tem interesse em participar, p.f. contacte Margarida Morgado em marg.morgado@ipcb.pt ou Maria José Infante em minfante@ipcb.pt.

Para mais informações sobre o projeto, visite alphaeu.org
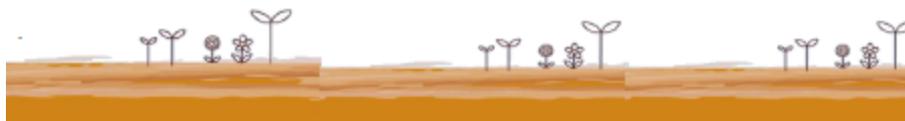
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