

Introduction

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If foreign language teaching in primary education is to contribute seriously to the international education of young people, it has to recognise the complexity of the task, to include intercultural competence among its aims, to seek relationships with other aspects of the curriculum in systematic ways and to demand properly trained teachers and appropriate teaching materials.

(Byram & Doyé, 1999, p. 150)

The ICEPELL Project

The opening quotation in our Introduction was the impetus for the Erasmus+ proposal, ‘Intercultural Citizenship Education through Picturebooks in early English Language Learning’ (ICEPELL), which received approval for funding by the European Union’s Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Programme in the summer of 2019 (2019–1-PT01-KA203-061353) and was coordinated by Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal. It consisted of a network of partners from five European countries (Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal and the Netherlands); all either specialise in teacher education for early English language learning or have expertise in teaching with and/or training teachers to use picturebooks in English language education:

- » Technische Universität Braunschweig, Brunswick, Germany
- » Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per Piemonte – Rete Sostenibilità, Turin, Italy
- » Nord Universitet, Bodø, Norway
- » Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Inglês, Lisbon, Portugal
- » Avans University of Applied Sciences, Breda, The Netherlands.

As a consortium of six partners, we prepared a proposal, which responded to Michael Byram and Peter Doyé’s call following a three-year programme (2019–2022), and did the following:

- i) targeted the teaching of English as a foreign language to children from 5 to 12 years old;
- ii) aimed at developing the skills, attitudes and competences associated with intercultural communicative competence;
- iii) sought to relate English to citizenship education;
- iv) included a professional development course for teachers, student teachers and school librarians; and
- v) considered picturebooks as vehicles for teacher-made resources in its approach.

English as a foreign language (EFL) is being introduced into European educational systems at ever earlier ages and, although teachers of English are often seen as confident in their knowledge of the target culture, they are reticent about integrating the affective and pragmatic dimensions of intercultural competence (Breka & Petravić, 2015; Brunsmeier, 2017). The result is that despite being part of many EFL curricula, the intercultural dimension of language learning is scarcely addressed in early English language teaching. A key reason for this is that activities which explicitly foster the intercultural domain are not sufficiently included in coursebooks for early EFL across Europe (Hurst & Franco, 2021). In addition, there is little evidence that global issues are being brought into the early language learning classroom (López-Gopar, 2019; Lourenço, 2021). The ICEPELL project aimed to address this issue by fusing early language learning and its intercultural dimension and citizenship education, and moving towards the concept of Intercultural Citizenship Education (Byram, 2008). Fundamental to the project were these aims and objectives and the development of four intellectual outputs (IO), as follows:

- » Analysis of the needs of teachers of English and school librarians in the five partner countries in relation to their ability to include the intercultural domain and citizenship in their teaching repertoire (IO1 · ICESurvey).
- » Development of a versatile and sustainable professional development course, with associated open-access resources, in order to equip teachers of English to promote a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning with picturebooks and thereby, develop intercultural citizenship through early EFL curricula (IO2 · ICEPro Course).
- » Contribution to teachers' and learners' ability to navigate cultural differences and communicate successfully despite linguistic diversity,

using their knowledge, skills, sensitivity, awareness of and attitudes towards intercultural citizenship within innovative teaching and learning.

- » Provision of the skills and competences to select picturebooks with intercultural citizenship themes (**Picturebook Selection Guide**).
- » Nurturing of teachers' confidence in mediating picturebook read-alouds, as well as planning, implementing and evaluating teacher-made resources based on picturebooks (**IO3 · ICEKits**).
- » Fostering teachers' and learners' critical thinking, creativity and reflexivity.
- » Strengthening teachers' ability to use the virtual learning **eTwinning** platform to communicate across borders, further extending the effectiveness of their learning mobility experiences.
- » Dissemination of a pedagogical framework based on grounded theory, together with the practical ideas which emerged from the ICEPELL project (**IO4 · ICEGuide**).

The Consortium Contexts

The education systems and specificities vary enormously across the five partner countries. Table 1 gives an overview regarding the age of children in primary education; whether citizenship is part of the curriculum; at what age English becomes compulsory; allocated time and use of a coursebook; the inclusion of intercultural competence; and the teachers' profiles. One of our objectives was to expose the Consortium partners, as well as the teachers and children involved in the project activities, to these cultural differences while interacting during the project.

The ICESurvey comprised a needs assessment of teachers' understanding, attitudes towards and confidence about intercultural competence and citizenship in the English curriculum. It was completed by teachers in the five partner countries and confirmed that though they might be confident about the concept of culture, they lacked familiarity with the intercultural domain of early English language learning, and its affective and pragmatic dimensions. Similar results emerged regarding citizenship education; teachers were confident about the concept but unsure how to plan for citizenship in English lessons.

	Primary education	Citizenship in the curriculum	Citizenship topics in curriculum documents	Age English is compulsory	English lesson time per week	Use of coursebooks	Intercultural domain explicit in the English curriculum	Profile of teacher responsible for English
GERMANY	Ages 6 – 10	Citizenship is implied in the curriculum, but not explicit and no guidelines exist	Implies global education and education for sustainable development	Age 8	2 x 45min	Not mandatory but used by most teachers	Yes	Specialist
ITALY	Ages 6 – 11	Citizenship is part of the curriculum	Constitution and law; sustainable development; digital citizenship	Age 6	AGE 6 60min AGE 7 120min AGE 8+ 180min	Yes	Yes	Specialist or generalist
NORWAY	Ages 6 – 13	Citizenship is part of the curriculum	Understand individual rights and obligations; become active citizens	Age 6	AGE 6/7 30min AGE 8/9 45 – 60min AGE 10/12 approx. 70min	Not mandatory but used by many teachers	Yes	Generalist
PORTUGAL	Ages 6 – 10	Citizenship is seen as a cross-curricular thread in primary education	Human rights; equality; interculturality; sustainable development; environment; health	Age 8	AGE 8/9 2 x 60min AGE 10/11 3 x 50min	Yes	Yes	Specialist
THE NETHERLANDS	Ages 4 – 12	Citizenship is implied in the curriculum, but no explicit guidelines exist	—	Age 9	30 – 60min	Not mandatory but used by most teachers	—	Generalist, generalist w/ minor in English and specialist

In our view, one of the innovative and, as we discovered, challenging aspects of the project involved the activities which were planned for collaboration between the stakeholders, the project partners and the project participants (student teachers, practising teachers and teacher librarians). This resulted in real intercultural dialogue as the participants brought their different ages, stages of professional development and teacher competence levels together with all of their personal characteristics, curricular variety and local demands.

This, nevertheless, is the essence of the Erasmus+ Programme, which promotes the educational, professional, and personal development of people in education and training in Europe (and beyond), contributing to social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship (adapted from Erasmus+, n.d.).

The Covid-19 Pandemic

Our introduction would be incomplete if we did not refer to the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on our project. As with all projects requiring mobility between March 2020 and most of 2021, the ICEPELL Consortium was unable to implement its initiatives as planned; this included two iterations of the ICEPro Professional Development Course (ICEPro Course), scheduled to take place in Italy and Germany. Instead, the partners developed two alternatives in 2021:

- i) A spring ICEPro Virtual Course: a virtual professional development course on *Moodle* and *eTwinning* with synchronous and asynchronous activities, followed by synchronous mentoring sessions on *Zoom*.
- ii) An autumn ICEPro Hybrid Course: a hybrid professional development course where partner groups met in person in their respective institutions and interacted synchronously online with the other partner groups, followed by synchronous mentoring sessions on *Zoom* (see Figure 1).

Participants' feedback was overall very positive in both iterations of the course, and objectives were reached, but we all wish that everyone had travelled and connected in the same physical space.

TABLE 1
(on the left) Education Systems
in the Five Partner Countries

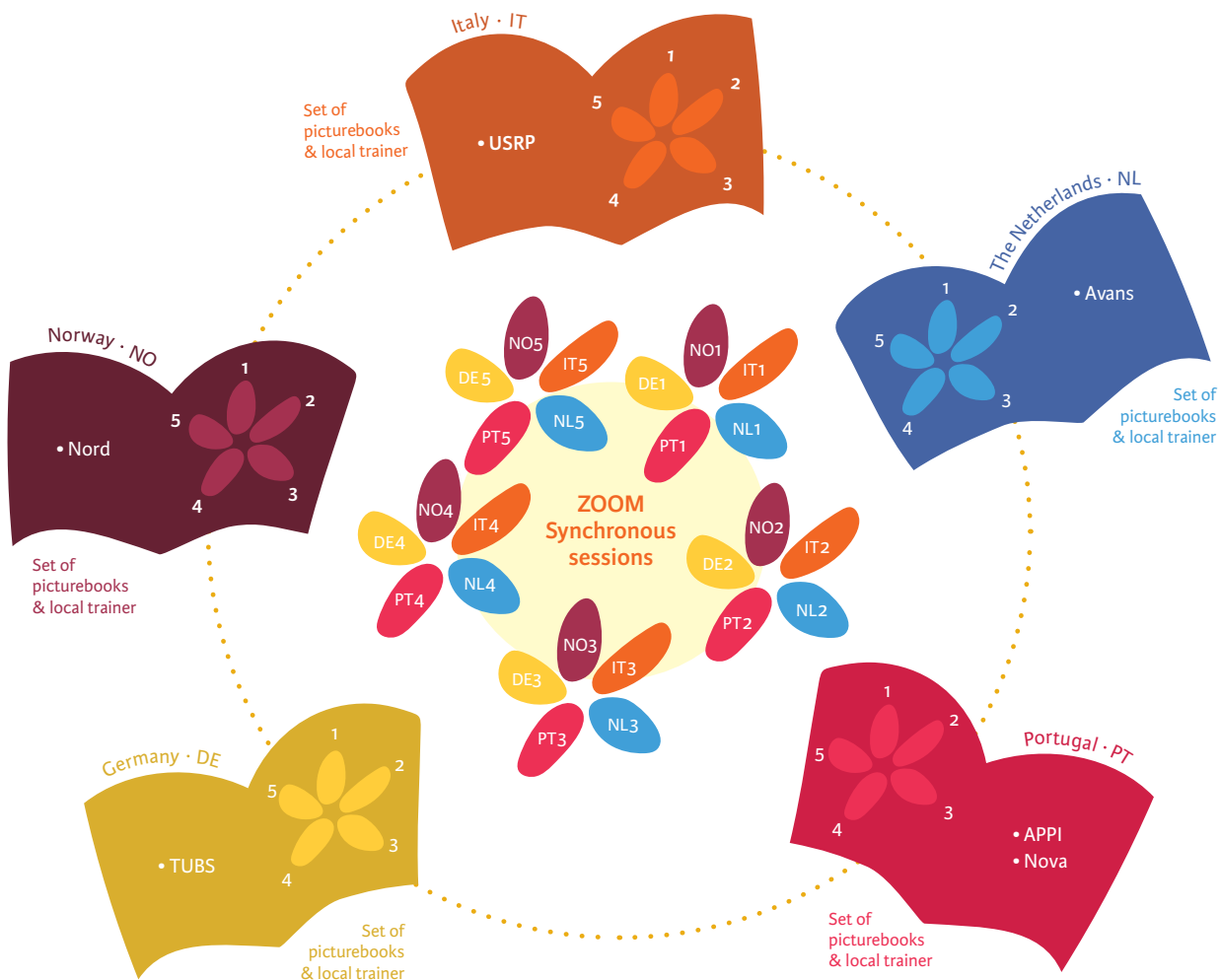


FIGURE 1 The ICEPro Hybrid Course

This ICEGuide Handbook

The ICEGuide: A Handbook for Intercultural Citizenship Education through Picturebooks in early English Language Learning is for stakeholders who are involved in early English language learning (e.g., teacher educators, researchers, teachers and student teachers, policy makers, publishers). It has been planned as a pedagogical framework and ready-to-use manual for the implementation of Intercultural Citizenship Education through picturebooks in early English language learning. It intends to disseminate grounded theory and practical ideas which have emerged from the ICEPELL project. The *ICEGuide* consists of three main parts, **Part 1: Theoretical Underpinnings**; **Part 2: ICEKits in Action**; and **Part 3: The ICEPro Professional Development Course**.

Part 1: Theoretical Underpinnings

Part 1 has six chapters and provides the theoretical underpinnings for the ICEPELL project. It opens with **Chapter 1.1 From Culture to Intercultural Citizenship Education** by Sandie Mourão, Nathalie Kik and Ana Gonçalves Matos. This chapter examines the concepts of culture, intercultural competence, citizenship and intercultural citizenship, key concepts in understanding the *how* and *why* of the ICEPELL Project. **Chapter 1.2 eTwinning** by Silvana Rampone and Fabrizio Ferrari introduces the *eTwinning* platform and highlights the opportunities it offers for developing collaborative school partnerships. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the benefits of *eTwinning* for intercultural learning and citizenship education. **Chapter 1.3 Picturebooks and Reading Aloud in the Early English Language Classroom** by Sandie Mourão presents the vehicle for intercultural citizenship, the picturebook as aesthetic object. It then discusses the read-aloud event and the role of mediation. **Chapter 1.4 Picturebook Selection** by Nayr Ibrahim, Carmen Becker and Sandie Mourão presents the Picturebook Selection Guide, which was developed as a tool to help teachers identify suitable picturebooks for intercultural citizenship in early English language learning. **Chapter 1.5 Reflecting and Reviewing** by Nayr Ibrahim and Marieke Alferink introduces and defines reflecting and reviewing and illustrates their importance in and relevance to the ICEPro Course. Finally, **Chapter 1.6 Picturebook Materials Development** by David Valente explores the components and benefits of materials developed for using picturebooks in early English language learning for Intercultural Citizenship Education. It describes the rationales behind materials development and for the ICEKit components and discusses the action taking activities created by teachers during the ICEPro Course.

Part 2: ICEKits in Action

Part 2 is an overview of the ICEKits developed by the participants who attended the two professional development courses. This has been collated by Nathalie Kik, Ana Nunes and Marieke Alferink. All of the ICEKits are available to download on the project website and links to these downloadable teaching packs are embedded in this section of the *ICEGuide*.

Part 3: The ICEPro Professional Development Course

Part 3 has been written by Sandie Mourão, Sónia Ferreirinha and Jenny Jakisch. It offers a detailed overview of the ICEPro Professional Development Course, with revisions that have been made based on

the two iterations of the course in the spring and autumn of 2021. It explains the various features of the course, presents the schedule and gives insights into its implementation.

One innovative aspect of *The ICEGuide* is the way it summarises and brings together the learning, teaching and training experienced during the project. It is the result of documenting practice in situ, based on sound theoretical principles, and we hope, will support the sustained implementation of picturebooks in English to develop intercultural citizenship in early language learning in Europe and maybe beyond. Despite being part of a project developed around picturebooks in English, we hope it will also serve to support similar approaches in any foreign or additional language, and is thus easily transferable. In addition, it may serve as a sound basis for similar activities with secondary English language learners and their teachers.

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