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"Teaching English to Young Learners", Małgorzata Szpotowicz, Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska, Warszawa 2011 : [recenzja]

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**Małgorzata Szpotowicz,
Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska
“Teaching English to Young Learners”
Warszawa, PWN, 2011 – review**

Today teaching foreign languages is very popular. Owing to the migrations of people, the world has become multicultural and multilingual. We have to speak foreign languages to communicate to each other effectively. This is also true for young citizens. In many countries children learn the foreign languages from an early age. There are many theories and methods of teaching foreign languages which are still being refined. Teaching foreign languages is obligatory at the primary level in many European countries, and has been the case in Poland since 2008. The most commonly taught language is English, which is an international language these days. According to research, most children in Poland (from the first to the third classes) learn English. There are many publications that include methodical guidance for the teaching of foreign languages. However, there are not many of them devoted to the methodology of teaching for elementary learners. One of them is *Teaching English to young learners* which has been written by Magdalena Szpotowicz and Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska. The authors have examined the reality of Polish educational system, especially the rules of integrated early education level.

The authors have experience of teaching children and teachers who are interested in the practical preparation for teaching English to young learners. Magdalena Szpotowicz is the leader of the Foreign Language Section at the Educational Research Institute and is a graduate of the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. She is a lecturer at

the Centre for Foreign Language Teacher Training at the University of Warsaw and a lecturer at the Faculty of Education who specializes in the Teaching of English in Early Childhood. She has written a number of English language textbooks for primary schools, a curriculum and teaching aids for foreign language teachers. Since 2006 she has been the national coordinator of the international research project on Early Language Learning in Europe. Her research interests include child language acquisition and English language teaching methods. Unfortunately, there is not much information about the co-author of this publication. Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska graduated from the Wrocław University, English Department and she works at an English Teacher Training College. Szpotowicz and Szulc and Kurpaska are the co-authors of *Sparks* – a course-book for primary classes and some articles published in *The Teacher*.

This publication is addressed to teachers who want to acquire practical preparation for teaching young learners. It consists of twelve chapters. Most of them contain a theoretical section – this discusses the factors influencing teaching and a practical section with proposes activities and some points for discussion. The book contains substantial knowledge about the process of teaching English that can help the teachers implement it successfully. The supplementary materials, such as lesson plans, attainment targets and model letters to parents are also very useful, especially for inexperienced contemporary teachers.

In the first chapter, the authors perceive the tendency to lower the age when obligatory language education is introduced. They claim foreign languages are taught in primary school and kindergartens mostly because it is wildly believed that starting a language earlier provides better opportunities in the future. The authors compare the system of teaching foreign languages in European countries, which is very interesting for a reader and broadens his/her mind through the use of comparative studies. The authors suggest that the early start allows to reconsider many factors that influence the learning process. They suggest that the success of early foreign language learning depends largely on how it is organized. In this part of the publication, the authors ask some questions of the role of foreign language teachers that can inspire individuals to re-

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consider that matter. In the next parts of the book, they try to find the answers to them.

The second chapter consists of some theoretical and practical knowledge of how to integrate English into the primary curriculum. The authors admit that this is not easy an task even for more experienced teachers. At the same time, they point out that integration is natural (children learn holistically) and remind us that it is key factor when teaching foreign languages productively. Kurpaska and Szulc-Szpatowicz propose some ways that will allow for integration, such as through the topic (topic-centred), through the method (activity-based learning) and task-based learning. These propositions can be used by teachers or can be stimuli for their own research.

The next chapter consists of an original approach towards the aims, principles and factors that influence the teaching-learning process. These propositions based on the author's experience of working with elementary learners and some psychological knowledge of child development. The authors point out that the planning of the educational process is very important and is an integral part of teaching. Some valuable principles of lesson planning are included in this part of the publication. The authors also explain some uncontrollable factors which influence the lesson. One of these is the fact that each pupil has her/his own natural abilities and disabilities that the teachers should take into account when making the learning process more centred upon the individual.

The main part of that book is devoted to teaching language skills, such as teaching vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing and also playing with grammar. I am convinced that these important contents will help educators to teach competently. The last chapters consist of many activities and resources (songs, chants, rhymes, games, etc.) that are also practical.

The publication has been written by professionals. It is a compendium of knowledge, the most important aspect of which is the combination of the theoretical and practical approaches. Readers can find many instructions and a great deal of encouragement to teach English more effectively.

That publication is written in the English language. However, it is suitable also for Polish readers who can both acquire more information and practice in the English language. The language used by the authors is comprehensive and clear. There are some special pedagogic terms but they are explained and understandable.

