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The MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed forum for the investigation of language and culture in the Mediterranean, South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The editors of this periodical welcome articles, reviews, review articles and bibliographical surveys in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish relating to the following aspects of Mediterranean languages, past and present:

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Early Language Learning in Private Language Schools in the Republic of Cyprus: Teaching Methods in Modern Times

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Introduction

Early language learning can be an enriching experience that brings about a great deal of benefits for children. It can help them enhance their language learning, problem solving and expression, their cognitive growth, attention span and self-confidence, and assist them in appreciating their identity and culture (Cameron 2003; Curtain 1990; Nikolov 2009, 2016; Read 2014; Singleton & Ryan 2004). All this is possible if language learning is monitored in an efficient manner, that is, when age-appropriate approaches are applied within the Young Language Learner's (YLL) classroom (Nikolov & Mihaljević-Djigunović 2011). However, early language learning and teaching has endured a number of issues around the globe, even more so when the teaching and learning of languages belong to private supplementary tutoring, also known as 'shadow' education (Bray 1999; Heyneman 2011). The metaphor is used, according to Bray (2011), because private tutoring imitates the mainstream school system, and as formal education expands shadow education expands with it.

Many countries around the world experience the booming phenomenon of supplementary private tutoring (Bray 2003, 2009; Bray & Lykins 2012; Bray & Kwok 2003). Bray's research (2011), in particular, reveals that every year families in Europe spend astonishing amounts of capital on private tutoring, as displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Family capital spent on shadow education (Bray 2011: 46)

Country	Year of Research	Costs (€ - million)
Austria	2010	126
Cyprus	2008	111.2
Germany	2010	942
Greece	2008	952.6
Italy	2010	420
Romania	2010	300
Spain	2010	450

Despite its proliferation around the world, and economic and social implications (Bray 1999; Kwok 2004; Hartmann 2013; Oller & Glasman 2013; Buhagiar & Chetcuti 2013), private tutoring across school subjects, and English in particular – a special and important subclass of private tutoring worldwide (Hamid, Sussex & Khan 2009) – has received little research attention overall (Bray 2011).

The present exploratory study conducted in Cypriot private language schools (locally known as *frontistiria*), seeks to explore, how YLL teachers operate in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frontistiria classrooms, the teaching methods used, the impact these are likely to have on language learning, and the nature of teacher training undertaken and needed. Research outcomes are expected to foster ongoing support for good teaching practices that can increase the chances for successful language learning and effective teaching in the private sector.

To establish a clearer understanding of the language-learning situation within the current educational context, the following section will elaborate on the language learning scope of 'shadow' education in Cyprus (the Greek term being *parapedia)*, and present findings of the research undertaken.

Early Language Learning in the private educational system in the Republic of Cyprus

Parallel to their state school EFL education, many YLLs attend frontistiria, which offer English language supplementary tuition in the afternoons. Frontistiria in the Republic of Cyprus are both state-funded and privately owned institutions (Lamprianou & Afantiti Lamprianou 2013). Although frontistiria maintain a considerable degree of independence (Pashiardis 2007), they are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture and abide by certain curriculum and facility requirements prescribed by law. Frontistiria raise their funds primarily by tuition fees along with some government assistance.

Overall, private EFL frontistiria prepare students for high-stakes exams set by external Awarding Bodies (Tsagari 2012, 2014). The English language certificates thriving on the Cypriot frontistiria market are the *IGCSE* (University of Cambridge International Examinations), *IELTS*, *Cambridge English: First, Preliminary English Test, Key English Test* and *English Young Learners Tests* (Cambridge English Language Assessment). The student population in frontistiria is reported by Xanthou & Pavlou (2010) who explain that 60% of the primary school students in their study attended frontiristiria language classes. Also, research carried out by Lazarou & al. (2009) in primary schools showed that children might spend, on average, more than two hours per day on private lessons.

However, while research and innovation in the primary state school system, supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and Pedagogical Institute in the Republic of Cyprus, has led to the implementation of various teaching and assessment innovations, such as the European Language Portfolio, new teaching methods (CLIL), new materials, and ongoing in-service teacher training (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou 2010; Xanthou 2010; Tsagari & Michaeloudes 2012), very little

has been done in the private sector. Through the existing research in the language frontistiria industry in the Republic of Cyprus, we know that language teaching and learning is structured in complex ways. For example, Tsagari's studies (2012, 2014) in the local private context with teenage and young adult students show that the intensity of exam preparation is particularly strong and teachers' practices depict a propensity towards 'traditional' methods, including the use of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (Richards & Rogers 2001) and behaviouristic approaches to language teaching and learning (Brown 2007; Harmer 2010; Larsen-Freeman 1986). For instance, language lessons are delivered in a teacher-centred environment where emphasis is placed particularly on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. Teachers also resort to frequent use of L1 (Greek) to teach exam-taking techniques and language structures, which could be regarded as "medium-oriented goals" and considered too complex to be taught in the target language (Hall & Cook 2012). Nevertheless, even though teachers are aware of exam impact on their instructional practices, they attribute their exam-oriented teaching to accountability reasons and fierce competition on the market of private institutions in the country: the higher the success in the exam, the better a school or teacher is considered to be (Giannikas 2014).

Given the strong influence of exam preparation evidenced in the studies reported above, various questions are also raised with regard to the quality of teaching and learning in YLL classes in frontistiria, such as: Would it be the case that private language teachers follow similar methodological approaches when teaching YLLs? Is the quality of teaching and learning in YLL classes affected by exam-preparation orientations prevalent in higher language levels in frontistiria? What is the parents' motivation and expectation of their children and their language learning? How does this affect what teachers do in the classroom and how they teach? The private sector favours examinations more than state schools given the numbers of young students attending frontistiria classes. Parents and students seem to place trust in the quality of EFL education offered in the private sector, even though public schools and the frontistiria draw from the same pool of teachers. As the public sector offers stability and high pay, the most experienced and most qualified private sector teachers are often (not always) 'absorbed' by the public sector. Whether quality teaching and learning is accomplished or not, calls for rigorous research that looks more closely at the EFL learning and teaching of YLLs in the private sector.

Aims

Research Questions
The current exploratory study aimed at systematically recording the teaching methods EFL teachers use with YLLs, and the type of training teachers received in the Cypriot private sector. The research took place in Nicosia, the capital of the country. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How is language learning conducted in frontistiria classes?
- What are the factors that influence early language learning in the current context?
- Are frontistiria teachers adequately trained to teach YLLs?

The study will contribute to the understanding of the workings of the particular education system, specifically in the area of YLL's learning and teacher education in the local context and beyond since the quality of education provided in private schooling is an international issue as seen in France, Belgium, the USA etc. (see Bray 1999; 2011). The current research study provides the field with empirical data and lays the groundwork for future research in Cyprus and beyond.

Participants and Methods

An ethnographic research approach (Atkinson & al. 2001) was undertaken in the current research with the aim of 'document[ing] the world from the point of view of the people studied' (Hammersley 1992: 45). Such work offers the opportunity for an in-depth and intensive study of a single unit 'where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena' (Gerring 2004: 341). Data was gathered from eight frontistiria located in various areas of Nicosia which responded to a call for collaboration in this study. Out of the eight language teachers who participated in the study (one teacher from each school), seven were female and one was male. The participants' teaching experience varied from 4 to 28 years. All teachers held a BA in English and six had an MA in Language Teaching or Applied Linguistics. All teachers taught YLLs who were between 8 to 12 years old. Numbers of students per class varied from 5 to 12 (see also Table 2):

Table 2: Teacher biodata

Teachers	Qualifications	Years of Teaching	Age groups taught	Continuous Professional Development – Topics
Teacher 1	BA	4	8–10yrs	Exam preparation and guidance
Teacher 2	BA & MA	8	8–12yrs	Exam preparation
Teacher 3	BA & MA	28	8–12yrs	Exam preparation
Teacher 4	BA & MA	5	9–15yrs	Exam preparation and course book presentation
Teacher 5	BA	1	8–9yrs	Learning difficulties and differentiated learning
Teacher 6	BA & MA	14	8–12yrs	Exam preparation
Teacher 7	BA & MA	21	8–12yrs	Dyslexia, Learning Technologies
Teacher 8	BA & MA	1.5	8–12yrs	Exam preparation

The study also used a mixed-methods approach to data collection, triangulating data from different sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the study results (Creswell 2015; Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori 2009). More specifically, three types of data were collected:

a) Audio-recordings of four lessons per teacher were conducted (32 recordings in total) in eight frontistiria. This data was collected in order to provide the researchers with the opportunity to document and investigate the reality of classroom life.

b) Systematic notes based on an observation worksheet were taken during the lessons observed (see Appendix A). These were used later to assist in the interpretation of data.

c) Semi-structured interviews with the same eight EFL teachers (for the list of interview questions, see Appendix B), providing opportunities to probe deeper and explore the interviewee's opinions. The interview questions prompted information about the teachers' background, their expectations of the lessons and their students. The interviews were carried out in English (preferred by teachers). Detailed notes were made during the interviews, marking illuminating responses for the transcriptions of tape recordings, which were used for cross-referencing later on. Conversations were audio-recorded and word-processed and critical incidents were identified (Dörnyei 2007). Finally, privacy and confidentiality were respected.

Before the research commenced, parents and teachers were provided with letters of consent, which were signed and returned to the researchers. All participants (students and teachers) were assigned a pseudonym in order to ensure anonymity (Richards 2003).

ATLAS.ti 7©2013 (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin) was used to analyse and code the recordings. The analytical process, based on principles of grounded theory (Strauss 1987; Glaser 1992; Charmaz 2006), was iterative and abductive (Dörnyei 2007) and the data analysis involved a number of readings of the data entries and progressive refining of emerging categories. The procedure was carried out as follows:

• Initial reading of the transcribed observations and interviews were conducted. This process allowed themes to emerge from the data gathered.

• Transcribed texts were re-read and thoughts were annotated in the margin. The text was examined closely to facilitate a microanalysis of data. Open coding was used to identify new information.

• Axial-coding was then used and was done by considering the research questions, drawing on the major themes of the study.

The next section will present the results of the study, where points will be made with regard to the teachers' practices illustrated by extracts from the data. The findings have been grouped according to the research questions. The extracts are presented in

their original form when English was spoken, as transcribed after data collection and translated in L2 by the authors. The English translation is provided where the participants' L1 (Greek) is used. The translations are in bold and italics.

Findings

Methodological orientations to teaching YLLs

One of the most prevalent issues in the interviews was teachers' sensitivity towards age-appropriate teaching methods. Teachers repeatedly stressed that they employ a friendly approach towards their YLLs. They also claimed to provide YLLs with interesting and engaging tasks that promote fun language learning. Nonetheless, it is important that future studies also focus on both students and parents to investigate whether they would favour more fun or creative activities in the classroom or not.

> *I try to have a positive attitude towards my students and create a positive atmosphere in class, that is, to learn while having fun at the same time!*
> (Interview: Teacher 5)

> *One of my former teachers at University said that you can either be a performer or you can just go in a classroom, teach, and then leave and not care. I chose the first approach because I teach young children and they need to feel that what they learn is actually fun.*
> (Interview: Teacher 6)

Irrespective of teachers' consideration of the use of age-appropriate activities for their young language learners, in none of the observations conducted did any of the teachers use 'fun' activities, i.e. games, songs, mime, etc., which students of the specific age group usually find entertaining (Pinter 2006, 2011; Linse 2005). On the contrary, there were cases where teachers, despite their students' eagerness to play games in class, would resort to course-book activities, despite students' reactions. An example of such a case is displayed in the following extract:

Extract 1

Penny: ***Miss, can we play a game?***
Teacher 3: Yes, if we finish our work … ***Let's see if there is anything relevant in the book****.
John: ***No, Miss, the games from the book are so boring.***
Teacher 3: ***No! Our book is very good.*** OK, lesson six … Lesson six, page 18! The Romans are in town. OK, do you remember the story? ***Do you remember what happened?***
All Students: ***Yeeees***…
Teacher 3: OK, who can tell us the story? ***Tell us a little bit about the story in English.*** The children… what are they doing?
Anna: Children are playing a game in the computer … Simon lost the game so he search in the … in the web…

In the instance quoted above, the teacher misses an excellent opportunity to respond to the needs of her YLLs. As shown in the extract, the children yearn for

something more exciting, like playing a game. The teacher, on the other hand, seems to be content with the course-book material and refuses to work on anything else. The teacher would introduce the 'fun' element the children asked for, as long as this came from the course-book used, irrespective of her learners' resistance. This indicates a preference towards a textbook-directed and teacher controlled approach, a primary characteristic of GTM. No doubt, such practices are likely to create a barrier between the teacher and her students, and reduce students' motivation (Dörnyei 2001; Pinter 2011; Cameron 2011).

Textbook reliance was regularly recorded in the lessons observed. Focus on course-book materials was used to guide teachers and learners through instructional decision-making, a practice that took up valuable time in various stages of the lessons. Also, once the tasks from one book (i.e. course-book) were completed, the teachers would move on to the next (i.e. workbook), a procedure of 'completeness', which Howatt (1984) views as a main characteristic of the GTM. As a result, the motions of L2 use in the classes observed became mechanical: teachers would read the number of the task question, call on learners by their names, learners would read their answers and teachers would provide direct feedback. The lesson lacked authenticity and stimulation, which are essential to keep a group of YLLs more focused and motivated. This procedure was noted in most of the lessons as teachers went through course-books, workbooks and grammar-books checking on tasks. For example, in the following two extracts, teachers rigorously followed the sequence of textbook materials in terms of content and order when correcting a course-book and workbook grammar task respectively:

Extract 2

George: I was reading the book last night when my dad asked me to help him with the computer.

Teacher 7: Good! I was reading when my dad asked me. Mike!

Mike: It was raining when I woke up.

Teacher 7: Excellent! OK? Question four! Mary!

Mary: When I was arriving home yesterday my sister… ***Aaa, no that's wrong!***

Teacher 7: Aha!

Mary: When I arrived home yesterday my sister used my computer… hmm… using? *No,* used … ***the opposite!***

Teacher 7: Don't forget 'was' and 'were'! Five! Andrew!

Andrew: My parents was watching…

Teacher 7: My parents 'was'?

Andrew: Were watching!

Teacher 7: 'Were'! Where do we use 'was'? Which persons? Julia!

Julia: Eem, in…

Teacher 7: He, she, it and ***with*** it, OK? 'Was'! Yes! Natasha! Five!

Extract 3
Teacher 4: OK workbook! Page 24. Now! Page 24! Exercise 1, John!
John: Circle the correct answer. When you get off the bus wait for me at the corner. Dan
    walks to school on his way.
Teacher 4: On his way?
Diane: On his own.
Teacher 4: On his own! Alone! Hm? Three! Alex!

Detailed analysis of the classroom observations also showed that the teacher-fronted approach demonstrated in the extracts above was widely dominant in the YLLs classes observed. Even when teachers were not working with their course-books or workbooks, they were in complete control of the content and the conditions of learning: not giving YLLs much opportunity to explore elements of the language on a more natural level. This is particularly evident in Extract 2, where there is strict turn taking, giving very little opportunity for students to be naturally interactive and use the L2 spontaneously. The focus is on mechanical practice rather than the development of language skills and meaningful interaction. Furthermore, Extract 4 displays the opening of a language lesson that follows a teacher-centred sequence: the teacher begins the lesson with a daily greeting and immediately directs students towards a controlled conversation. The teacher initiates the exchange and requires learners' response. Subsequently, in Extract 2 and 4, the teacher confirms the learner's response and provides evaluative feedback before moving to the next stage (e.g. 'Aha!', 'Good!','Excellent!').

Extract 4
Teacher 4: Good afternoon children, how are you?
All children: We are fine, and you?
Teacher 4: I am very well, thank you. Joanna, which is your favourite food?
Joanna: My favourite food is spaghetti.
Teacher 4: Excellent, very good! Now, Michael, which is your favourite colour?
Michael: My favourite colour is green.
Teacher 4: Green! Very good! Andrew! What do you do every day before you go to school?

In the above extract, the immediacy and correctness of students' answers, give the impression that it was a well-rehearsed and conditioned response. The routine nature of the above and other similar exchanges echo the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) framework (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). Such classroom interaction patterns are likely to result in what Maroni & al. (2008) call 'asymmetrical interaction' where power balance between teachers and learners is unequal in that teachers assume an authoritative role and deprive students of spontaneous interaction. In cases like the above, there was also no indication of child-friendly approaches, such as involving children in speaking activities through games, children's poems, songs or movement that would stimulate communication with YLLs in the L2 classroom.

Another interesting trend, regularly observed in the analysis of the classroom data, was the frequent use of L1 (Greek) employed on various occasions, e.g. to develop awareness of grammar aspects (also see Inbar-Lourie 2010). For example, in Extracts 5 and 6, the teachers walk the students through tasks where grammatical points arise. During such incidents, the teachers provide students with ample meta-language in L1, and try to raise awareness about grammar and lexicon in an item-by-item progression.

Extract 5

Nicole: My father sometimes works in London.

Teacher 1: Bravo! 'My father' **the subject***, *'sometimes' **our word,** **'**works' **our verb***, *'in London'. **Who is going to do three for me?** Georgia?

Georgia: People usually travel in the summer.

Teacher 1: Excellent! Very good Georgia! Very good! 'People' **the subject,** 'usually' **usually,** 'travel' **travel,** 'in the summer'.

Extract 6

Teacher 6: **Now let's go** to grammar. **As we already mentioned, this is a review***. *Do you remember Present Continuous? **With 'now' we have the phrase** 'I am moving', **right***, *'he is moving' 'she is moving' **right**? 'It is moving'. **So pay attention here so that we can remind ourselves of it**. Now, **something is done now, the short version**. Look at me.

In the above extracts, the teachers distinguish the two languages and give them different roles, e.g. the L2 is used as the language being examined and learned through analysis, whereas the L1 is used as a reference system (Stern 1983) through which the teachers explain possibly unfamiliar grammatical terminology and vocabulary.

What seems to have driven teachers to the use of L1 was their eagerness to create a linguistically non-threatening environment, as illustrated in the following extract from the teachers' interviews:

> *[…] I would say that it is very difficult to make sure that all the children understand what you actually say in English, because sometimes for example, they may say that they understand what you actually say in the classroom, but they don't. So I use their mother tongue to explain things.*
> (Interview: Teacher 3)

However, irrespective of teachers' intentions, the classroom data of our study shows that L1 mainly functions as a tool to describe language. This is highly likely to result in the learning of metalanguage and decontextualised instances of language, rather than focusing on language use and communication (Cook 2001; Ellis 2005).

Professional Development

The analysis of the teachers' interviews identified some of the reasons behind the methodological orientations preferred by teachers. Teachers openly admitted that even though they had been teaching YLL classes for a number of years, they had undertaken very little training in teaching the specific age group. The majority explained that they had attended exam-preparation seminars organised by external examination boards, or events held by English language teaching publishers for the promotion of teaching material:

> *I have participated in seminars that have to do with exams that are organised by the University of Cambridge, for example, Flyers or Starters or First Certificate.*
> (Interview: Teacher 1)

> *I have attended British Council's IELTS seminars, specifically on reading and writing, and I have attended the Jolly Phonics Seminars where there was a full introduction and three hours' demonstration of the books.*
> (Interview: Teacher 4)

Difficulties faced

Additional factors seem to influence participants' instructional practices in the present context. Teachers referred to a range of difficulties they faced in their daily teaching in YLL classes, such as lack of students' motivation, enthusiasm, and the intervening role of parents, e.g.:

> *I would say that the most difficult part is to be able to make your students feel excited and interested in English, because most of the times their parents oblige them to attend these private institutions, so this is very challenging.*
> (Interview: Teacher 1)

> *I find it difficult to motivate the children after a hard day at school, and to persuade parents to have realistic goals.*
> (Interview: Teacher 2)

Teachers also referred to further issues they faced with their YLLs, e.g. pressures due to limited teaching time (*I believe one of the main difficulties we face is time, as we only see our students twice a week*, Teacher 2), difficulties in the selection of new course materials and the lack of support by local educational authorities. For instance, Teacher 3 expressed her need for more help from the MoEC, and suggested that more attention should be given to educators of the private sector who are often regarded with contempt in the local society (Lamprianou & Afantiti Lamprianou 2013).

> *It is difficult to decide what books to use in class; there isn't enough care or help from the Ministry of Education for the frontistiria, which are considered to be second-class educational institutes.*
> (Interview: Teacher 3)

Additionally, teachers discussed the issue of mixed ability groups (in English proficiency), and the difficulties they face when they teach such groups: *One of the difficulties we face is mixed ability students in the classroom. This can be very challenging* (Teacher 6). Mixed ability classes typically include students who may seem uncooperative, and others who make an effort to participate in the lesson. The students who are considered weaker can become restless and result in causing a commotion in the language classroom (Giannikas 2013a). This can lead to teachers' negative attitudes, and, in many contexts such as the present one, teachers may be unaware about how to approach the task of dealing with mixed-ability classes (Prodromou 1992).

Summary and Discussion of the results

The present study focused on the EFL teaching situation in supplementary education, concentrating on early language learning and the teaching practices used within the specific context. Analysis of the data revealed a traditional textbook-directed mode of teaching, with a focus on grammar rather than language skills development and interaction (Cameron 2011; Nunan 2011). In particular, the teacher-student interaction in the classes observed was dominated by the teacher-initiated monologic IRF sequence (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975) where the teachers in our sample would initiate a learning opportunity (e.g. ask a question), the learners would respond to this initiation and then the teachers would do a follow-up move in response to learners' previous answers. Using the IRF model, teachers seemed to engender, through a continuous process of positive reinforcement, a time-efficient way of moving classroom interaction forward. However, the IRF sequences have been criticised for limiting learners' opportunities for authentic language use (Hall 2007; Waring 2008). While potentially meeting teachers' and learners' social expectations of role and classroom behaviour, IRF sequences reduce young learners' opportunities to lead and participate meaningfully in classroom interaction and develop cognitively and linguistically. Furthermore, the teacher's 'monologue' (Lee & Ng 2010) created through the IRF exchanges can result in the learner remaining caught in limited awareness and fossilised repertoire of interactive tactics (Basturkmen 2001). When teachers in our sample engaged in such practices they, most often, looked for correct answers from students rather than information or learners' opinions, thus creating limited exchanges with their students (also seen in Walsh 2006). This routine was also prevalent in the exam-preparation of frontistiria classes with adult learners reported in the available literature (Tsagari 2012, 2014). Such teaching orientations are likely to create a barrier for language learning by limiting YLLs' ability to experience what could be an enjoyable and age-appropriate language lesson through the development of interactive skills, and stimulating the use of authentic communication.

Furthermore, as evidenced in the data, the private language teachers in our sample supported their teaching via instructional aids and practices such as a grammar book, a text, and explanations of grammar rules and translations of texts.

However, the application of constant grammar instruction in a YLL context is not considered age-appropriate language teaching. An expanded range of materials, materials development and how they are to be used is a key research area in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) to YLLs (Garton, Copland & Burns 2011) and one that would benefit not only the present but similar contexts in Europe and beyond. Such material can be provided to YLL teachers with full and simple instructions in order to assist teachers to use them effectively. Additionally, language teachers can step out of their structured course-book nature and explore material that is more imaginative, draw on local understandings, encourage creativity and increase children's confidence in using the L2 successfully in a more age-appropriate manner.

The analysis also showed that from an early stage, children are educated in L2 via L1, the quantity and quality of which is far from judicious (Copland & Neokleous 2011; Tsagari & Diakou 2015; Neokleous 2016). In teaching environments where constant use of L1 is not monitored, students may communicate in the mother tongue or use only minimal English, rather than extend their English competence (Littlewood & Yu 2011). Furthermore, in agreement with Garcia & Wei (2014), constant use of L1 deprives learners of engaging and interacting socially and cognitively in the learning process in ways that produce and extend the students' languaging and meaning-making (Tsagari & Giannikas 2017). These findings support the traditional view of teachers as transmitters of knowledge rather than as facilitators who nurture learner independence. Indeed, teachers in our sample seem to perceive themselves as grammarians who describe grammar rules and display their operation in an exceedingly systematic way. Even though L1 use and grammar teaching can have a place in and facilitate the learning process of L2 (Larsen-Freeman 2003; Littlewood & Yu 2011; Levine 2014), in the present context these represented a static body of rules, norms, parts of speech, and verb paradigms used to form an understanding of the L2 grammar and its metalanguage. Additionally, even though teachers made an effort to develop declarative knowledge (informational knowledge in nature) about aspects of the new language, this will not necessarily become valuable to the YLLs since declarative knowledge has not been based on their existing knowledge. The teaching approaches to developing declarative knowledge have not been executed through beneficial pedagogical practices, which would help them shape their procedural knowledge over time. Furthermore, successful L2 learning would include more planned actions of the teachers in interaction with the students (Garcia & Wei 2014), which was not observed in the current context. However, explicit attention to form does not necessarily lead to acquisition (Schmidt 1993). Conscious attention to form can be important, but it should not be expected that simply calling learners' attention to form lead to successful learning. Other age-appropriate approaches need to be in place, such as the use of games, stories, drama etc. (Ioannou-Georgiou & Pavlou 2003; Scott & Ytreberg 1990).

Furthermore, the issue of parental involvement in the YLLs' English education seems to be an important factor in the current context. As teachers explained, they

faced difficulties motivating students due to the direct intervention of parents. Actually, parental involvement has been frequently documented as an important factor influencing education and language teaching in the present context and elsewhere (Cheng, Andrews & Yu 2011; Georgiou 1996, 1997; Georgiou & Tourva 2007; Pavlou & Christodoulou 2003; Yan, Gu & Khalifa 2014). Tsagari (2009) also notes that parents' perceptions of the value of language and exams as well as the individual frontistiria's commitment towards their clients (students and parents) are important factors likely to promote or impede successful language learning in this context.

The current research also unveiled contextual issues that appear to shape the teacher-student interaction in the YLL classroom and largely arising from mixed-ability classes and lack of support by educational authorities. Most importantly, the participant language teachers stated that their YLLs were neither enthusiastic nor motivated; nonetheless, teaching approaches were not changed in order to increase students' interest. Fischer (2005) argues that when children are provided with activities where they discover the need for exploration, self-esteem, stimulation and autonomy, language learning is more successful. It is, therefore, essential that YLL teachers develop skills for the purpose of introducing task-based and interactive methods to their young learners as well as the appropriate teaching strategies that will generate students' interest in learning (Giannikas 2013b). According to Moon (2005), these methods are more appropriate for teaching children a foreign language. An early phase of appropriate language instruction can equip children with a positive outlook, meaning that the methods in question need to be compatible and age-appropriate. Language teachers need to be aware of this before entering the YLLs' classroom in order to bring out the most positive results.

The data analysis also showed that teachers have not undergone effective teacher training. They received guidance in order to lead their students towards language examinations and good results, as is the nature of shadow education in many cases (Buhagiar & Chetcuti 2013; Giannikas 2011; Kassotakis & Verdis 2013; Tsagari 2009, 2012, 2014) but this kind of training was not geared towards the teaching of English to YLLs as such. As a consequence, the teaching methods applied in the current YLL classes mainly focused on what learners would need in the future, at an age where they can take their language examinations, rather than on their present needs. It is necessary here to compare the situation within the public sector and take into account certain parameters, which are linked to the state education system. The first has to do with the fact that Cypriot teachers in state schools now have more resources available in order to diversify their teaching according to students' needs. Secondly, the Ministry of Education and Culture is currently seeking to expand school based in-service teacher training programmes, aiming to effectively implement the new curricula introduced in recent years. Given also that the work of teachers in state schools is heavily regulated, as well as resourced through teacher training initiatives, it would be worthwhile to consider whether this extensive continuous professional development could be offered to private language teachers and

whether this would have an impact on the private language school sector. Pre- and in-service training to teachers of YLLs in the private sector need to be considerably strengthened. Actually the needs of the YLL teacher are particularly acute, as many did not start their teaching careers as YLL teachers (Garton, Copland & Burns 2011). Teacher education programmes will help language teachers develop the necessary skills to teaching English to children effectively and work towards the benefit of the *interactive* student rather than the *exam-taker*. These programmes should also focus on foreign language improvement and on pedagogical knowledge and skills. Finally, Raya & Hewitt (2001) stress that teacher education programmes should be inquiry-based, with peer-observations and this should be kept in mind in teacher education.

Finally, although language teachers may be influenced by the examination-oriented nature of the frontistiria, there are a number of factors a language educator must take into consideration when teaching children, such as emotional and cognitive growth and children's short attention span, to name a few. These factors cannot be supported by the teacher-centred method, and if there is no change in the teaching approach in private supplementary tutoring, language educators are at risk of negatively affecting their students' language learning, motivation and competence in the long run (Falout, Elwood & Hood 2009). As Fang & Clarke (2013: 4) have observed in similar learning contexts, 'here the teachers strip away the juicy parts of the English language down to its dry bones and force the students to swallow it down in its most basic form'. A solution would be to train teachers to be able to make distinctions of age-appropriate tasks and use effective learning strategies in the specific context allowing exam preparation methodologies to gradually take place at a later stage of the students' learning. Undoubtedly, the YLL teacher must have the training and ability to teach the core of the foreign language, encourage pupils to learn the material, and most importantly, to employ it (Gardner 1991). The negligence of professional development in shadow education will only have negative effects on early language learning. Additionally, larger research projects in the field of YLL ELT and specifically on teaching practices, whether in the private or public sector, are needed for greater opportunities for not only addressing such issues and raising awareness to policy makers and stakeholders, but for providing participating teachers with the opportunity to share their experiences and ideas on a national and international level (Garton, Copland & Burns 2011). Finally, educational policy developers should be informed with evidence based on current research and good practice in effective curriculum development for YLLs in order to enhance the language learning experience of children (Garton, Copland & Burns 2011).

Conclusion

One could argue that a paradox exists within the current language-learning context: parents entrust their children's English language learning to frontistiria where YLLs are expected to expand their knowledge and, eventually, take the desired language examinations; however, language teachers of the specific sector lack professional

development, which results in teacher-centred methods from an early age. No satisfactory measures have yet been taken by the state in order to address the phenomenon of shadow education, and the increased reliance of families on private tutoring, despite the past recommendations of various advisory committees and teacher unions such as the Committee of the Seven Academics (2004) and the local Teachers' Union of Secondary EFL Teachers, who highlight the impact of the shadow education system on state education and view shadow education as an informal or even illegal system of tutoring.

For the situation to change and to have fruitful and effective results in any context, professional development should be included and become obligatory in the private sector for teachers of YLLs (and perhaps other student groups). Teacher training programmes and pre-service activities can equip potential language teachers with the skills to face and effectively respond to the challenges that await them (Giannikas 2013c). In the local context, our suggestion is that the MoEC run professional development programmes for pre- and in-service EFL teacher; frontistiria EFL teachers should be included and recognised as equal language educators as their colleagues in the public sector so that professional development in the private sector ceases to be so loose. Education in Cyprus is very centralised, and the Ministry can impose various initiatives on the teachers such as teaching methods, as is the case in the public sector. Teachers in the public sector are required to undergo certain training sessions/courses, which may have a positive effect on teaching methods. Nonetheless, with the professional development of both public and private supplementary educational sectors, significant improvements can be made in early language learning in the country as a whole.

Shadow education can thus have many positive effects on a child's general education, as it supports and enhances language learning by supplementing state school education where needed. However, shadow education must become more transparent and language practitioners of the private sector should be treated as equal educators to their peers in state schools, and enjoy the same benefits from professional training. The policy of professional development should evolve based on the best available research evidence. As Tomlinson argues, 'flexible weak versions of pedagogic approaches, which encourage teacher variation within a recommended framework, have a much better chance of helping teachers to help their learners to learn' (2005: 143). Setting the need for professional development aside, teachers can and must act as reflective practitioners and professional decision-makers (Borg 2008), and should be encouraged to develop strategies, which are supported by research and in keeping with teachers' personal beliefs. Nonetheless, further research needs to take place in order to investigate this matter, and provide policy makers with enough feedback and data to fill the gap created in language teaching of the specific age group.

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Appendix A

Observation Worksheet

Date:
Class:
Level:
Aim:
Context:
Aids:

STAGE/ INTERACTION	AIM	PROCEDURE	TIME

Appendix B

Teachers' Guiding Questions

Section I - Bio Section
1. Male   Female
2. Teaching qualifications
3. English teaching qualifications
4. Years of teaching experience

Section II - Training and teaching
5. Have you attended any teacher training seminars/workshops/courses? What did they focus on?
6. In the English teacher-training seminars/workshops/courses you have attended so far, did you learn anything about teaching young learners? If yes, what was it?
7. How satisfied were you with these seminars? Did you feel that they appropriately prepared you to teach young learners?
8. What difficulties do you face in class with your students?
9. What do you feel characterises your teaching?

Section III - Students
10. How many levels/grades do you teach?
11. How many students do you have in each level? How many of these are boys and how many are girls?
12. Do your students face any particular problems in learning English, e.g. with reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, vocabulary, other?
13. Do you have any ethnic minority students (e.g. from Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia)? Do they face any problems when learning Greek? When learning English?
14. Does your school run remedial classes for "weaker" students?

Section IV - Materials
15. What kind of English teaching materials (e.g. course-books) are you using at the moment?
16. Do you like them? Please provide reasons why.
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?