

Our Philosophy and Course Design

The Papaeliou Schools' Pre-Junior Course is designed for children aged 5–6. The course's syllabus is based on the notion that the formal instruction of a foreign language should begin at the age of 5 provided that young learners' needs and background are taken into account. Thus, the materials, teaching approach and methodology used by our teaching team have been based on our students' first language background, world knowledge, social and motor skills and aim to cater to their English linguistic and sociolinguistic needs.

Enhancement of Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Skills

The Pre-Junior Course's primary aims are:

1. **To provide learners with the opportunity to learn English in a similar way as their native language.** Students are first exposed to oral and written language (listening and reading). At a much later time – depending on individuals' language learning pace – they are asked to produce the target language (speaking and writing). This teacher-induced silent period is critical to native-like foreign language acquisition.
2. **To make students associate the process of language learning with positive and memorable experiences.** Our team of experienced educators specializes in teaching young learners and does so in a very fun and loving way. Learning takes place through activities and materials that help increase children's motivation and imagination.
3. **To make students autonomous learners** by kindling in them the desire to explore the new language and to treat mistakes as opportunities to learn. Our teachers' primary aim is to create a stress-free environment where learning and not assessing is the only goal.

Teaching Young Learners

At this stage of cognitive development (Pre-operational stage) intelligence is demonstrated through *the use of symbols*. Although *language use matures*, and *memory and imagination are developed*, thinking is done in a nonlogical, nonreversible manner.

Thus, most children need to experience language through hands-on activities. The use of realia, games, role-play activities, puppets, puzzles, songs, chants and rhymes that are used in class by our specialized staff facilitate foreign language acquisition as well as eye-hand coordination and fine motor skill control.

As mentioned, teaching is done through a wide variety of short tasks (lasting no longer than ten minutes) whose aim is to facilitate the development of our students' motor, cognitive, and linguistic skills. During the course our learners experience language as a means of communication, rather than a set of rules and explanations. Discovery learning and supporting the developing interests of the child are two primary instructional techniques used in our school. There is no metalinguistic analysis of the foreign language, the activities focus on experiencing the target language through meaningful and imaginative practice. Classroom routines – necessary for young learners – involve story-telling, singing, drama activities, DVD watching, reading, using plasticine, project work, pair and group work task – completion.

The Curriculum

The Pre-Junior Course Curriculum has been designed with a view to challenge the child's abilities, but NOT present material or information that is too far beyond the child's level. The language is initially approached on a phonemic level. Association of symbols and sounds is the focal point of the first month. English is used by the teacher throughout the lesson. The Total Physical Response method used encourages the coordination of speech and action and children learn to respond physically to spoken language from the very

first lesson. Once listening comprehension has been developed, speech develops naturally and effortlessly out of it. Our syllabus incorporates vocabulary items closely related to children's everyday needs (self, family, interests, festivities, etc) as well as grammatical structures that facilitate the construction of meaningful utterances describing our children's daily life. The English Alphabet (letter recognition and letter writing) as well as Reading (word recognition, sentence recognition and reading) are introduced during the third month of instruction. By the end of the year, our Pre-Junior students are able to communicate about their everyday lives as well as seeking and receiving personal information. They are also able to read and write short paragraphs about their interests.

End of the Year Pre-Junior Play

The school year is completed with the Pre-Junior School Play. A play which gives ALL our students the opportunity to play-act the language they have learned throughout the year. The play lasts for 70 minutes and is written and directed by our teachers.