Author's accepted manuscript (postprint)

Teacher's image of the child in an ELT context

Ellis, G. & Ibrahim, N.

Available online: 10 May 2021

Teacher's Image of the Child in an ELT Context

Gail Ellis and Nayr Ibrahim

Introduction

In the course of the 20th century the concepts of the child and childhood have evolved dramatically. Children were treated as invisible objects, vulnerable and dependent, devoid of a voice and excluded from social structures and processes. Towards the end of the century, a paradigm shift altered the discourse around the child: children are rights-bearing subjects, they are capable human beings with their own opinions and perspectives and can participate fully in society (Jones and Walker, 2011; Clark, 2017). These rights have now been recognised in national policy, for example, the UK Children Act (1989), and international conventions, such as, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

The shift in paradigm from exclusion to being accepted as competent, contributing social actors has had a significant impact on the educational world. According to Woodhead and Montgomery (2003), the concept of being a child and childhood is socially situated and constructed. As a result, children are social actors and negotiate multiple positionings in the social and cultural world they inhabit. This implies that children should exercise agency in the social context of the school, where educational decision-making depends on the interdependent and reciprocal (O'Neill, 1994) relationships between the child and the adult. It also implies listening actively to the child as a pre-requisite for acting on what the child says. However, there is little evidence that the latter is common practice in classrooms (Lundy, 2007).

The ELT (English Language Teaching) profession is largely based on an adult notion and on adult perspectives of teaching, learning, teacher education and how materials should be conceptualized. The unprecedented expansion of teaching English to children (Enever, 2011, 2019) now raises the issues of, not only age-appropriate methodologies and materials (Cameron, 2003), but also the status of the child. Only recently have attempts been made to integrate a rights perspective to TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) by researchers, such as, Pinter (2011), Pinter and Zandian (2012), Pinter, Kuchah and Smith (2013) looking at

research with children rather than on children, and Ellis and Ibrahim (2015) focusing on giving children a voice in the EFL classroom by developing learning to learn strategies with children. In April 2018 the IATEFL Young Learners and Teenagers SIG Pre-Conference Event in Brighton dedicated a full day to exploring children's rights in ELT, *Children's rights, children's future: practical applications in TEYLs,* giving it visibility and prominence at an international ELT conference. Although this theme may appear 'beyond the remit of the English language teacher' (Davies 2018), an event dedicated to children's rights recognized its importance both in the ELT classroom as well as in teacher education and as part of the teacher's wider professional role.

Background to the Study

The impetus for this study came from a one-day induction in Paris for thirty teachers of pre-primary EFL children working in an out-of-school context for the British Council in different countries across Europe. The training aimed to support the teachers in implementing a new pre-primary programme in its Teaching Centres from September 2016. This formed part of a wider change-management and innovation process in the standardisation of early years programmes across British Council Teaching Centres in the region. The project had the following objectives: looking at higher efficiencies and effectiveness in curriculum development and implementation, and bringing together best practice from around the region in the teaching of English to pre-primary children.

The teachers

All the teachers had English as their first language or were highly proficient speakers of English. Years of experience of teaching English in pre-primary ranged from those who had only one year to those who had five or more years' experience. Most had followed a typical English as a foreign language training route and had a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) qualification for teaching adults. Some had also completed a young learner extension course such as the Cambridge Young Learner (YL) Extension to CELTA or the Trinity TYLEC (Teaching Young Learners Extension Certificate). However, extension courses focus on a wide range of ages (6 – 17 age span), and often make broad generalisations about 'young learners'. These courses often lack a focus on the 'specific requirements with regard to teaching methodology, course structure, materials and learning environment' (Ellis 2014: 76) for the life stages which fall within the umbrella term 'young learners', in other words, pre-primary, primary and secondary. Furthermore, they

do not usually include a pre-primary focus and do not include the study of children's rights or encourage teachers to reflect on their own theories and constructions of children and childhood.

The pre-primary programme

Although children's rights and agency have only recently been highlighted, many historically well-established approaches to the education of young children such as Froebel (Tovey 2016), Steiner (Nicol and Taplin, 2017), and Montessori (Isaacs, 2012) have also focused on young children's capacities as agents in their own learning. This tradition has continued amongst more recent approaches, such as Reggio Emilia (Edwards and Rinaldi, 2012; Rinaldi, 2006; Thornton and Brunton, 2015), and the HighScope approach (Hohmann, Epstein and Weikart, 2008; Wiltshire, 2012), which have played, and are playing, an important role in early childhood education settings internationally. The latter two approaches appeared in the UK in the 80s and have influenced the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (EYFS Department of Education 2017), which was first introduced in England in 2008, and outlines the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five.

The revised pre-primary programme in the British Council is underpinned by the philosophy of the EYFS and the HighScope approach (Hohmann, Epstein and Weikart, 2008) to early childhood education. The EYFS expresses concern for the child as a social agent and active learner, as lists the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning (Department of Education 2017: 10) which are:
- playing and exploring,
- active learning,
- creating and thinking critically,

and its four overarching principles which should shape practice in early years settings: (2017: 6)
- a unique child: observing how a child is learning,
- positive relationships: what adults could do,
- enabling environments: what adults could provide,
- children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates: respecting individual differences.

The HighScope approach provides a flexible structure and routine via the 'plan-do-review' cycle of activities which emphasizes shared control and active learning and focuses children's attention on what they are doing and how they are doing it. It shows faith that pre-primary children can reflect on and express their views about their own learning given appropriate support and scaffolding. It also recognizes children as active learners with agency who are capable of reflection and decision-making from an early age (Nisbet and Shucksmith, 1986; Whitebread, 2012). For many teachers, this pedagogical approach requires a rethinking of the power dynamics in the adult-child relationship moving to one of more shared control.

The induction

We began the induction by asking teachers to explore and to discuss with others in the group their own views of the child and of childhood. We wanted to encourage the teachers to re-examine their beliefs and attitudes because these impact on the type of relationships they establish with children in the classroom. This discussion activity therefore aimed to help teachers

- recognise children's reflective capacities given appropriate support and scaffolding
- establish their own theories and constructions of the child and of childhood
- recognise children as rights holders.

Overall we found that the teachers held views of the child as mostly passive, and had limited awareness of children's rights.
Their responses ranged from

- adjectives describing children's characteristics – these were often emotive, for example, 'innocent, pure, cute, fragile, sweet, kind, funny', and designated the child as passive and dependent,
- phrases that reflected their view of the child as an object to which they do things,
- phrases which showed some awareness of the child as an individual with rights and their own perspectives.

We wanted to find out if the views of the teachers attending the induction were typical of teachers elsewhere so we conducted an online survey in January 2017 to elicit a wider range of views of the child and of childhood.

Theoretical background to the online survey study

In this section we aim to give an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. We will focus on operationalising Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) and on the social study of children over the last few decades. This has developed new theoretical perspectives that conceptualize the child as an individual and a social actor in his/her own right.

A children's rights perspective

Our study is embedded in a children's rights perspective which was enshrined in the UNCRC in 1989. However, most classrooms are rigid and highly structured spaces and many teachers may feel it is not possible to move to a relationship of more shared control. We nevertheless believe the classroom should provide a conducive space for children to exercise their participation rights, if the teacher is equipped with the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding of children's rights to enable this.

The UNCRC is the first international human rights agreement to bring together a universal set of standards concerning children. It is also the first to present children's rights as a legally binding imperative. The document contains participation rights as well, which were absent before 1989, as previous children's rights charters only included provision and protection rights. The convention defines childhood as a separate space from adulthood and recognises that children are the holders of their own rights. They are not passive recipients of adult intervention but empowered actors in their own development. In particular, Article 12, (UNCRC) states that

1. 'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'.

2. 'For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law'.

The document recognises the child as a full human being with integrity and personality and the ability to participate freely in society. According to UNICEF, childhood is not just the space between birth and adulthood; it refers to the state and condition of a child's life and to the quality of those years. It is a separate and safe space where children *are*

'resourceful citizens, capable of helping to build a better future for all' (UNICEF, 2002:16). Furthermore, in order for children's voices to be heard, we need to employ 'a pedagogy of listening', where we 'listen' to the child, accompany the child in discovering their world and not just speak for the child. According to Rinaldi (2001: 4) 'listening is an active verb, which involves giving an interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who are being listened to'. Within an educational context 'listening is central to responsive and reciprocal relationships when the object is teaching and learning' (Clark and Moss, 2011: v Preface by Carr).

There have, however, been criticisms of the UNCRC especially around the threefold categorisation of protection, provision and participation rights, known as the '3P's' (Dillen, 2006: 238; Qvortrup, 1994: 36). Furthermore, the Convention contains a number of inconsistencies and is open to various interpretations. Alderson (2000:439) summarises the common criticisms which include a fear that the convention gives children too much liberty and not enough protection, that this liberty could undermine respect for adults, including parents and teachers, and that children could become greedy, selfish and irresponsible. The convention is also criticised for being based on an idealistic western vision of childhood, and as being unrealistic as it fails to take into account differences which exist between countries and cultures (Garnier 2012). Alderson (2000: 440) responds to these criticisms by affirming that, for example, Article 12 is about 'taking part and not taking charge'. For example, in a democratic classroom children and the teacher will negotiate responsibilities, learning activities, learning partners or groups, topics and resources and so on. This decision-making process is about participating collaboratively, not about taking over control. The convention is also about necessities not luxuries, and it does not endorse selfish individualism, as 'rights are collective not individual' (Alderson 2000: 442). She concludes that the convention is an effective tool for monitoring the rights of children and can be used as a tool for change.

Whist we can see that implementing children's rights is a teacher's ethical duty as it is not just 'a model of good pedagogical practice (or policy making) but a legally binding obligation' (Lundy 2007: 930), schools are traditionally highly structured, hierarchical organisations. Teachers are confined by organisational constraints such as restrictive curricula, prescribed methods and pre-defined outcomes, rigid assessment systems and rules and regulations. These constraints can make it seem challenging for the teacher to give over some agency and control to their pupils and, consequently, they may underplay, ignore or even deny children their

rights. They may also fear that giving children more control will undermine their authority, or they may believe that children are too young and not capable of expressing their opinions or views, or of participating in making decisions and choices about their learning. Furthermore, as children's rights rarely form part of ELT training programmes, many teachers lack an awareness of these and do not have the skills or knowledge to implement them. We are, therefore, faced with an ethical dilemma as these organisational constraints, fears, beliefs and lack of training conflict with the ethos of creating a democratic classroom.

The Lundy model of child participation

According to Alderson (2000: 440) Article12 'grants to children a share in making decisions which affect them'. This sharing has four levels, but the Convention only deals with the first three: 'to express a view, to be informed about the details and opinions within a decision and to have their view taken into account, according to the child's age and ability, by adults who are making the decision' (Alderson op.cit). The fourth level is 'the right to be the main decider in matters which affect the child'. This right is 'only for children who are able to make an informed decision in their own best interests' (Alderson op.cit). Lundy (2007) acknowledges this complexity and considers that Article 12 falls short of its initial purpose, as children's views are not given due weight in education and the scope of the Article is not fully understood. Obstacles to the successful implementation of the Article include a lack of informed understanding thereof, the extent to which children and adults should be involved, and the concept of 'pupil voice' (Lundy 2007: 930) which camouflages and detracts from the need to act on children's opinions. She focuses on a reinterpretation of Article 12 and expands the second part 'the child's right to have the view given due weight' (Lundy 2007: 933), so that children's views are not just listened to but also acted upon and informed of any action taken.

Lundy proposes a model (Fig. 1) for conceptualising Article 12, which attempts to capture more fully the true extent of these legal obligations to children including educational decision-making. Her model resulted from a research study across Northern Ireland (Kilkelly et al., 2005), which involved 1064 school children from 27 schools including mainstream schools, special schools and Irish medium schools. The main aim of this research was to identify areas where children's rights were ignored or underplayed in all areas of their lives, including education. Lundy employed a range of data collection methods and children contributed to the research through drawing pictures, writing stories, designing posters or undertaking tasks

that were appropriate to their level of understanding. Her research showed that when children were consulted their views were often not acted upon which revealed that Article 12 often remained at a tokenistic level in school contexts. For example, teachers often asked their classes which activities they preferred but did not use this feedback to inform their practice and plan next steps.

Lundy's model consists of four distinct interrelated elements, which show that Article 12 has an explicit chronology:
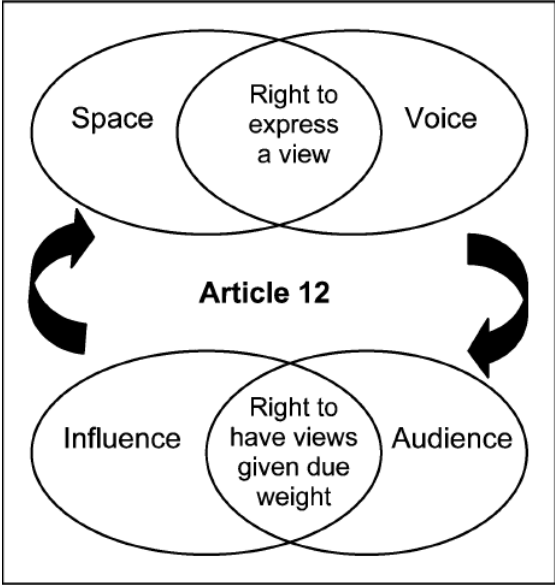
Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view

Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views

Audience: The view must be listened to.

Influence: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Fig. 1. Conceptualising Article 12 (Lundy 2007: 932)

We used this model when analysing teachers' responses from the survey because it goes beyond the popular notion of 'pupil voice' (Lundy op.cit) which often results in only tokenistic opportunities for children to participate in decision-making. For example, if children are consulted, the issues they get to discuss are often predetermined by teachers, and are often about more superficial aspects of school life such as the colour of uniforms or canteen menus rather than the curriculum. We wanted to find out to what extent teachers implemented, if at all, all four elements of the model.

New sociology of childhood

Previously, children were more socially 'managed', which made it difficult to access the world of the child. In the 21st century, their world is still controlled and/or ignored by the adult because children 'are held incompetent in making judgments or because they are thought of as unreliable witnesses about their own lives' (Qvortrup et al., 1994: 2). In the main, children remain a disempowered population, often denied the right to speak (or to be listened to), and whose considerations are often disregarded.

A new sociological approach to conceptualising childhood leading up to the UNCRC aimed to find ways of accessing the child's world, where children are seen as a social group and as contributing social actors to the social condition of childhood (Mayall, 2000: 247). This approach focuses on the child as an individual in their own right, the child as *being* in the present, in other words, the here and now of childhood, and their everyday lives as children rather than the child as *becoming,* i.e. citizens and adults of the future (Qvortrup, 1985; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). This focus on the future overlooks the actual *being* of children and ignores their opinions and perspectives as relevant to their own lives.

Christensen and Prout (2002: 480) refer to four ways of viewing childhood and children in research: the child as object, the child as subject, the child as social actor and the child as participant and co-researcher.

Child as object, that is, a person acted upon by others. This view of the child neglects the understanding of children as social persons in their own right and is based on the assumption of children's dependency. For example, in schools children are usually controlled by the systems in place. They are often told what to do and when, e.g., when they can sit down or stand up, when it is their turn to answer a question, when they can take a break, what colour pen to use, etc.

Child as subject, recognizes the child as a person with subjectivity but it is the adult who decides whether the child can or cannot participate in a particular event. This is usually dependent on age-based criteria, for example, a child's stage of development and maturity. For example, the following comment from a research project conducted in 2000 (Ellis, 2000: 78) in France shows that the teacher considers the children are too young to be given explanations about what they are going to learn, 'To tell a class of 8 year olds what the aims of a lesson are, is, in my opinion, pointless.'

Child as social actor, recognises children as having their own experiences and understandings. Children are seen to act, take part in, change and become changed by the social and cultural world they live in. For example, research carried out in Indian primary English classrooms by Pinter, Mathew and Smith (2016: 21) reveals that children are capable of sharing their views about what type of English language learning they wanted and enjoyed. They noticed that when they were invited to discover knowledge for themselves, they started to participate fully, made decisions for themselves and worked in collaboration with each other. They commented on the importance of being able to voice their views, being independent and being able to learn for themselves as the following quote reveals, 'Because this time, we designed our own holiday homework ourselves and included things like a coin collection, interviews, comics, stories' (Pinter, Mathew and Smith op.cit). Ellis and Ibrahim (2015:96) when eliciting evidence from children of the impact of learning to learn on the teaching and learning process, also found that children were capable of expressing their opinions on how they learn, 'I like talking about my activity with my partner. We can share each other's ideas and help each other.'

Child as participant and co-researcher, views children as active participants who have the support of the UNCRC, which emphasises children's participation rights and promotes the idea that children be involved, informed, consulted and heard on issues relating to their lives. Modugala (2018) collected data via a questionnaire and participatory techniques to better understand her pupils' preferences about the ways they want to learn and about the materials they would like to use.
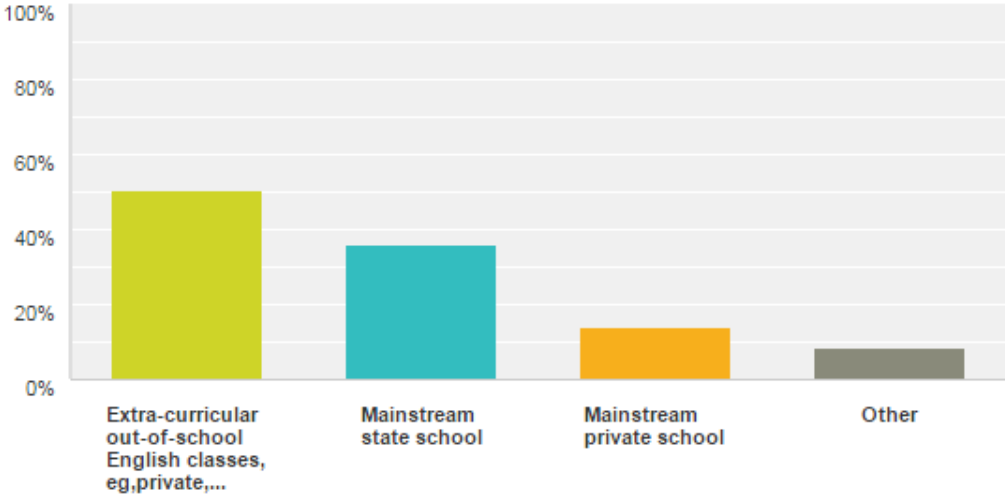

Data collection and analysis

For the purpose of the present study we collected data from an online survey generated by SurveyMonkey in January 2017 (see Appendix 1). We sent it to colleagues, associates and acquaintances in teacher training colleges, universities, teacher associations and educational institutions around the world, to share with teachers. The survey was also posted on some social media sites in order to allow for greater access and visibility. The survey consisted of 8 questions. Questions 1 - 4 asked about the teachers and their teaching context. Questions 5 – 8 elicited teacher's views of children and of childhood and were open questions to avoid influencing possible means of conceptualising children according to the above categories. This provided both quantitative and qualitative data which we analysed thematically based on the categorisation of Christensen and Prout (op.cit) above related to the roles of children. Data was extracted to Excel where we were able to identify recurring words and expressions

by theme. We then used a word cloud creator, Word*It*Out, to visualise the highest number of recurring words.
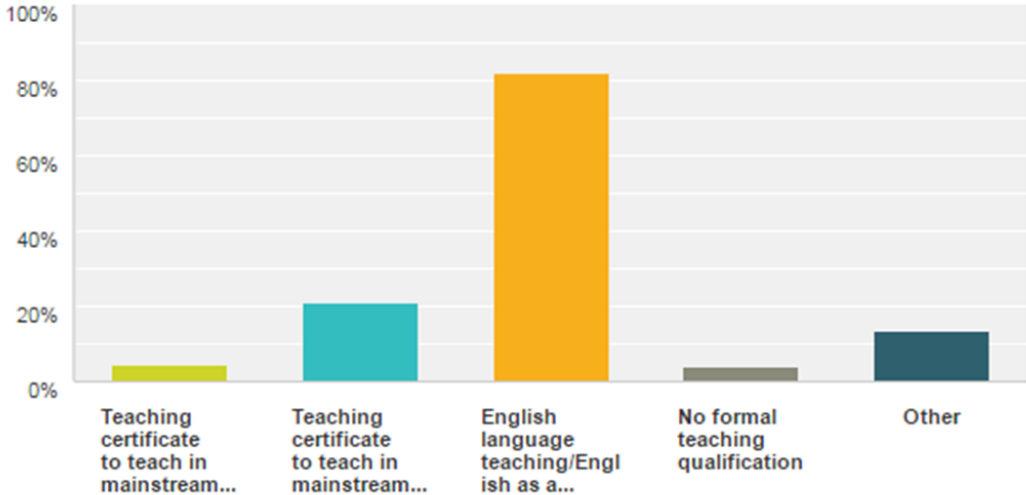
We received 226 responses from teachers working in 38 countries, with the highest number of responses coming from Algeria, Croatia, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Ukraine. 50% of respondents worked in extra-curricular, out-of-school settings, that is, private, fee-paying language institutes or language schools. 36% worked in mainstream state schools, and some worked in both private and state settings. 95% taught primary aged children and 22% pre-primary and some taught both (Fig.2).

Fig.2. What educational settings do you work in?

82% of the respondents had an English language teaching/English as a foreign language qualification and 20% a teaching certificate to teach in mainstream education at primary level and some had both and a few had no teaching qualifications (Fig.3).

Fig. 3. What teaching qualifications do you have?

Data analysis

For each question, 5 – 8, we categorised teachers' comments into the different themes related to the categories outlined above. Each question elicited comments that highlighted a different focus of the view of childhood (see Table 1). Analysis of Q5 and Q6 responses centre on the child and the place of childhood in society and Q7 and Q8 shift the focus to the adult or the teacher and how they perceive their relationship with the child.
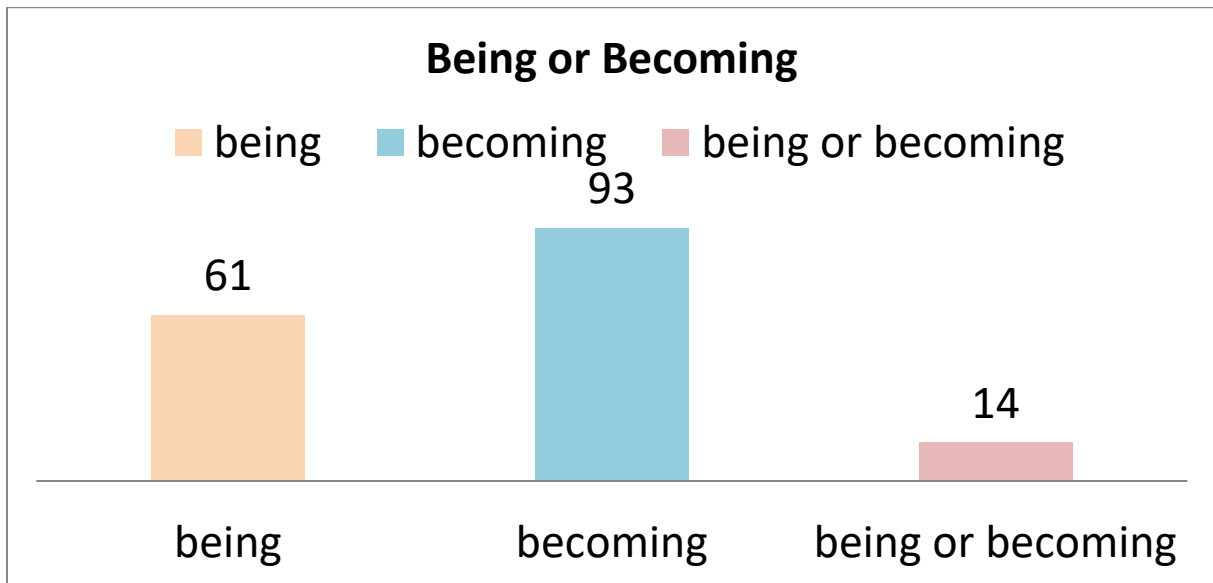
Table 1: Categories of analysis per question

Q5: What is your perspective of childhood?	the being and becoming of childhood	Child focus
Q6: What is your view/image of the child?	child as object, subject, social actor, participant/co-researcher	Child focus
Q7: How would you describe your relationship with children?	teacher as partner vs teacher as authority	Adult focus
Q8: How do your responses to questions 5, 6, and 7 influence your teaching practice?	teacher as authority, facilitator, partner	Adult focus

Findings

In response to the question, What is your perspective of childhood? we categorised the responses into two themes, child as *being* or *becoming* (Qvortrup, 1985; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998), which provided evidence that the majority of respondents saw the child as an adult in the making or as a future citizen. A few comments reflected both *being* and *becoming* (Fig. 4), which indicates that these are not always polarised or mutually exclusive themes, and that there are multiple perspectives of how teachers view the child.

Fig.4 Responses categorised into *being* or *becoming*

We extracted the recurring words from responses that referred to the beginning of a process where the adult plays a key role in 'shaping, forming, moulding' the child into a future citizen, therefore the child as *becoming* and created a word cloud (Fig.5). These words are also linked to the perceived fragility and vulnerability of childhood.

Fig.5. Word cloud for *becoming*

In comparison, the *being* respondents used terms that reflected children as active participants capable of making choices about their own lives, as well as in the classroom about their own learning. Fig. 6 highlights words that reflects the 'here and now of childhood' (Mayall, 2002), the child as a meaning-maker with agency and competence.

Fig.6. Word cloud for *being*

When comparing the *becoming* and the *being* terms we identified three recurring and contrasting themes which reveal inconsistent beliefs strongly reflected by the language employed by the teachers in the study (see Table 2).

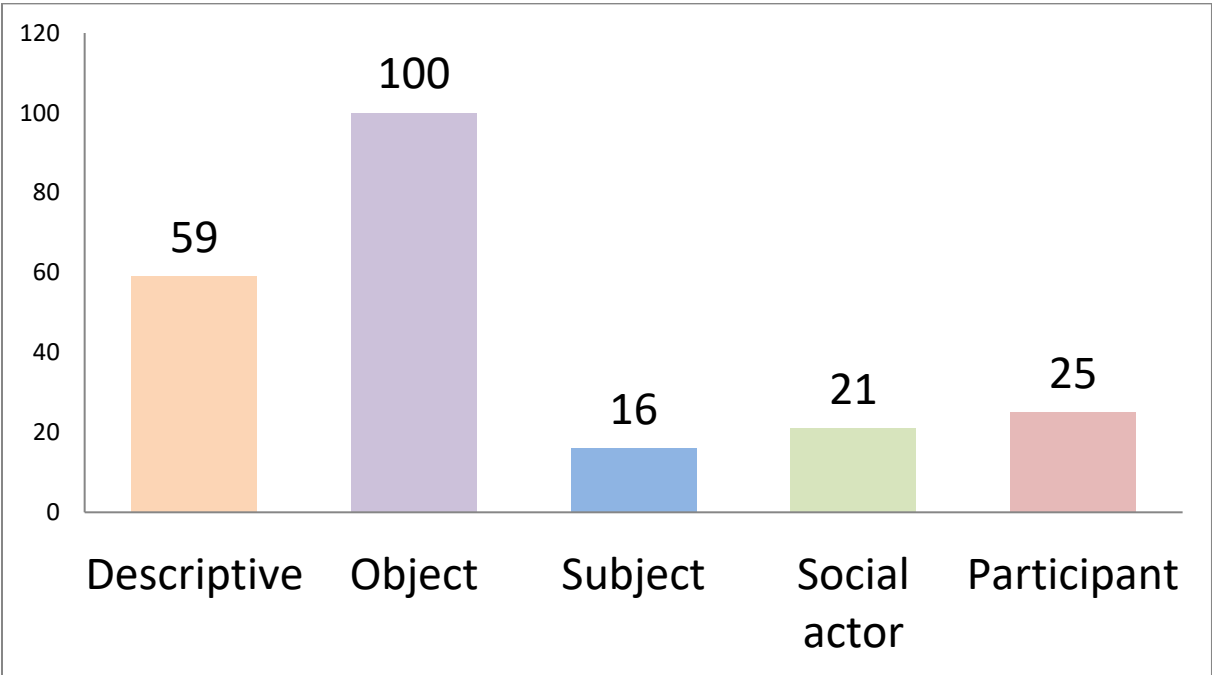Table 2: Contrasting themes in the *becoming* and *being* categories

Becoming	*Being*
Vulnerable, dependent child innocent, fragile, ephemeral, guileless, delicate, naive, easily-hurt, protect, help, supervision, support, innocent	**Strong, independent child** confident, social actor, responsible communicator
Passive child absorb, unconscious, acceptance, depend, impressionable	**Active child** explore, curiosity, discover, experiment, play, meaning-maker, interact, express, imagination, observation, questioning
Child as future individual, adult in the making, an educational outcome shape, create, later life, adult, preparation, mould, influence, form, flexible material, starting out on a journey, spring, dawn, step, base, early, building-blocks, foundation	**Child as an individual now** human being, real people, rich, listen

In addition to the responses above, one respondent used a metaphor by referring to the child as 'a little person under construction... and we [teachers] are the language engineers'. This

response clearly illustrates that the child is viewed as an adult in the making. Whilst it is acknowledged that children are growing and developing and that part of childhood is learning to become a functioning adult in society, the majority of responses show that there is less focus on the child as an individual in their own right and the child as *being*. From a language learning perspective, respondents mainly accorded the active or principal role to the teacher. The child's role in the inherently dynamic language learning process that requires reflecting, hypothesising and reorganising of structures and concepts already learnt, was underplayed and overlooked.

We categorised responses from Q6 into the four categories of the view of the child discussed in Christensen and Prout (op.cit). The majority of the responses indicate that there is a tendency for teachers to view the child as an object (100 out of 266 responses). Fig.7

Fig.7 What is your view/image of the child?

Several respondents used metaphors which referred to a range of different objects, often empty or blank. The objects named are loaded with significance and may have cultural references (Jin and Cortazzi, 2008). Some are inanimate which reflect teacher's view of the child as inert and passive in need of the adult to teach them, 'A white page we fill in', 'a blank page', 'a blank sheet of paper', 'a blank slate', 'a clean slate', 'an empty/blank canvas', 'a tiny growing vessel ready to be filled'. Some objects also denote size thereby relegating children to a position of inferiority in relation to the dominant adult, 'a small plant', 'a child is like a

bud', 'just a bulb...a very nice bulb', 'a little sun'. The metaphor of light, although positive, still reflects the need for adult intervention 'They are like stars, and we need to help them shine brighter, a light turning on'.

In particular, many respondents used the metaphor of 'a sponge' with one participant also referring to a child as 'an impulsive sponge'. In this expression, the adjective denotes an unthinking child, a child who simply reacts to a context created by the adult without reflecting on their own role and rights in the adult world. We speculate that the numerous uses of the noun 'sponge' when referring to how children learn, may originate from a widespread common misconception of Montessori's classic work, The Absorbent Mind. The noun 'sponge' as used by our participants views children as passive in their learning. However, Montessori (2007:5) writes, 'the child has a type of mind that absorbs knowledge and instructs himself' which indicates the active and thoughtful processes involved in learning.

This passive view of children by respondents is also reflected by the use of the passive voice (in italics below) when referring to children. This relegates them to passive objects, even though they were saying positive things about them.

> 'Young and (mostly) innocent young mind *to be shaped and developed*, pointed in right direction.'
> 'They have *to be 'handled' with* high care and respect.'
> 'An individual with their own set of wants, needs and opinions, but one which *needs to be made aware of* functioning within a group.'
> 'Every child *should be dealt with* individually as we deal with our own children.'

Surprisingly the next largest category (25 responses out of 266) viewed the child as an active participant. For example, here are some of the phrases used:

> responsible for own actions
>
> make decisions
>
> have their own ideas
>
> we learn from them
>
> a complete human being
>
> have their own unique way
>
> can do things on their own
>
> make choices
>
> a contributor of own ideas

These responses depict children as active, responsible, independent beings who are involved in their own construction of meaning and are acting on their choices.

We classified 21 responses into 'child as social actor'. These responses reflect children who understand and construct the social, cultural and educational situations they experience and actively influence them.

> a natural scientist
>
> understands the world around him
>
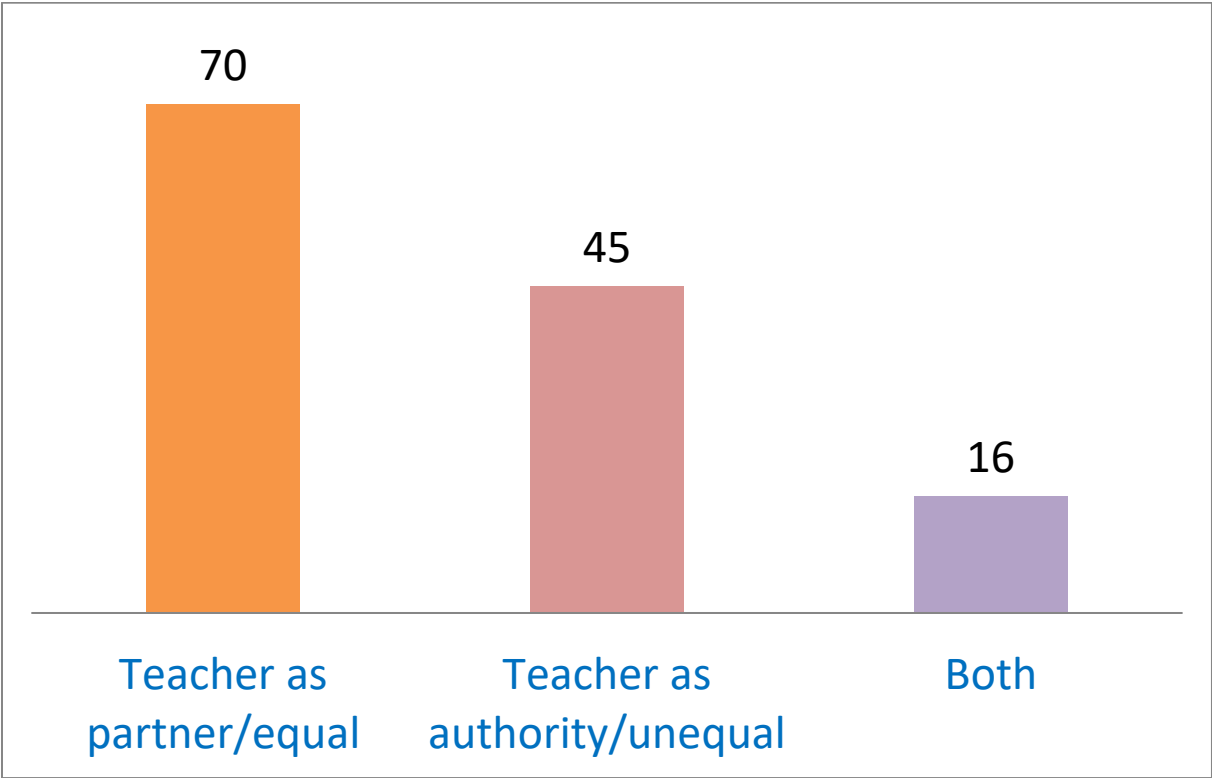> knows exactly what they want
>
> a learning person

In the subject category, the responses show that children were recognised as people and individuals.

> I see them as actual children and not miniature adults.
>
> Each child possesses a different personality and a different level of maturity.
>
> The child is a central figure in the classroom, so my lessons are very child-centred.
>
> A human being who should be treated with respect.
>
> A child is a person with his own character and expectations of life.

We were unable to categorise quite a large number of the responses (59) as they were purely descriptive statements about the child, such as they are 'curious, intuitive, happy, emotional, energetic, inspiring, innocent, lively, fragile, spontaneous, carefree, naïve, sweet, cute, vulnerable.' This matches our first experience of eliciting teachers' views of the child in the induction session in Paris. The number of descriptive adjectives used to describe children was the second largest category (59 out of 266). We decided to keep this as a separate category, as this attests to society's vision of children as innocent and needing protection.

The responses to question 7, 'How would you describe your relationship with children?' show the power dynamics in the adult-child relationship which is transposed into the teacher-pupil relationship in the classroom. The data fell into three categories 'teacher-as-partner', 'teacher as authority' and some which fell into both categories. 'Teacher-as-partner' has an equal relationship with the child and 'teacher-as-authority' thereby placing the child in a more subordinate and passive role. It was interesting to see that the balance tilts towards the teacher as partner (Fig.8).
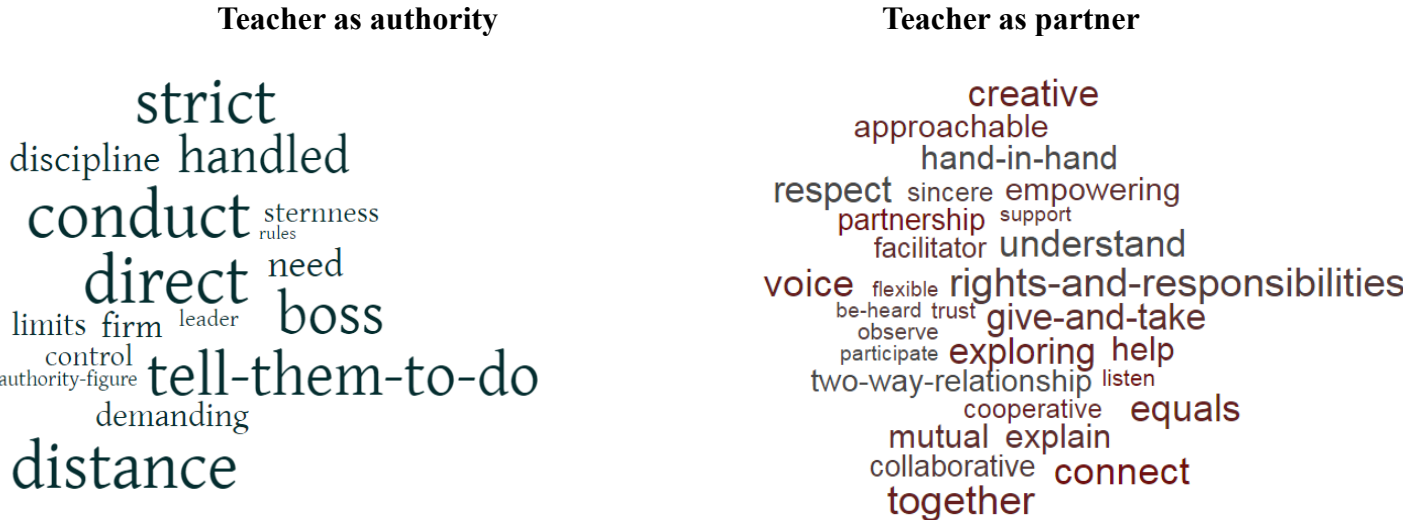
Fig.8. Teacher as partner/authority

However, again, we were unable to categorise 95 responses because the question was replied to very literally and included comments like, 'excellent, fine, very good, friendly'. This highlighted the limitation of surveys as a data collection method both in terms of formulating questions and in interpreting questions and responses. We would need to review this for further research.
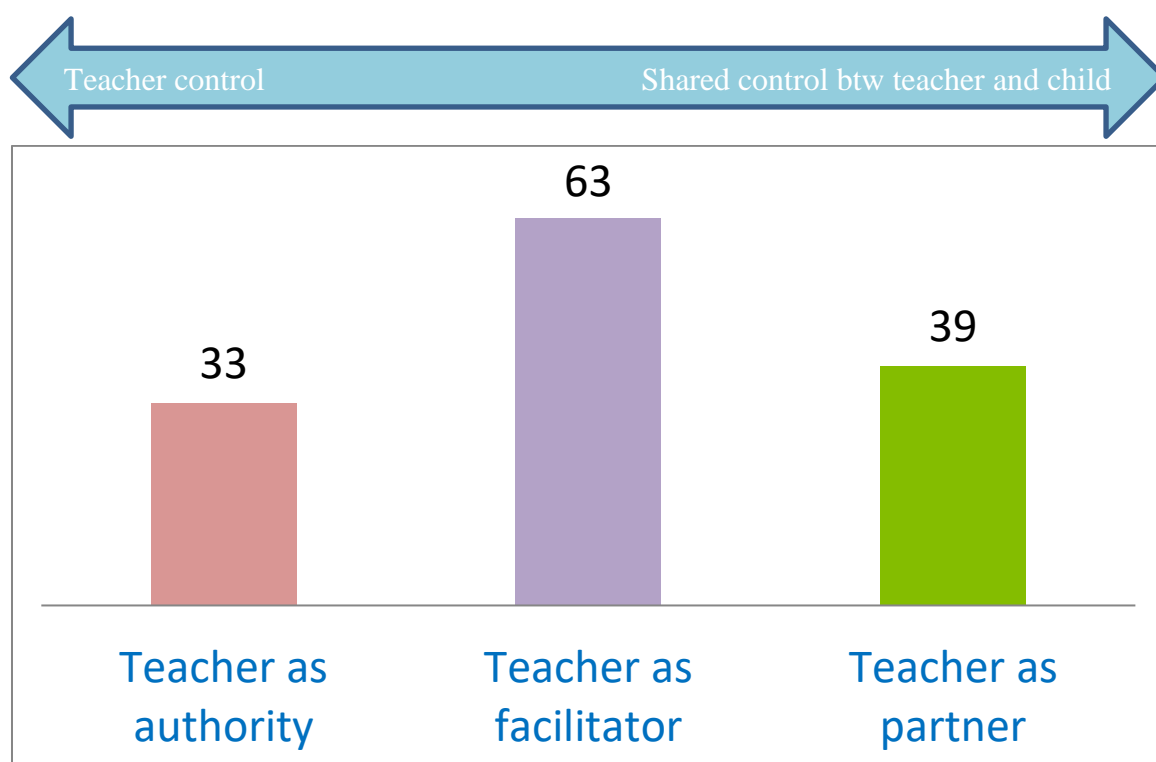
We created word clouds (Fig. 9) to highlight the terms that were used by respondents in each category. Words on the left reflect control and discipline, while the words on the right reflect respect, collaboration and togetherness.

Fig. 9. Word clouds teacher as authority/partner

Teacher as authority   **Teacher as partner**

The final question asked teachers to reflect on the impact their view of the child has on their teaching practices. Responses focused on their relationship with the child which influences their teaching practices depending on the role they adopt in the classroom. Responses were classified according to the following roles, Teacher as authority, facilitator or partner, which represent a continuum from teacher control to one of shared control between teacher and child (Fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Teacher as authority/facilitator/partner

In the role as 'teacher as facilitator', which is the largest category, teachers are aware of the need to give children space to participate and voice their opinions. However, only 39 respondents categorised as 'teacher as partner' described a more democratic approach to working with children in an ELT context. For example, a British teacher working in an out-of-school context in Thailand who had completed a training course in Childhood Studies explains her development along the continuum from 'teacher as authority' to 'teacher as partner', 'I've greatly changed my teaching practice from one where the teacher does most of the talking based on a pre-planned agenda to a flexible one that demands and allows more participation from the children and their imaginations.'

Discussion and recommendations

The findings from this study highlight the complexity of teacher's perceptions of childhood. On the one hand, teacher's responses reflect a more traditional view of childhood. On the other hand, some teachers show they have, or are in the process of developing, a view of the child as a competent and active member of the classroom in particular, and in society. In some cases teachers reflect both views in their responses.

When we compared teacher's qualifications with the categories in question 8, we expected the teachers with a mainstream teaching certificate only would express their relationship with the child as more participative and facilitative, as a result of their more comprehensive training. This includes age-appropriate classroom and behaviour management and how to use routines to establish a structured and positive classroom climate of mutual confidence and respect. In some cases, training also includes Childhood Studies and an understanding of children's rights. However, in contrast to our expectations, the data showed that the EFL qualified teachers expressed their relationship with the child more as partner and facilitator while the mainstream teachers fell almost equally into both the authority and facilitator categories and very few in the partner category. As a result, children's learning experiences will vary across cultural and educational contexts as well as within the same school and according to each teacher and their own beliefs.

We postulate that the reason why EFL qualified teachers seem to describe their role as a facilitator and partner is a result of their training in communicative methodology as covered extensively on courses like the CELTA. A communicative approach encourages more learner participation, involvement and collaboration, increases 'student talking time', puts a greater focus on fluency and less on accuracy. It therefore seems to take a less authoritative stance to teaching and learning. Teachers with this qualification for teaching adults may have transferred this approach to their classrooms when teaching children. However, in our experience, these teachers often lack the age-appropriate classroom and behaviour management skills to meet children's needs and expectations. Children do not have the same motivations or metacognitive coping and self-regulation strategies as adult learners and will soon let a teacher know if they are bored by manifesting this through their behaviour. These teachers therefore need to develop these skills in order to effectively act on children's needs and views.

Returning to Lundy's model of child participation, the majority of teachers' comments reflect that they give children space and voice, while some go as far as mentioning that children's views should be listened to, they see them as contributors and responsible for their own learning. Yet we found no evidence of the fourth element, i.e. influence. Teacher's comments did not reveal that they were acting upon children's views and perspectives as appropriate. This may be because research tools need to be more specific in order to elicit

teachers' actions based on children's voices, or because teachers are simply not used to acting in this way.

Lundy's research has shown that consulting with children improves teaching and learning; it builds children's self-esteem, develops their autonomy and their self-expression and fosters a more democratic school ethos. In order for this to happen, we recommend a whole-school approach to respecting children's rights and to implementing a participative philosophy where there is shared control in the adult-child relationship. Given the traditional structures of most schools, ethical guidelines for the implementation of an effective whole-school approach are recommended, so that all staff understand their obligations vis à vis the UNCRC. For example, where teachers are concerned, to help them understand the implications of the UNCRC and its confirmation of the equal status of children as the subjects of rights, we recommend that initial training and continuous professional development should increase knowledge and understanding of the Convention, encourage active respect for all its provisions and provide teachers with guidelines on how to implement Article 12 in the ELT classroom.

In conclusion, training should help teachers construct their own theories of children and childhood in order to recognise children as genuine partners in education and more specifically as partners in the ELT classroom. For this to happen, they need to move along the continuum from a 'technician applying prescribed methods to produce pre-defined outcomes, to a reflective democratic and 'rich' professional' (Moss 2010) who uses a pedagogy of relationship and of listening, and who creates possibilities for all children. Even small steps such as building in opportunities for choice can make a difference, and can begin the teacher's task to fulfil their ethical duty and contribute to the creation of a democratic ELT classroom and a children's rights culture.

References:

Alderson, P. (2000) 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Some Common Criticisms and Suggested Responses'. *Child Abuse Review Vol. 9*: 439–443

Cameron, L. (2003) 'Challenges for ELT from the expansion in teaching children', *ELT Journal*, 57(2), 1 April 2003, 105–112.

Christensen, P. and A. James (eds), (2000) *Research with Children.* London: Falmer, 2000.

Christensen, P. and Prout, A. (2002) 'Working with Ethical Symmetry in Social Research with Children'. *Childhood*. London: Sage Publications.

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach,* London, NCB.

Clark, A. (2017) *Listening to Young Children. Third Edition.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Davies, A. (2018) 'IATEFL 2018 YLTSIG PCE Review: Children's Rights, Children's Future: Practical Applications in TEYLs'. *YLTSIG Blog 2 May* *https://yltsig.iatefl.org/2018/05/02/iatefl-2018-yltsig-pce-review-childrens-rights-childrens-future-practical-applications-in-teyls*

Department for Education. (2017) *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the standards for Learning, Development and Care for Children from Birth to Five. London; Crown Copyright.* https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf

Dillen, A. (2006) 'Children between Liberation and Care: Ethical Perspectives on the Rights of Children and Parent-Child Relationships'. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 11/2, 237-250.

Edwards, C. and Rinaldi, C. (eds) (2012) *The Diary of Laura: Perspectives on a Reggio Emilia Diary*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf.

Ellis, G. (2000) 'Is it worth it? Convincing Teachers of the Value of Developing Metacognitive Awareness in Children' *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*. B. Sinclair, I. McGrath, T. Lamb, (eds). Harlow: Longman in association with the British Council.

Ellis, G. (2014) 'Young Learners': clarifying our terms.' *ELT Journal* Vol. 68 (1), 75-78.

Ellis, G. and Ibrahim, N. (2015) *Teaching children how to learn.* Peaslake: Delta Publishing.

Enever, J. (2011) (ed) *ELLiE: Early Language Learning in Europe*. London: The British Council.

Enever, J. (2019) *Policy and Politic of Global Primary English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Garnier, A. (2012) 'Criticisms of Children's Rights'. Available at: https://www.humanium.org/en/criticisms-of-childrens-rights/

Hohmann, M., Epstein, A. S., and Weikart, D. (2008) *Educating Young Children: Active Learning Practices for Preschool and Child Care Programs*. 3rd Ed. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Isaacs, B. (2012) *Understanding the Montessori Approach.* Oxon: Routledge.

James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. (1998) *Theorising childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jin, L. and Cortazzi, M. (2008) Images of teachers, learning and questioning in Chinese cultures of learning, In: E. Berendt (ed.) *Metaphors of Learning, cross-cultural perspectives*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 177-202.

Jones, P. and Walker, G. (2011) *Children's Rights in Practice.* London: Sage Publications.

Kilkelly, U., Kilpatrick, R., Lundy, L., Moore, L., Scraton, P., Davey, C., Dwyer, C. and McAlister, S. (2005) *Children's rights in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Lundy, L. (2007) 'Voice is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal,* 33 (6), 927-942.

Mayall, B. (2002) *Towards a sociology for childhood: Thinking from children's lives.* London: Open University Press.

Modugala, M. 2018. Listening to children's perceptions and experiences of English language teaching material. *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India. Issue 11 Understanding learners – researching learners' perceptions*. Edited by Brian Tomlinson and Andy Keedwell. British Council India.

Montessori, M. (2007) *The Absorbent Mind*. Radford. Wilder Publications LLC.

Moss, P. (2010) 'What is Your Image of the Child?' *UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood*. N°47

Nicol, J.and Taplin T. J. (2017) (2nd ed) *Understanding the Steiner Waldorf Approach: Early Years Education in Practice.* London: Routledge.

Nisbet, J. and Shucksmith, J. (1986). *Learning Strategies*. London: Routledge.

O'Neill, J., (1994) *The Missing Child in Liberal Theory.* Toronto/London: University of Toronto Press.

Pinter, A (2011) *Children Learning Second Languages: Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pinter, A and Zandian, S. (2012) 'I thought it would be tiny little one phrase that we said, in a huge big pile of papers': (cf. Kuchah and Pinter, and Pinter and Zandian) children's re ections on their involvement in participatory research. *Qualitative Research* 15/2: 235–250.

Pinter, A, Kuchah, K, and Smith, R. (2013) Researching with children. *ELT Journal* 67 (4): 484–487.

Pinter, A., Mathew, R. and Smith, R. (2016) Children and teachers as co-researchers in Indian primary English classrooms. *ELT Research Papers* 16.03. London: British Council.

Qvortrup, J. (1985) Placing children in the division of labour. In P. Close and P. Collins (eds), *Family and economy in modern society*. London: Macmillan.

Qvortrup, J., M. Bardy, G. Sgritta and H. Wintersberger (eds) (1994) *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics.* Aldershot: Avebury.

Qvortrup , J. (1996) "Monitoring Childhood: Its Social, Economic and Political Features", in E. Verhellen (ed), *Monitoring Children's Rights.* The Hague: Martin Nijhoff Publishers.

Rinaldi, C. (2001) A pedagogy of listening: a perspective of listening from Reggio Emilia. *Children in Europe***,** 2-5.

Thornton, L. and Brunton, P. (2015) *Understanding the Reggio Approach. Third Edition.* Oxon: Routledge.

Tovey, H. (2016) (2nd ed) *Bringing the Froebel Approach to Your Early Years Practice*. London: Routledge.

UK Children Act 1989. Available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ ukpga/1989/41/contents

UNICEF. (2002) *A world fit for children.* United Nations.

UNICEF. (1989)The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

Whitebread, D. (2012) *Developmental Psychology and Early Childhood Education.* London: Sage Publications.

Wiltshire, M. (2012) *Understanding the HighScope Approach.* Oxon: Routledge.

Woodhead, M. and Montgomery, H. (2003) *Understanding childhood: an interdisciplinary approach.* Chichester, UK: The Open University.

Appendix 1 - Online survey

The view of the child in an English language teaching context.

We are conducting a small research study entitled, 'The view of the child in an English language teaching context.

More and more teachers are teaching English to younger and younger children. We are, therefore, researching teachers' perspectives on their view/image of the child.

We would appreciate if you could please complete the following short survey by Friday 3 February. Please interpret the open questions freely and respond spontaneously. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. The survey should take approximately ten minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary and all information you provide will be kept confidential.

With many thanks for your time.

Gail Ellis   Nayr Ibrahim

1. In what country do you work?

2. *W*hich educational setting do you work in?
    - Extra-curricular out-of-school English classes, eg, private, fee-paying language institute or language school
    - Mainstream state school
    - Mainstream private school
    - Other

3. What age children do you work with?
    - Early years (2 - 5 years) or equivalent in your country
    - Primary (6 - 11 years) or equivalent in your country

4. What teaching qualifications do you have?

   - Teaching certificate to teach in mainstream education at early years level
   - Teaching certificate to teach in mainstream education at primary level
   - English language teaching/English as a foreign language qualification
   - No formal teaching qualification
   - Other

5. What is your perspective of childhood (childhood = a stage in life)?

6. What is your view/image of the child?

7. How would you describe your relationship with children?

8. How do your responses to questions 5, 6, and 7 influence your teaching practice?

Many thanks for your time.