

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Inquiry on EFL Teaching Methods in a Multilingual Context:

A Comparative Focus on the Productive Skills in Child and Adult Learners

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Dissertation/Individual Final Project

Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Letters, UCLouvain

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Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

This section sets out the use made of generative artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this thesis.

Source identification. *Anara* was used at the literature-search stage to identify potentially relevant academic publications. Every source surfaced in this way was subsequently retrieved and read in full: no claim made in this work rests on a summary, abstract, or description produced by the tool, and all references listed in the bibliography were consulted directly in their available form online.

Comprehension support. *Claude* was used to clarify and expand on passages of the scientific literature that were not immediately transparent to me. The interpretations of those sources presented in this work, and the use made of them, are my own.

Formulation in English. *Claude* and *Gemini* were used to reformulate passages I had already drafted myself, in English, after the relevant sources had been consulted. The content, argument, and structure of these passages originate with me; the assistance concerned their expression.

Final language pass. *Claud* and *Gemini* were used in a final revision stage targeting syntax, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and academic fluency.

The research design, the fieldwork, the corpus, its coding and analysis, and the conclusions drawn from it are entirely my own work (and my co-researcher's).

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Abstract

The question of whether children and adults should be taught foreign languages through fundamentally different methods remains debated within second language acquisition research. This thesis addresses this question from the productive side of English as a Foreign Language instruction—speaking and writing—forming the complementary half of a two-part research project: a parallel thesis, conducted jointly with a research partner using the same fieldwork, examines the receptive skills, reading and listening. Drawing on 13 classroom observations across seven teachers, together with semi-structured interviews, conducted in Brussels, this study compares the approach to speaking and writing taken by teachers working with young beginners in a European School with that of teachers working with adult beginners in a *Promotion Sociale* establishment. Rather than confirming a clean split between age groups, the fieldwork revealed that the same core teaching methods frequently recurred in both settings; what changed with age was less which method a teacher reached for than how tightly, or how loosely, it was applied once chosen. No comparable divide held across materials, task design, or the handling of learners' errors, where the observation design proved unable to separate a genuine age difference from an artefact of unequal observation time. When asked directly to account for their method choices, teachers rarely pointed to age itself, describing instead what their students needed explained or how much detail they expected, a pattern consistent with age shaping instruction indirectly, through the learning objective it sets, though this corpus cannot fully separate that account from a direct effect of age. A further finding emerged outside the study's initial framework: because no first language was shared widely enough in the child classrooms to serve as a fallback, those learners were structurally required to sustain English production in a way the adults, who could retreat to French, were not.

Keywords

English as a Foreign Language; productive skills; age factor; teaching methods; corrective feedback; English as a Lingua Franca; adults; children; writing and speaking

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List of abbreviations

ALM	Audio-Lingual method
CEFR	<i>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages</i>
CLL	Community Language Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CP	Critical Period
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific (professional) Purposes
FonFs	Focus on Forms
GTM	Grammar-Translation Method
L1	first language (a person's native tongue)
L2	second language (any language in addition to the L1 that a person learns or speaks)
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLT	Situational Language Teaching
TBI	Text-Based Instruction
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TLC	Teaching and Learning Cycle
TPR	Total Physical Response
WW	Writing Workshop

1. Introduction

“For the new generation of teachers;
You will have a greater impact
on the life of this nation
than you can imagine”

Fletcher and Portalupi (2001, p. v)

Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) opened their book *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*, 25 years ago, with the epigraph above. The authors framed the teachers’ impact around a single nation, which undersells what is at stake for the discipline this thesis is concerned with.

English has spread around the globe and its growth has led to an increasingly large population of language learners. In the modern linguistic landscape, for every English native speaker, there are now three non-native speakers using the language to navigate their daily lives (Crystal, 2003). As a contact language often used between speakers who do not share a native tongue (L1)—what Mauranen (2018) terms *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF)—English has recently reached some 1.5 billion speakers worldwide (Eberhard *et al.*, 2026). Teaching English within this global landscape, therefore, takes a specific form depending on where it occurs: English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to English taught in a context where it is not the learners’ dominant language (Brown, 2007b)—the case throughout Belgium, the setting of this study’s fieldwork. This scale has produced an unusually diverse population of learners, whose relationship to the language itself varies with age: Kormos and Csizér (2008) found that adult learners are driven significantly more than younger learners by an “Ideal L2 Self” (p. 327)—an internalised vision of a successful future self, capable of navigating a globalised world.

This thesis is the result of an extensive dual-research project conducted in close collaboration with a research partner. Given the multifaceted nature of English Language Teaching (ELT), our shared objective was to construct a comprehensive comparative analysis of pedagogical methods across two polar ends of the educational spectrum: primary school learners and adult students. To ensure that this investigation remains academically rigorous and avoids a superficial overview, the research was

structured around a collaborative division of the four macro-skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. While my research partner focuses on the receptive branch, analysing how learners decode and extract meaning from oral and written discourse, the present study is dedicated to the productive branch, specifically examining the complexities of speaking and writing.

The diversity of learners raises a question this thesis takes seriously from the outset. Krashen's (1985) *Input Hypothesis* treats production as the result of acquisition rather than a mechanism that drives it—a secondary display of competence acquired elsewhere, rather than a site of learning in its own right. Swain's (1985) *Output Hypothesis* directly challenges this view: producing language, she argues, does not simply display mastery already achieved through comprehension, but is one of the mechanisms through which mastery is itself built. Section 2 of this work develops this argument in full; for now, it is enough to note that if production is where learning actively happens, then how productive skills are taught to different learner populations is not a peripheral question, but a central one.

Despite this, how productive skills specifically are taught across such radically different populations remains comparatively under-examined. Existing research comparing children and adults in second language acquisition—including, as this thesis will show, the biological, cognitive, and motivational differences reviewed in the state of the art—has largely addressed acquisition in general terms, rather than how these differences translate into productive-skill-specific pedagogical practice. This gap is the starting point of the present study. A second, related question runs alongside this one. The literature on language teaching methods is extensive: successive traditions have left behind an extensive catalogue of named methods, each with its own procedural logic and theoretical lineage. Whether that catalogue corresponds to what teachers actually deploy in a classroom is a separate empirical matter, and one this study aims to examine, since its review intends to map the field broadly enough for the comparison to be made.

Accordingly, this study aims to conduct an *Inquiry on EFL Teaching Methods in a Multilingual Context: A Comparative Focus on Productive Skills in Child and Adult Learners*. To complete this task, fieldwork was conducted across two contrasting Brussels-based institutions: a European School, representing primary-level child instruction, and a *Promotion Sociale* evening programme, representing adult

education. Across both settings, classroom observations and semi-structured teacher interviews were used to compare how productive methods were selected, adapted, and delivered to each learner population.

This thesis is organised into five additional sections. Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations this study builds on; most of this review—particularly the sections addressing age and language teaching in general terms—is shared with the parallel thesis, while a substantial part specific to each half addresses the productive and receptive branches respectively. Section 3 formulates the research question, its delimitations, and the hypotheses this study tests; one hypothesis is shared between both theses, while the second is specific to this study's productive focus. Section 4 details the methodology, including the data collection instruments and the coding process used to analyse the resulting corpus, and is entirely shared between both halves of this dual-research project. Section 5 presents the empirical findings: as with the *State of the Art*, several sections—covering general aspects of language teaching, multilingualism, and classroom structure—are shared, before each half turns to its respective skills; the section's closing reflection on this study's methodological limitations is, once again, shared between both. The thesis closes with an individually authored conclusion; and, because both halves of the project draw on the same corpus, several findings reported here bear directly on the receptive skills examined in the parallel study and are signalled as such where they arise.

2. State of the Art

This section reviews the theoretical foundations this study builds on. Because this thesis is concerned with how productive skills are taught to two structurally different populations, children and adults, this review is not a general survey of second language acquisition (SLA)¹; it is built specifically around what a comparison of this kind requires. It proceeds in three broad movements. The first establishes why production itself warrants independent theoretical treatment, while the second identifies the learner-related variables, here age, that justify treating children and adults as distinct groups in the first place. Finally, the third part turns from learners to teachers, surveying the teaching methods through which these variables translate into observable practice, and which the empirical chapter of this thesis will later trace across the settings studied.

2.1. Language Skills and Methodological Terminology

In the field of language teaching, the definition and classification of language proficiency have undergone a significant structural evolution (Harmer, 2006). To establish a clear taxonomy, modern language pedagogy recognises two primary dimensions of language processing: receptive and productive skills (Broughton *et al.*, 1980). These two overarching dimensions serve as the foundation for language learning, determining how a learner internalises or generates meaning.

This foundational distinction is clearly attested by Broughton *et al.* (1980), who state that language proficiency is governed by these two main types of skills, which are subdivided into four distinct macro-skills² to operationalise them within educational contexts:

- Within the receptive framework, proficiency is split into listening (oral comprehension) and reading (written comprehension).

¹ While the scientific literature's analysis in this study focuses on both SLA and EFL, the empirical data focuses on the latter only. Therefore, while the concluding data will focus on EFL, they might apply in other SLA classrooms, but with no certainty.

² The term macro-skills is used here to distinguish reading, writing, listening and speaking from the globalising categories *receptive* and *productive skills*. However, those four 'macro-skills' are also, and mainly, referred to as *skills* in the scientific literature and in this work.

- Within the productive framework, proficiency is split into speaking (oral production) and writing (written production).

To clarify the interdependence of those skills, they are organised into a hierarchical structure (see Figure 1).

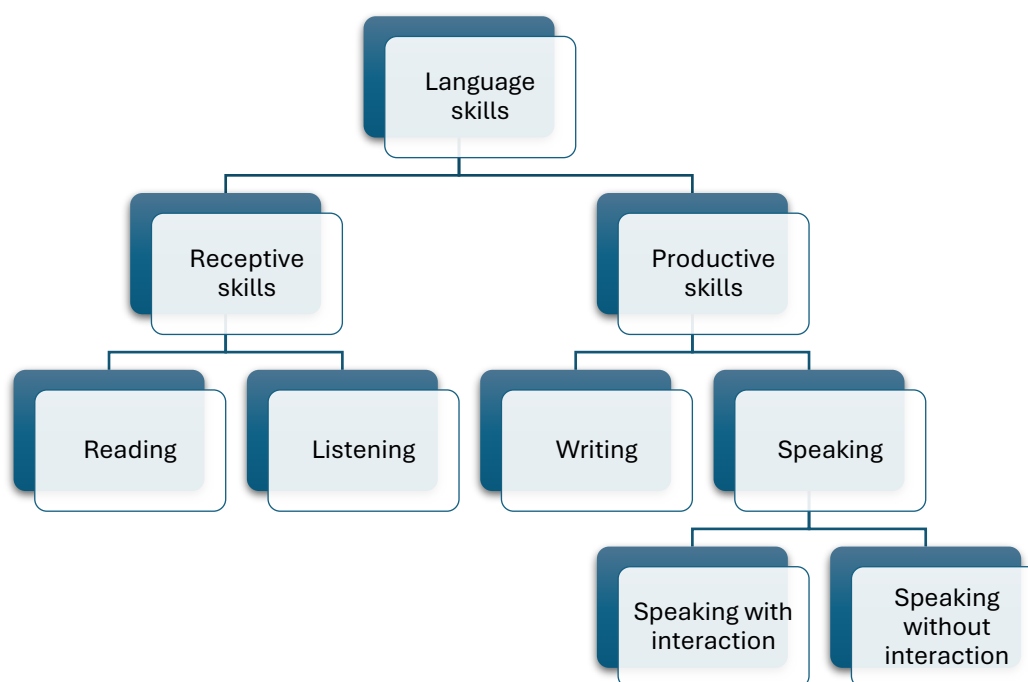


Figure 1: Hierarchical classification of language skills and their sub-dimensions

Note. Own elaboration based on Brown (2007b), Harmer (2006) and Council of Europe (2021).

It is important to note that the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, known as CEFR (Council of Europe, 2021), identifies five distinct competencies, explicitly separating the speaking skill into two: speaking with or without interaction. However, most of the scientific literature, including the works of Brown (2007b) and Harmer (2006) among many others, continues to categorise language proficiency into four main macro-skills. For the sake of theoretical consistency and clarity, this study adopts the traditional four-skills model. This choice is motivated by the inherent complementarity of this skill (speaking with interaction); indeed, oral interaction cannot be isolated as a purely productive act, as it fundamentally relies on the ability to listen to and understand the interlocutor. This loop between reception and production highlights that interaction is, in essence, a continuous cycle of decoding and encoding meaning, further justifying the integrated and collaborative approach of this dual-thesis.

The necessity of this division is widely supported in language teaching by current empirical research, which underlines both the individual importance of these skills and their deep interrelation. As Burns and Siegel (2017) assert,

“the four language skills are at the heart of current practice in English language teaching. It is now usual in course books to find sections dedicated to listening, speaking, reading and writing alongside the more traditional activities of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.” (p. xiii)

This focus confirms that while reception and production constitute the overarching cognitive pillars, classroom practice inevitably revolves around these four explicit macro-skills as interconnected components.

These different skills shape the way teachers design their lessons, enabling them to select the most appropriate method for each target competency. When preparing to teach a language, an educator must make a deliberate choice regarding the instructional framework they will implement in the classroom; to that end, they face a wide range of methods.

Throughout the scientific literature, we encountered three words often used interchangeably: *approach*, *method* and *technique*. Therefore, it is essential to clarify and define this terminology to avoid conceptual ambiguity. Harmer (2006, p. 78) distinguishes among *approaches*, *methods*, and *techniques*: according to him, an *approach* is “a broad theory about how language is learned and taught”; a *method* is “the practical implementation of an *approach*”, and a *technique* is “a single specific teaching action”. These definitions align with Anthony’s (1963), cited in Richards and Rodgers (2014).

However, many authors use *methods* and *approaches* interchangeably, which can be confusing. For instance, while Richards and Rodgers (2014) classify Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an approach, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) treat it as a method operating within a broader communicative approach. For this reason, this study adopts Anthony’s (1963) three-tier model as its guiding framework, rather than proposing an entirely independent terminology; an initial attempt to construct our own definitions from scratch proved to generate more conceptual confusion than clarity, precisely because it detached the terms from the theoretical continuum already established in the literature. What we propose instead is a clarification of Anthony’s

(1963), cited in Richards and Rodgers (2014), original distinction, adapted to the specific needs of this study:

- an *approach* denotes the teacher's overarching, distanced perspective on the general articulation of the course (e.g., the PPP approach—Presentation-Practise-Production—in which a language item is first presented, then practised under control, and finally used in freer production (Criado, 2013));
- a *method* designates the concrete procedural pathway through which the teacher leads learners towards a given objective—whether acquiring vocabulary, developing oral production or engaging with a written text, among others—considering their learners, the context, the mobilised skills and the intended learning outcomes;
- and a *technique* refers to a specific, discrete classroom activity that operationalises a given method.

A single *approach* may thus encompass several distinct *methods*, and a single *method* may, in turn, be implemented through multiple distinct *techniques*. Given this three-tier hierarchy, the present study focuses specifically on the level of *method*; *techniques* are mobilised solely as illustrative examples of how a given *method* is concretely implemented in the classroom.

2.2. Focus on Production: A Founding Element of Language Learning and Teaching

As stated earlier, this study concentrates specifically on productive skills (speaking and writing) because production is not a secondary display of language ability but, as Swain (1985) argues, a founding element of language acquisition itself. SLA research organises this distinction around two complementary (or opposed) constructs: *input*, the receptive counterpart, and *output*, the productive one. While *input* in VanPatten and Benati's (2015) work is defined as "language that learners are exposed to" (p. 38) (encountered through listening and reading), *output* is defined as a "language that learners produce for the purpose of communication" (p. 38), whether spoken or written. This distinction maps directly onto the division of labour at the heart of this dual thesis: where the parallel study examines the receptive side of this equation, this study examines its productive counterpart. Understanding what *output* covers, and why it

commands its own theoretical treatment here, requires situating it against the theory it challenges.

Krashen's (1985) *Input Hypothesis* holds that comprehensible input is the primary, and largely sufficient, engine of language acquisition: according to him, learners progress by being exposed to language slightly beyond their current level, understanding it, and absorbing it. Krashen (1985) views production as the *result* of acquisition, not a mechanism that drives it. He went further by arguing that forcing learners to produce language before they are ready can raise anxiety and hinder acquisition rather than helping the learner. Swain (1985), the author behind the *Output Hypothesis*, directly challenges Krashen's (1985) account. Drawing on her observations of French immersion students in Canada (learners who, despite years of rich *comprehensible input*, still fell short of native-like accuracy in their production), Swain (1985) argues that comprehension alone cannot guarantee full linguistic development. According to her, something happens specifically in the act of producing language that comprehension alone does not require: to speak or write is to be forced into complete grammatical processing, rather than the partial, meaning-based processing that comprehension allows a learner to rely on, she argues. *Output*, in other words, according to Swain (1985), does not simply display mastery already achieved elsewhere but is rather where a portion of that mastery is built.

This is precisely why productive skills deserve sustained, independent attention in this thesis, rather than treatment as the passive counterpart of reception within the foreign language learning process. If Merrill Swain is right, production is not only how a language learner demonstrates competence to an outside observer: it is one of the mechanisms through which competence itself develops. A study concerned with how methods shape learning control cannot, on this view, treat productive skills as an afterthought to comprehension; it must treat them as a site where acquisition is actively happening.

2.2.1. Three Functions of Output

A few years after developing her *Output Hypothesis*, Swain (1995) developed it into a more precise account, arguing that output serves three distinct functions in second language learning: a *noticing* function, a *hypothesis-testing* function, and a

metalinguistic function. However, she underlines in her work that “no claim is being made that any or all of these functions operate *whenever* learners produce the target language” (p. 141).

She argues that the *noticing* function describes what happens when a learner attempts to say or write something and discovers, in the act of trying, a gap between what they want to express and what they are actually able to express in the target language. She states that this gap is not always apparent during comprehension, where context and partial understanding can carry a learner past what they do not fully know, while production exposes it directly.

Swain (1995) highlights that the *hypothesis-testing function* is built on this previous function: every utterance a learner produces rests on a tacit hypothesis about “how the [target] language works” (p. 126), whether the learner consciously holds one or not. By producing the utterance, the learner tests that hypothesis in practice. Nevertheless, she highlights that a hypothesis that is tested and never evaluated teaches the learner nothing new; it is only through some form of response from an interlocutor that the hypothesis can be confirmed, revised, or discarded. This is where correction enters the picture, not as an external add-on to production, but as the mechanism through which the *hypothesis-testing* function is completed.

Finally, Swain (1995) distinguishes the third function, the *metalinguistic* one, from the first two. She claims that the *metalinguistic function* occurs when, under certain task conditions, learners not only produce a hypothesis but reflect on it explicitly, “using language to reflect on language, allowing learners to control and internalise it” (p. 132). Indeed, this function takes the form of a discussion, with an interlocutor, about the hypothesis itself. The author terms this reflective activity “negotiating about form” (p. 133), distinguishing it from the more familiar concept of negotiating about meaning: learners negotiate meaning, but the content of that negotiation becomes language form itself, and its relationship to the meaning they are trying to express. Swain (1995) illustrates this *metalinguistic* function with collaborative tasks such as the *dictogloss*, in which pairs of learners reconstruct a text from shared, incomplete notes—talking, in the process, not only about what to say but about how to say it correctly.

2.2.2. Correction in Production

As explained above, in the discussion of the *hypothesis-testing* function of Swain's (1995) *Output Hypothesis*, correction is not external to production but, according to her account, integral to it. Correction, however, is not a single, uniform practice. It takes markedly different forms depending on the modality of production, spoken or written, each governed by its own typology and, as the following section shows, a very different degree of theoretical consensus.

2.2.2.1. Correcting Spoken Production

The dominant framework for oral correction comes from Lyster and Ranta (1997), based on more than 18 hours of transcribed interaction across four French immersion classrooms in Canada. They identify six recurring types of oral corrective feedback: *explicit correction* (the teacher directly supplies the correct form), *recasts* (the teacher reformulates the error correctly, without pointing it out as an error), *clarification requests* (the teacher signals a problem without naming it), *metalinguistic feedback* (the teacher points to the error using grammatical terminology, without supplying the correction), *elicitation* (the teacher prompts the learner to self-correct), and *repetition* (the teacher repeats the learner's error, typically with adjusted intonation). Lyster's (2004) later work regroups these six types of corrective feedback into two broader families: *reformulations* (*recasts* and *explicit correction*, which supply the correct form directly) and *prompts* (*elicitation*, *metalinguistic feedback*, *clarification requests* and *repetition*, which withhold the correct form and push the learner to produce it independently).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) themselves demonstrate that *recasts*, despite being by far the most frequently used form of feedback among teachers, are the least likely to produce learner uptake (the immediate, observable sign that a learner has registered and responded to the correction). *Prompts*, though considerably less common in practice, are more likely to lead to successful self-repair. Indeed, recasts represent the most commonly used form of corrective feedback (55%), while only having an 18% successful uptake rate. Metalinguistic *feedback* offers the starkest contrast: used in barely 8% of feedback moves, it nonetheless produces successful repair in 45% of cases (See Table 1).

Table 1

Types of Oral Corrective Feedback and Rates in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) Study and Lyster (2004)

Category	Type	Frequency of use	Successful uptake rate
Reformulation	Recasts	55%	18%
	Explicit correction	7%	36%
Prompts	Elicitations	14%	46%
	Clarification requests	11%	28%
	Metalinguistic feedback	8%	45%
	Repetition	5%	31%

Note. Own elaboration based on Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (2004).

2.2.2.2. Correcting Written Production

While a global consensus seems to exist within the theoretical framework of oral corrective feedback, such consensus does not seem to exist for writing. First, when it comes to correcting written production specifically, the literature identifies three main strategies (Ellis, 2009): *direct feedback*, *indirect feedback*, and *metalinguistic feedback*. *Direct feedback* involves the teacher locating the error and supplying the correct form outright. *Indirect feedback*, for its part, signals that an error is present—by marking its location or coding type—without providing the correction itself, leaving the learner to work it out. Finally, *metalinguistic feedback* offers an explicit comment about the nature of the error, such as a grammatical term, again without supplying the correct form.

Beyond this typology, however, a long-standing debate persists over whether grammar correction is worth doing at all. Truscott (1996) argues that it is ineffective, and in some cases harmful, and should be abandoned as a classroom practice; Ferris (1999) disagrees, arguing that correction of grammar does help learners improve their accuracy over time when properly implemented. This position was later supported by Bitchener (2008) with direct experimental evidence, showing that learners who received written feedback outperformed a no-feedback control group. Since then, a

substantial body of research has continued to investigate both whether correction works and how it should best be delivered; Liu and Brown (2015) note that more than 300 published studies have yet to settle either question.

2.2.3. Conclusion

Taken together, production functions not merely as a display of prior learning but as one of the mechanisms through which linguistic competence is built, through Swain's (1995) *noticing*, *hypothesis-testing*, and *metalinguistic* functions. Correction, in this light, is structurally tied to production rather than incidental to it—though the literature treats oral and written correction very differently, with a stable, widely adopted typology governing the former and an unresolved, decades-long debate still surrounding the latter. Correction is not measured quantitatively in this study, nor evaluated for its effectiveness; what the empirical chapter traces is how teachers respond to learners' output across the different settings. This theoretical grounding establishes why productive skills merit the sustained, independent attention this thesis gives them, not as a passive display acquired elsewhere, but as an active site where acquisition itself takes place—and why correction is treated here as the point at which that site is either closed or left open.

2.3. The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition

A central question in SLA research is whether structural and processing differences exist between how children and adults learn a new language, as highlighted by Hird *et al.* (2000). Historically, the field has been split into two opposing stances regarding age-related success. This opposition can, for instance, be observed through the works of Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006) and Macovei and Duhlicher (2010), among many others. On the one hand, Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006) argue that both children and adults are fundamentally capable of acquiring a foreign language. On the other hand, authors like Macovei and Duhlicher (2010) state that SLA is inherently easier for children due to a highly receptive brain, whereas the mature brain finds the same process far more challenging. This aspect is the starting point of this

section: does age genuinely influence the process and success of language learning, and if so, in what way?

2.3.1. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)

The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which Siahaan (2022) claims was first developed by Penfield and Roberts (1959), and later refined by Lenneberg (1967), holds that there is an optimal biological window for language acquisition, extending from roughly two years of age until puberty, during which the brain remains particularly plastic and receptive to linguistic input (Siahaan, 2022). According to the authors that support the CPH, within this window, a language can be picked up naturally through immersion; once the window closes, learning tends to become a more deliberate, effortful process that rarely leads to native-like fluency (Siahaan, 2022).

The CPH still finds support today: Siahaan (2022) confirms that

“second-language learners who begin early in life and stay exposed to information and so learn across several years or decades *unquestionably* outperform later learners in the long run and in immersion environments.” (p. 40)

However, the hypothesis is not unanimously accepted. Some research reports that adult learners who begin acquiring a second language after puberty can still reach a level of proficiency close to that of a native speaker (Stromswold, 2000; Birdsong, 2006). This weakens the stronger claim that native-like mastery becomes impossible after puberty. In a similar vein, Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006) argue that children and adults are, in principle, equally capable of acquiring a foreign language. Macovei and Duhlicher (2010) take a middle position: they consider acquisition easier for children because their brains remain highly receptive to new input, while adult brains find this more difficult; at the same time, they note that adults benefit from a longer attention span and a stronger grasp of abstract concepts, which can offset this disadvantage.

2.3.2. Biological Differences

The primary mechanism driving the Critical Period (CP) is neuroplasticity. Siahaan (2022) notes that during early childhood, brain connections and synapses are exceptionally receptive to environmental stimuli. Biologically, however, Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006), citing Paradis (2004), demonstrate that the plasticity of the human brain's procedural memory system declines sharply after early childhood. Furthermore, adults experience specific age-related neuromuscular changes; as highlighted by Siahaan (2022), because the human neuromuscular system experiences diminished flexibility following maturation, adult learners are highly unlikely to develop unaccented, native-like pronunciation unless they undergo specific phonetic training.

2.3.3. Cognitive Differences

From a cognitive perspective, age alters how a learner interacts with linguistic stimuli. Macovei and Duhlicher (2010) show that adults possess a significantly longer attention span and a stronger grasp of abstract, analytical concepts than children. According to Siregar *et al.* (2024), mature learners leverage metacognitive mechanisms to intentionally plan, monitor, and regulate their foreign language learning. The authors underline that mature learners consciously rely on advanced critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to systematically parse, process, and internalise complex linguistic data. Moreover, Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006), citing Paradis (2004), explain that around the age of seven, human learners undergo a cognitive transition, naturally shifting away from automated processing and relying more heavily on conscious learning operations. To overcome the biological loss of procedural flexibility, Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006), citing Paradis (2004), underline that adults draw extensively on metalinguistic knowledge, analytical reasoning, and pragmatics to consciously parse language data.

2.3.4. Processing Systems: Memory-based vs. Rule-Based Learning

The neurocognitive divide between age groups is best explained by the distinction between two parallel memory systems, as outlined by Skehan (1998) and Paradis (2004), cited by Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006):

- **Memory-Based Processing (Procedural):** Paradis (2004) argues that young children rely primarily on procedural memory, which Lechevalier and Habas (2021) define as an automatic system that enables individuals to learn skills through repetition without conscious awareness. Therefore, this memory facilitates unconscious, implicit language acquisition. In this context, the mind grasps the information to which the learner relates, resulting in “abstract rules and representations” (Schmidt, 1995, p. 172 cited in Skehan, 1998, p. 54). This concept was developed by Skehan (1998), who named it the *memory-based system*. He explains that in this system the brain, rather than relying primarily on explicit rules, depends on internalised contextual knowledge that has been acquired through previous experiences. This knowledge is stored in memory and is automatically activated when processing information.
- **Rule-Based Learning (Declarative):** Conversely, Paradis (2004) cited by Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006), shows that older learners depend increasingly on declarative memory and conscious learning processes. This manifests as what Skehan (1998) calls the *rule-based system*, which Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2006) define, citing Skehan (1998), as a concept in which “storage and powerful generative rules operate together to compute well-formed sentences” (p. 234). Fitri and Alawiyah (2023) note that while adults can use their established first language as a structural reference, this declarative reliance frequently causes what they call *negative interference*: “when differences between L1 and L2 cause difficulties in the learning process” (p. 12). In this context, the brain relies on declarative memory which comprises episodic memory (events) and semantic memory (general knowledge and language) (Tulving, 1972 cited in Greenberg and Verfaellie, 2010).

2.3.5. Motivation Variables

Motivation operates as a highly differentiating variable across age groups. While Harmer (2006) emphasises that young learners are commonly guided by external factors, such as curriculum requirements or parental expectations, Purwati *et al.* (2022) underline that adult learners exhibit a highly developed *self-concept*; which characterises them as autonomous and self-directed individuals who take responsibility for their own educational choices. They argue that while mature students are fundamentally driven by intrinsic motivators like job satisfaction and personal growth, their learning trajectory can simultaneously be shaped by pragmatic, external factors such as professional regulation, career advancement, and occupational demands.

As emphasised by Purwati *et al.* (2022), the distinct nature of motivation across different age groups requires a fundamental reorientation of instructional design. While young learners are heavily influenced by situational and external classroom attitudes (Nikolov, 1999; Dörnyei, 2005), adult motivation is deeply pragmatic and goal-oriented (Dörnyei, 2005). Consequently, Purwati *et al.* (2022) underline that an adult learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) will inherently prioritise lexicogrammatical accuracy, specialised professional vocabulary, and immediate conversational fluency over generic, curriculum-based content. This developmental variance in learners' motivation dictates that teaching approaches and task selection (or *techniques*) must be tailored differently to align with the learners' objectives and needs.

2.3.6. Conclusion

Taken together, this section shows that age shapes SLA not through a single mechanism, but through several interacting biological, cognitive, and motivational differences. The CPH captures part of this picture but not all of it: an early start offers real advantages in neuroplasticity, without this study assuming it guarantees faster or more complete mastery on every dimension. The procedural/declarative distinction (Skehan, 1998; Paradis, 2004) offers the clearest throughline across the biological, cognitive, and processing differences discussed above: children rely on implicit, memory-based learning, while adults increasingly draw on explicit, rule-based, metalinguistic reasoning to compensate for declining procedural flexibility.

This same asymmetry extends to motivation, though along a different axis. Where children's engagement is shaped largely by external factors beyond their control (e.g., curriculum design, parental expectations), adult learners bring a more self-directed, pragmatically oriented motivation, shaped by both intrinsic goals and external professional demands (Purwati *et al.*, 2022). Age, in other words, does not only alter how language is processed: it also alters why a learner is in the classroom to begin with, and what kind of engagement can be expected as a result.

2.4. Methodological Guidelines and Core Instructional Orientations

The differences discussed above are not purely descriptive facts about learners; SLA and second language teaching (SLT) are two sides of the same coin, and neither can be fully understood without the other as they are closely interdependent, with pedagogical practice properly understood through, and shaped by, acquisition research (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Having established how age shapes the way a learner acquires a language, this section turns to what that implies for how language should be taught. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that teaching choices directly depend on who the learners are, requiring educators to establish distinct instructional orientations based on the age of the student cohort. Rather than applying identical techniques, Hird *et al.* (2000) confirm, on the basis of classroom observations of EFL teachers, that while children's and adults' classrooms share some common practices, the overarching teaching rationale must also adapt to the neurocognitive realities of the specific audience.

2.4.1. Core Guidelines for Younger Learners' Teachers

For young learners, Stakanova and Tolstikhina (2014) highlight the particular usefulness of visual aids, songs, and poems. They identify some teaching methods and techniques, for this age group, such as role play and communicative focused methods combined with differentiation according to gender, skill level, and personality. As Harmer (2006) suggests, children respond to immediate environmental meaning rather than grammatical display. Therefore, the curriculum should focus on oral interaction, treating language as a holistic communication tool rather than a formal

system to be dissected. The goal is to lower affective barriers and feed the child's highly receptive procedural memory through interactive, stress-free group encounters.

2.4.2. Core Guidelines for Adult Learners' Teachers

Conversely, adult instruction cannot rely on raw environmental exposure; as demonstrated by Skehan (1998), teaching adults requires structured, deliberate intervention to transform declarative knowledge into procedural fluency. The primary guideline outlined by Hird *et al.* (2000) is to prioritise highly structured, goal-oriented tasks, logical grammatical analysis, and metacognitive reflection and, while doing so, there should be an equal focus on all four macro-skills.

2.5. The Four Strands Model

When it comes to foreign language teaching, the instructor has to take into account various aspects of the language. Nation (2007) identified four equally important aspects that he refers to as “strands” which Newton and Nation (2021) argue are necessary for the language course to be “well-balanced” (p. vii). The authors explain that “these *four strands* are called meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development” (p. 1) (see Figure 2).

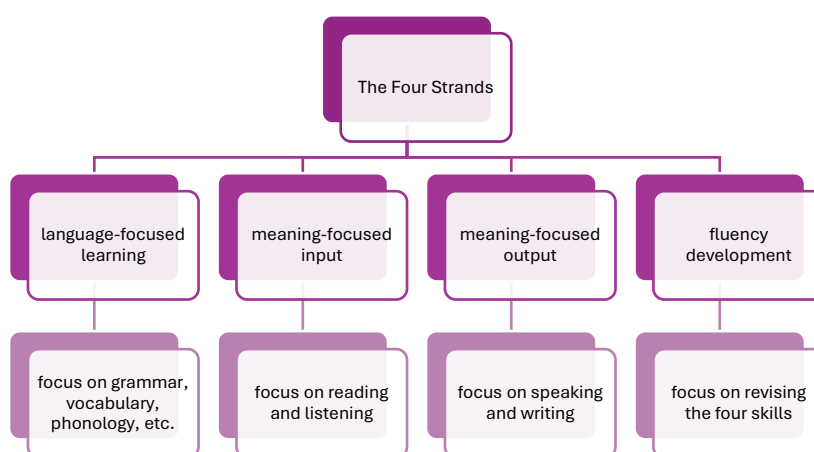


Figure 2: The Four Strands model

Note. Own elaboration based on Nation (2007) and Newton and Nation (2021).

The first strand is *language-focused learning*: this dimension involves a deliberate focus on the linguistic aspects of the language; that is teaching grammar, vocabulary

(form, use and meaning), pronunciation, etc. It also aims to develop the learners' "language learning strategies and language use strategies" (Newton & Nation, 2021, p. 1).

The second strand is *meaning-focused input*: this strand focuses on reading and listening. Within this strand, the learners' objective is to be able to process the language receptively and to decode the message.

The third strand is *meaning-focused output*: this aspect comprises speaking and writing skills. Here, the learners are expected to actively produce the language to convey a message.

The last strand is *fluency development*: this strand focuses on revising the four skills. It allows the learners to be more familiar with the processing and the production of the language. It aims to automatise the language through the regular practice of the four skills.

Although this model appears practical in theory, its implementation can be more complex in practice, as the instructor must account for several individual factors when designing lessons. Harmer (2006) highlights age and motivation, explaining that learner's interests and needs vary significantly based on these variables. Indeed, Stakanova and Tolstikhina (2014) emphasise that with a younger audience, the primary focus must be placed on oral skills. Furthermore, Dörnyei (2005) points out that children, especially the younger they are, frequently experience reading and/or writing difficulties in their L1 that can transfer to their L2—called *negative interference* (see Subsection 2.3.4). Consequently, an equal division among Nation's (2007) four strands cannot always be implemented, particularly when teaching younger learners. Additionally, it is worth noting that some language courses are designed to focus exclusively on one or more specific skills, mainly oral communication. In such context-specific cases, regardless of the learners' age, the traditional balance of the model is altered, as the written components of *meaning-focused input* (reading) and *meaning-focused output* (writing) lose their relevance.

2.6. Teaching Methods in the SLA Classroom

Having established the linguistic content and competences that have to be targeted in the classroom, which constitutes the subject matter, it is now essential to examine the pedagogical frameworks and methods that govern their classroom implementation. Building on Nation's (2007) Four Strands model presented above, the analysis of teaching methods used within the foreign language classroom will be organised around three of these four strands: *language-focused learning* methods, *meaning-focused input* methods and *meaning-focused output* methods; these two last strands being examined separately by each author of this dual-thesis, in line with the productive/receptive division outlined earlier. In addition, given that several methods span multiple strands simultaneously rather than fitting into a single one, a fourth category will be dedicated to inter-skill methods applying to various competences at once. The fourth strand identified by Nation (2007), fluency development, will not be treated as a separate category as this strand consists of revising and automatising the four macro-skills rather than introducing new linguistic content; it naturally draws on the very same methods already presented in the sections above, which in this strand are deployed for practice and consolidation rather than acquisition.

The review that follows is deliberately broad. Its purpose is not only descriptive: by establishing the full range of methods the literature documents, it provides the baseline against which the classroom data can later be read. The relationship between the two is itself treated here as an object of analysis, since the breadth of the theoretical inventory and the range of methods teachers actually enact need not coincide. The tables below therefore serve a double function—a reference framework for the reader, and a comparison point for Section 5. Practically, the four following subsections open with a table listing the most cited and discussed methods within the scientific literature. During our review of the literature, we realised that relying strictly on continuous text to describe and contrast numerous teaching methods often creates a dense, overwhelming narrative where key operational details are easily lost, as observed in comprehensive overviews such as Richards and Rodgers' (2014). Adopting a tabular format directly resolves this difficulty by allowing key operational parameters—age group, method definitions, target skills, practical classroom examples, and key theorists—to be scanned and compared easily. Reflecting the collaborative design of

this study, the first two tables, which cover *language-focused learning* methods and inter-skill methods, are common to both researchers as they establish shared instructional foundations. The subsequent tables are presented individually, each tailored specifically to the receptive or productive focus of the respective author's investigation. Each table is followed by a comparative analysis of these methods, highlighting both their common ground and their divergences.

2.6.1. Language-focused Learning Methods

Table 2

Language-focused learning methods

Age group	Name + abbreviation	Explanation	Skills medium	Example	Theorist(s)	Sources
Adults	Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)	The target language is taught and learned through the study of vocabulary, the exercise of analysing grammatical rules and the translation of texts. It relies heavily on the students' L1 for instruction and comparison, prioritising accuracy and memorisation.	writing and reading (with minimal or no use of oral and aural skills)	Students study a list of past-tense rules, memorise a set of translated verbs, and then translate a series of disconnected sentences from their L1 to the L2 to demonstrate understanding.	Karl Plötz & Johann Seidenstücker (mid-19th century)	Richards and Rodgers (2014); Chang (2011)
	Text-Based Instruction (TBI)	TBI focuses on teaching language through spoken and written texts, to highlight their genre through their grammatical aspects, purposes, and the context into which they fit. It guides learners in analysing and communicating through structured practice aimed at	reading then writing	Reading an authentic email and trying to write a similar one that is adapted to the learner's purpose.	Influenced by the works of Halliday (1989); Derewianka (1990) and Christie (2002)	Richards and Rodgers (2014)

		developing effective communication skills.				
	Situational Language Teaching (SLT)	This method is based on the principle that grammatical structures should be taught through meaningful situations in which they naturally occur. It allows students to understand and practise in context rather than in isolation.	The four skills	The teacher introduces new language structures by pointing to objects in the classroom and asking students to identify them, allowing learners to practise questions and imperative forms. Through repeated interaction with real objects and guided questioning, students gradually understand and use the target structures in context.	Advocates of this method: Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby	Smith and Loewen (2018)

The comparative Table 2 above highlights a clear division amongst the various methods used within the *language-focused learning*; while some concentrate on grammar rules, others stress the importance of linguistic aspects other than grammar (genres, pronunciation, lexis, etc.). Traditional methods like the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) isolate grammatical components to teach them in a linear, decontextualised, deductive manner which consists of the presentation of “explicit grammar rules, principles, or language structures before moving on to specific examples or exercises” (Harmer, 2007 cited in Varsat, 2023, p. 1). This method treats language as an accumulation of grammar rules which serve as a foundation for a strong language knowledge basis. Conversely, the SLT works as an inductive counterpart to this deductive logic: rather than presenting grammatical rules explicitly before practice, it embeds target structures within meaningful, concrete situations, allowing learners to understand the underlying rule through exposure to authentic material (Smith and Loewen, 2018). Consequently, while both methods remain fundamentally grammar-driven and thus fall under the *language-focused learning* strand, they approach the teaching of grammar in opposed manners, as the GTM moves from rule to example, whereas SLT goes from example to rule.

Beyond this conceptual divide, age plays a crucial role in this study. All the *language-focused learning* methods, listed in Table 2, target adult learners. This statement seems logical when examined through the lens of Skehan’s (1998) cognitive system framework. Since adult learners operate predominantly through a *rule-based system* and rely on analytical capacities that allows them to analyse complex grammatical rules (e.g., GTM): each of these methods adapts directly to the adults’ structural and cognitive abilities. Consequently, all these methods align with the reality of age-related cognitive development.

Although each language teaching method has contributed to the evolution of language pedagogy, none is without limitations. According to Ismoilov (2025), GTM, despite strengthening learners’ knowledge of grammatical rules, does little to develop oral communication, particularly speaking and listening skills. Similarly, SLT has been criticised for its time-consuming nature, and the difficulty teachers face in creating appropriate scenarios (Zhi, 2023).

2.6.2. Inter-Skill Meaning-Focused

Table 3

Inter-skill meaning-focused methods

Age group	Name + abbreviation	Explanation	Skill	Example	Theorist(s)	Sources
Adults	(De)suggestopedia ³	Desuggestopedia is a method designed to accelerate language learning acquisition by eliminating “psychological barriers” (Arulselvi, 2017, p. 25) and the fear of failure in students. It is based on the concept of <i>desuggestion</i> , which involves unlocking learners’ unexploited mental abilities by deconstructing their limiting beliefs about their own capabilities. To create a positive and stress-free environment, the	All skills	While students do an exercise, such as reading a text, the teacher put on some classical or jazz music, to create a relaxed and stress-free environment.	Lozanov (1970s)	Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) Richards and Rodgers (2014) Arulselvi (2017) Rashtchi (2018)

³ Originally developed as *Suggestopedia*, the method was later rebranded as *Desuggestopedia* by Lozanov himself (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011), to emphasise the primary process of “desuggestion”. This phase aims to unlearn social inhibitions and “psychological barriers” to learning before tapping into the learner’s reserve capacities through artistic and suggestive techniques (Rashtchi, 2018).

		method incorporates arts, such as music and painting, into the core of the educational process.				
Not age related	Direct Method	This method is grounded on the principle that SLA should follow the same principles as first language acquisition. The Direct Method focuses on oral interaction, instinctual language use, and avoids translation and explicit grammatical explanations. Classroom teaching is carried out entirely in the target language, and the method emphasises listening comprehension, speaking skills, correct pronunciation, etc. The use of support, whether gestures, objects, or drawings is a strong component of this method.	Listening and speaking	Students learn a lesson about daily routines. The instructor conducts the entire lesson in English and introduces new vocabulary by using gestures, pictures, and real objects rather than translating words into French.	Popularised by Maximilian Berlitz	Richards and Rodgers (2014); Brown (2007b); Ismoilov (2025) Vireak and Bunrosy (2024)
Not age related	Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)	Task-Based Language Teaching is pedagogical method in which tasks form the primary basis upon which language instruction is planned and implemented. It encourages learners to use the	All skills	Students are asked to plan a trip to London. Working in pairs, they compare transport options, choose accommodation, and decide on activities using English. Their objective is to	Prabhu (1982)	Richards and Rodgers (2014)

		target language to complete meaningful, real-world tasks, with the primary focus on communicating meaning rather than practicing specific language forms. This method is based on the principle that authentic communication and meaningful language use support the language learning process.		complete the task successfully by communicating with their partner, rather than focusing on specific grammar rules.		
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Primarily, as can be seen in Table 3, one of the common characteristics of these *meaning-focused* methods is their inter-skill nature, bridging receptive and productive dimensions through a holistic language use rather than isolating skills in a fragmented, structural manner. While these three methods vary in their specific skill coverage, the Direct Method and Desuggestopedia share a structurally similar profile: both are mainly oral-centred, moving from a receptive phase to a productive one centred on spontaneous speaking, with reading and writing remaining secondary or absent all together (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). TBLT, by contrast, does not predetermine which skills are mobilised; its skills coverage depends entirely on the nature of the task itself, such as listening to a partner or speaking to negotiate a decision (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Beyond the question of skill coverage, this study also aims to analyse the influence of age in the choice of method. Regarding age compatibility, the literature reveals a particularly clear case with Desuggestopedia. Unlike the Direct Method and TBLT, which are not inherently age-restricted, Desuggestopedia is explicitly positioned as an adult-oriented method (Brown, 2007a). This orientation is not primarily cognitive, but affective: Lozanov's concept of *desuggestion* specifically targets the psychological barriers and rigid *language ego* (Guiora *et al.*, 1972) that accumulate with age, namely, the belief that language learning is difficult or that errors are humiliating (Brown, 2007a). These self-limiting inhibitions are far more pronounced in adult learners than in children, who typically approach language acquisition with fewer barriers (Brown, 2007a).

Upon analysing these three methods and their operational design, it can be observed that they are not merely divided by their skill coverage, but by the underlying pedagogical logic through which each achieves meaningful language use and understanding. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the Direct Method relies on a naturalistic logic, seeking to replicate first-language acquisition through exclusive target-language exposure. Regarding TBLT, it operates on a functional, task-driven logic, where meaning and use emerge as a by-product of accomplishing a concrete communicative task rather than being targeted directly (Ellis *et al.*, 2020). Desuggestopedia, meanwhile, follows a humanistic and psychotherapeutic logic (Byrnes, 2023), in which language acquisition is facilitated indirectly by first dismantling the learner's psychological resistance to learning itself (Scovel, 1979). These distinct

logics illustrate that these inter-skill *meaning-focused* methods might share a similar outcome, albeit through fundamentally different mechanisms.

Despite their benefits, these methods also present important limitations. For instance, Ismoilov (2025) points out that the strong emphasis on speaking in the Direct Method frequently leads to underdeveloped reading and writing skills. A similar criticism applies to TBLT, which tends to neglect structural accuracy, as the emphasis on communicative goals is often at the expense of the systematic acquisition of vocabulary and grammar (Ismoilov, 2025). As for Desuggestopedia, it received harsher criticisms from many researchers, including Scovel (1979). He questioned the scientific validity of Lozanov's method for its lack of empirical backing as he argues that it suffers from methodological flaws and "arithmetic errors" (p. 262). Finally, Scovel (1979) cautions that while certain affective elements (e.g., relaxation) can be useful in an EFL classroom, Desuggestopedia fails as a scientifically validated teaching method.

2.6.3. Meaning-Focused Output

2.6.3.1. Speaking Skills

Table 4

Speaking skills methods

Age group	Name + abbreviation	Explanation	Example	Theorist(s)	Sources
Not age-related	Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)	The Audio-Lingual Method relies on developing automatic, oral, responses through continuous speaking drills, prioritising correct pronunciation before introducing other skills. By practising contextualised dialogues and repetition exercises students internalise target structures implicitly and reduce reliance on their native language. It aims to establish correct pronunciation and quick, accurate answers, to help students speak naturally without having to think; lessons introduce new vocabulary and sentence structures using dialogues. Students then practice these sentence patterns through continuous repetition exercises, which allows them to understand grammar rules naturally from examples rather than from direct explanations.	Students repeat the sentence “I go to school” and immediately transform it into “He goes to school” or “We go to school” when the teacher gives single-word prompts (such as “He” or “We”).	Charles Fries (1945)	Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011); Richards and Rodgers (2014)

Adults	Community Language Learning (CLL)	CLL is an orally-oriented method based on a “Counselling-Learning” (Curran, 1976, p. 19) model. It views learners as “clients” (Curran, 1976, p. 5) to reduce the anxiety of acquiring new language. The teacher acts as a “Counsellor” (Curran, 1976, p. 5) who provides linguistic translation and support from the periphery. Grounded in a person-oriented teaching, the curriculum is learner-generated through collaborative, circle-based peer interactions.	A student tells the class “I felt happy this weekend” in their L1, and the teacher whispers “I felt happy this weekend” in English into their ear for the student to repeat to the group.	Charles A. Curran (1972)	Curran (1976) Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011); Richards and Rodgers (2014)
Not age-related	Silent Way	In this method, learners actively construct their oral competence through discovery, trial and error, and hands-on experiences with physical objects (such as <i>Cuisenaire rods</i> ⁴) used to represent sounds, words, and sentence	The teacher models a target linguistic aspect (such as the pronunciation) exactly once while presenting a visual layout using <i>Cuisenaire rods</i> . Afterward,	Gattegno (1963)	Brown (2007b); Richards and Rodgers

⁴ The Cuisenaire rods are coloured rods of different lengths used by the instructor to represent linguistic concepts, as well as charts to introduce the learners to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Each of the rods is associated with a phoneme, a word or a grammar point. The students have to study them so when the instructor shows the rods, they have to automatically make the right association (Huzieff, 2016).

		structures. Central to this method is the deliberate silence of the instructor, who speaks as little as possible so as to compel learners to take charge of their own speech: with minimal verbal input to rely on, learners are pushed to formulate, monitor, and self-correct their production autonomously, developing inner criteria for accuracy rather than depending on external correction.	without repeating the target linguistic feature, the teacher silently uses gestures and a pointer to guide students through various tasks, forcing them to construct complete sentences and correct their own errors.		(2014); Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) Gattegno (1963)
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Upon analysing these three orally-oriented EFL teaching methods, key overlaps emerge alongside fundamental theoretical contrasts, particularly regarding pedagogical logic, instructional dynamics, structural limitations and target age (see Table 4).

Despite their distinct classroom executions, all three methods converge on two core principles:

- Absolute priority of orality: this point makes sense as it is the category's main characteristic. However, what should be underlined is that in these methods, spoken language is considered as preceding written language. Speaking, with or without listening aspects, is treated as the primary modality, while the other skills are seen as derivative skills introduced only after oral patterns are established (Carroll, 1965).
- Inductive grammar: Within these methods, explicit, rule-based grammar lessons are systematically rejected. Instead, learners internalise structural patterns implicitly through repeated behavioural conditioning (ALM), problem-solving via visual aids (Silent Way), or translation of personal thoughts (CLL).

However, their main points of divergence lie in their conceptualisation of the learning process and the teacher role, positioning them at three opposite poles. Indeed, the learning paradigms are drastically opposed; while the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) is rooted in behaviourist psychology, framing language acquisition as mechanical *habit formation* achieved through stimulus-response conditioning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), the Silent Way adopts a cognitive framework, viewing language as an autonomous problem-solving activity where learners form hypotheses and establish internal criteria for correctness (Gattegno, 1963). As for the Community Language Learning (CLL), its humanistic approach argues that cognitive learning cannot occur without emotional security and the reduction of defensive learning blocks (Curran, 1976).

Regarding the teacher's role, it also shifts drastically from a controlling instructor, drill-oriented instructor in ALM (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), to a deliberately silent,

withdrawn facilitator in the Silent Way (Gattegno, 1963), and to a supportive “Counsellor” providing translation and scaffolding⁵ in CLL (Brown, 2007b).

In terms of target audience, CLL stands out as uniquely tailored for adult learners, as it relies heavily on emotional expression, self-disclosure, and group dynamics. This echoes Carroll’s (1965) observation that adult learners typically possess a socio-affective maturity that younger learners have not yet developed; a maturity which might make them better equipped to engage with CLL’s affectively demanding, vulnerability-based approach to language production. This aligns with foundational adult learning theory (also known as andragogy), where Malcolm Knowles (1980, p. 50) underlines that:

“adults derive their self-identity from their experience. They define who they are in terms of the accumulation of their unique sets of experience [...]. Because adults define themselves largely by their experience, they have a deep investment in its value [...] when they find themselves in situations in which their experience is not being used, or its worth is minimized, [...] they feel rejected as persons”.

In CLL, this pre-existing self-identity and life experience form the core of the in-class constructed curriculum, allowing adult learners to navigate the affective vulnerability of language learning through self-reflection and peer collaboration (Curran, 1976).

Finally, as with every method discussed earlier, despite their advantages and contributions to oral pedagogy, these methods also face important criticisms in the literature. Brown (2007b) argues that the Silent Way may place excessive responsibility on learners by limiting teacher intervention. Although learner autonomy is encouraged, some students require more explicit guidance and corrective feedback, and the method’s characteristic materials, such as *Cuisenaire rods*, may quickly lose their effectiveness over time. As for the ALM, it has also been questioned because its reliance on repetitive drills often results in “mechanical” learning that does not adequately promote “communicative competence” or “creative language use”

⁵ A temporary and adapted support provided by the teacher to help learners accomplish tasks they cannot yet do independently, with the support gradually withdrawn as they become more autonomous (Hammond & Gibbons, 2001).

(Ismoilov, 2025, p. 1390), which, according to Abbasxanovich (2024), is a major component within the productive skills. For his part, Brown (2007b) argues that CLL faces severe practical and pedagogical drawbacks. He highlights that this method's exclusive reliance on inductive learning deprives learners of efficient deductive strategies, while the method's overall success depends mostly on the teacher's translation expertise.

2.6.3.2. Writing skills

Table 5

Writing skills methods

Age group	Name + abbreviation	Explanation	Example	Theorist(s)	Sources
Not age-related	Product-Based Approach	This method focuses on the end product through four steps: reading and analysing a source text, controlled practice, copying the model, and adapting it. Students are thus given a text by the teacher, which they mimic and adapt to their own needs and content. The Product-Based Approach works mainly on elevating the learners' writing skills but it also raises their awareness of grammatical structures, sentence patterns and vocabulary specific to the text type.	Students are given a model formal letter of complaint about a faulty product. They first read and analyse the letter, identifying its structure and key language features. After practising these aspects in isolation, students then write their own letter of complaint about a different faulty product, following closely the structure and language patterns of the model text.	None, but derived from Audio-Lingual principles (Richards, 1990)	Selvaraj and Aziz (2019)
Not age-related	Genre-Based Approach	This method is structured around the <i>Teaching-Learning Cycle</i> . It operationalises instruction through a systematic four-stage progression: <i>building the context</i> , where learners explore the social	Students are preparing to write a short adventure novel story. After discussing common story elements (<i>building knowledge</i>), they read a model and identify its stages along with typical language features (<i>modelling</i>). The	Rothery (1989)	Hyland (2004) Rose and Acevedo (2017)

		purpose and the target audience; <i>text deconstruction and modelling</i> , in which authentic samples are analysed to unpack their structural patterns and linguistic features; <i>joint construction</i> , where the teacher and students collaboratively write a text through active scaffolding; and finally, <i>independent construction</i> , wherein learners autonomously write their own texts.	class then writes the opening paragraph together as a group (<i>joint construction</i>), before each student independently completes their own story following the same structure (<i>independent construction</i>).		
Children	Writing Workshop (WW)	This method's framework prioritises active composition over isolated drills. Driven by student control over topic, audience, and rhythm, it operates through a predictable structure: a brief instructional mini-lesson, extended writing time dedicated to individual production and one-on-one teacher session, and finally a group share session. By guiding learners fluidly through those steps, language mechanics and skills are embedded directly into context to build long-term writer autonomy.	During an hour-long lesson, the time is divided as follows: 5 minutes dedicated to the mini-lesson, in which the teacher models a specific writing technique using a model (e.g., dialogue); then 45 minutes are dedicated to independent writing time, during which the teacher circulates the room holding brief, individual sessions with some students to address their specific needs; at last, a group sharing occurs, where two or three volunteers read an excerpt of their work aloud and receive short, constructive feedback from their peers.	Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins (1980s) Graves, 1983	Fletcher and Portalupi (2001) Agésilas (2002)

When reading the scientific literature and comparing the information gathered on these three writing-oriented EFL teaching methods, a striking commonality emerges beneath their surface differences: regardless of their specific theoretical orientation, all three methods rest on an explicit, fixed skeleton that scaffolds the writing process from beginning to end (see Table 5). The Product-Based Approach structures instruction around four sequential steps (reading and analysing the source text, controlled practice, copying the model, and adapting it). Regarding the Genre-Based Approach, it follows its own four-stage *Teaching and Learning Cycle* (building knowledge of the field, modelling, joint construction, and independent construction). The Writing Workshop (WW), despite its far greater emphasis on learner autonomy and topic choice, is itself anchored in a fixed three-part session structure (the mini-lesson, independent writing time with one-on-one conferencing, and group sharing). Whatever theoretical label is attached to each method, this recurring reliance on a clearly delineated procedural skeleton stands as their most fundamental point of convergence.

This structural rigidity stands in sharp contrast to what was observed among the orally-oriented methods discussed previously, where classroom execution varied considerably from one method to another, with several techniques not necessarily or primarily relying on a fixed, step-by-step structure. None of the three orally-oriented methods is built around a uniform, sequential skeleton in the way all three writing-oriented methods are. This divergence may be rooted in a more fundamental distinction between spoken and written language. As Halliday (1990) argues, spoken language encodes the world as an ongoing process rather than a fixed structure: “in the spoken language, phenomena do not exist, they happen” (p. 97), constantly shifting in and out of focus, whereas written language encodes it as a fixed structure. This permanence could arguably carry real pedagogical weight: one might argue that, unlike a spoken error, which is transient and often goes unnoticed or is immediately self-corrected mid-utterance, a written error remains visible, open to repeated scrutiny by the reader. Writing could thus be argued to require a stricter command of linguistic rules in order to be considered mastered, which may explain why all three methods examined here rely on far more explicit procedural scaffolding than their orally-oriented counterparts.

Beyond this shared rationale, all three methods seem to translate this need for structure into a comparable pedagogical logic: a staged progression that gradually

transfers responsibility from the teacher to the learner. Fisher and Frey (2021) highlight that this structure closely mirrors the *gradual release of responsibility* framework, noting that it was first introduced by Pearson and Gallagher (1983) as a three-part progression—often summarised as moving from “I do” to “we do” to “you do”—and later refined by Fisher and Frey (2021), who extended it to include a distinct collaborative phase between guided and independent practice. However, none of the three methods maps perfectly onto either version of the model, but each reflects its underlying spirit in its own way: the Product-Based Approach follows the classic progression from teacher-led modelling to independent production; the Genre-Based Approach’s joint construction stage echoes the collaborative dimension Fisher and Frey (2021) identify as often missing from the traditional model, while also following the three-step model defined by Pearson and Gallagher (1983); and the Writing Workshop, through its mini-lesson, conferencing, and closing share session, cycles through a comparable movement from teacher input to individual and, eventually, collective engagement with the text.

However, the methods’ main points of divergence lie in the theoretical status they assign to the model text, and in the underlying philosophy of writing each one is based on. According to Richards (1990), the Product-Based Approach is rooted in behaviourist principles, tracing it back to “the principles of Audio-Lingual theory, from which it is derived” (p. 106); the model text here is a fixed structural template to be reproduced, and writing is valued primarily for its formal accuracy. Conversely, Nagao (2018), citing Halliday (1994), argues that the Genre-Based Approach is grounded in *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), which treats language as inherently shaped by its social context rather than a set of isolated forms; the model text thus becomes a socially situated artefact, not a template for mechanical reproduction. For its part, Agésilas (2002) highlights that WW draws on constructivist and expressivist theories that prioritise personal authorship and voice over external models, while also being framed by Vygotskian sociocultural principles that treat writing as a fundamentally social act, mediated through mini-lessons, conferencing, and especially peer sharing.

This divergence also extends to the question of target age: rather than being designed for both audiences simultaneously, two of these methods were originally conceived for one age group before being extended to the other: the Genre-Based Approach and the WW. However, while the first one moved from its theorist’s primary-school origins

towards adult academic writing, notably via the ESP tradition (Hyland, 2004), the latter (WW) remains most closely associated with its own theorist elementary-level foundations, though some teachers (and authors) have taken the initiative to implement it in secondary education (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018); unlike the Genre-Based Approach's well-established extension to adult ESP contexts this adaptation to older learners remains comparatively recent (Cheng, 2021). The Product-Based Approach stands apart from both: rooted from the outset in the age-neutral principles of Audio-Lingual pedagogy (Richards, 1990), it was never confined to a single age group to begin with, having always been applied across school and university writing instruction alike.

As with every method examined so far, these three writing-oriented methods are not exempt from criticism. Richards (1990) himself labels the Product-Based Approach as a "controlled composition", noting it does "not require the student to do any actual composition" (p. 107), its techniques remaining confined to a controlled manipulation of pre-set language. As for the Genre-Based Approach, it has similarly been criticised for its prescriptiveness, its modelling phase risking a restriction of individual writing choices and a marginalisation of linguistic diversity in favour of dominant academic norms (Zohbie & Bhowmik, 2024). The WW, for its part, has long been criticised "for being overly individualistic [...] and for its lack of attention to the social, cultural, and authority dynamics involved in pedagogy" (Dressman 1993; Lensmire, 1994; McCarthy, 1994, as cited in Scarbrough & Allen, 2015, p. 476).

2.6.3.3. Conclusion of meaning-focused output

Taken together, the comparative analyses of orally- and writing-oriented *meaning-focused output* methods reveal that the modality of production shapes pedagogical design more decisively than the shared *meaning-focused* label under which Nation's (2007) framework groups them. Among the orally-oriented methods, procedural diversity was the norm: ALM's behaviourist drills, the Silent Way's discovery-based silence, and CLL's translation-mediated exchanges each followed a distinct logic with no common structural skeleton as a uniting component. This heterogeneity is mirrored in the teacher's role itself, which fluctuates from one method to another—controlling, withdrawn or "counsellor" instructor. Conversely, the written methods converged on a

consistent staged, scaffolded structure across all three methods—a convergence plausibly rooted in the very nature of writing itself, whose permanence and visibility (Halliday, 1990) appear to demand more explicit procedural support than the transient, self-correcting nature of speech. Age, too, cuts across this division in uneven ways; while CLL stands out among the oral methods as uniquely and durably adult-oriented, the written methods instead reveal a pattern of gradual extension across age groups over time, whether from childhood towards adulthood (the Genre-Based Approach) or, more recently and tentatively, in the reverse direction (the Writing Workshop). Ultimately, both subsets of methods illustrate the same broader conclusion already drawn from previous sections: no single method, whether oral or written, offers a complete or age-neutral solution. Rather than treating these two modalities as separate, mutually exclusive pedagogical worlds, this asymmetry instead calls for their deliberate integration, balancing the transient immediacy of oral production with the scaffolded permanence of written composition according to the specific cognitive, affective, and age-related needs of the learners.

2.7. Conclusion

Taken together, this chapter has argued that productive skills cannot be understood as a passive by-product of comprehension, nor taught through a single, age-neutral model. Production, according to Swain's (1995) *Output Hypothesis*, is where a portion of linguistic competence is actively built, through the *noticing*, *hypothesis-testing*, and *metalinguistic* functions output serves—the second of which is closed, or left open, through correction. Yet this closing of the loop is itself asymmetric: a stable, widely adopted typology governs oral correction, while written correction remains the subject of an unresolved, decades-long debate. This asymmetry between modalities, first identified in the account of production itself, resurfaces throughout the chapter in a different guise each time.

This asymmetry resurfaces most clearly around the age factor. Children and adults do not merely differ in how successfully they acquire a language, but in the underlying system through which they process it: children rely predominantly on implicit, procedural memory, while adults increasingly depend on explicit, declarative, rule-based reasoning (Skehan, 1998; Paradis, 2004)—a divide that extends beyond

cognition into motivation, with children's engagement shaped by external, curriculum-driven factors and adults' by self-directed, pragmatic goals.

This same procedural/declarative divide, established at the level of the learner, reappears at the level of classroom practice once teaching methods are surveyed against it. Every *language-focused learning* method identified in this review targets adult learners specifically, consistent with their reliance on explicit, rule-based processing. A comparable asymmetry emerges within *meaning-focused output* methods, though along a different axis: oral methods diverge sharply in pedagogical logic and teacher role, with no shared procedural structure uniting them, whereas writing methods converge, despite differing theoretical origins, on an explicit, staged scaffold. This convergence is plausibly due to the fact that a written error remains visible and open to scrutiny in a way a spoken one is not; therefore, writing appears to demand, and to receive, a stricter procedural architecture than speech does.

No single pedagogical method, in other words, offers an age-neutral or modality-neutral solution for developing productive competence. This review has also established something the empirical chapter returns to: the sheer number of distinct methods the literature documents. Across the four categories surveyed, a dozen procedurally distinct methods have been described, each with its own theoretical lineage, target population, and classroom architecture. Whether this catalogue is matched by a comparable diversity in practice is an open question, and one the corpus gathered for this study should be in a position to address.

Having established how production, age, and instructional design interact in theory, the remainder of this thesis turns to empirical investigation—describing the instruments used to gather data and tracing how these theoretical constructs play out in practice across the primary and adult EFL classrooms studied.

3. Research Question and Hypotheses

To establish a clear bridge between the state of the art and the forthcoming empirical data investigation, it is necessary to define the key concepts constituting this thesis' research question:

“Inquiry on EFL Teaching Methods in a Multilingual Context: A Comparative Focus on Productive Skills in Child and Adult Learners”

This research question can be understood as:

“To what extent does learners' age shape the selection and the classroom enactment of productive-skill teaching methods in multilingual EFL settings?”

Three of its items require delimitation before the hypotheses can be formulated: the learner populations compared, the language modalities examined, and the multilingual context in which the fieldwork took place.

3.1. Target Learner Populations: Child vs. Adult Learners

In the context of this study, the distinction between child and adult learners is strictly demarcated by age group and educational setting. Adolescent learners (approximately 12 to 18 years old) are deliberately excluded from this comparative scope. The present study deliberately steps outside of it, focusing instead on the two ends of the learner spectrum which allows for a sharper contrast, if there is one, thereby maximising the visibility of age-related methodological differences:

- Child learners: this category specifically designates young learners in primary education, generally age under 12 years old. At this stage, language learning takes place in a foundational schooling environment where cognitive development, attention spans, and social dynamics differ significantly from older student populations.
- Adult learners: conversely, this category is defined here as individuals enrolled in adult training or continuing education contexts, outside the compulsory schooling track. In practice, the adult cohort observed for this study belongs specifically to the Belgian *Promotion Sociale* system: learners attending evening classes on a voluntary basis, whose participation is neither imposed by a

curriculum nor, supposedly, mediated by parental expectation. This is a narrower population than the category “adult learner” covers in the literature, and conclusions drawn here are correspondingly bounded.

3.2. Language Modalities: Productive Skills

While language proficiency relies on both receptive and productive competencies (Harmer, 2006), this study focuses specifically on the productive branch (speaking and writing). Theoretically, while Krashen (1985) argues that input provides the necessary foundation, Swain (1985) underlines that active production demands more complex cognitive operations; drawing on Swain’s (1985) *Output Hypothesis*, generating language serves as a crucial trigger that forces learners to move from a receptive processing to active generation (see Subsection 2.2.).

In this research, productive skills are divided into two main macro-skills:

- Oral production (speaking) : divided into interactional and non-interactional speaking, oral production requires managing three dynamic components simultaneously (phonological and linguistic encoding, on-the-spot production and pragmatic and discourse competence) (Brown, 2007b).
- Written production (writing): organisation of thoughts and ideas by applying syntactic, spelling and grammatical conventions and mobilising lexical strategies to convey clear, autonomous meaning (Brown, 2007b).

Ultimately, this focus on productive skills allows the study to examine how instructional methods support the learner’s transition from receptive understanding to active language generation, across both child and adult populations.

3.3. The Multilingual Context: English as a Lingua Franca and Theoretical Scope

Finally, a crucial contextual parameter of this study concerns the environment in which instruction occurs. While the pedagogical framework and curricular objectives of the observed classrooms remain firmly rooted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the actual communicative dynamic within these classrooms reflects an ELF

reality: given the absence of a shared L1 among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, English functions as the primary vehicle of interaction between learners, independently of any native-speaker norm. This distinction is not merely terminological; it carries direct pedagogical consequences, most notably regarding the practical feasibility of certain teaching methods.

It should be noted that the overarching State of the Art presented in this chapter deliberately adopted a broad theoretical scope, reviewing a comprehensive range of language teaching methods in order to map the historical and pedagogical landscape of EFL teaching.

However, this multilingual, ELF-driven reality introduces a fundamental practical restriction: in monolingual settings, traditional methods such as GTM or CLL might be employed because explicit language instruction relies on a shared L1. In contrast, within the observed ELF classrooms, the absence of a common L1 renders GTM and CLL practically impossible to implement.

This contextual parameter carries a methodological consequence that must be acknowledged from the outset. In the Brussels landscape, the availability of a shared first language is not distributed evenly across age groups: primary-level EFL instruction is concentrated in international establishments, which are multilingual by design, while adult *Promotion Sociale* provision tends to recruit locally, which may lead to a predominantly French-speaking population of EFL learners. Age and classroom linguistic composition therefore covary in this setting before any observation begins. Where the analysis in Section 5 identifies effects attributable to one, the possibility that the other is operating cannot be excluded and is signalled wherever it arises.

Consequently, while all methods were examined theoretically to maintain academic completeness, the empirical phase of this study will naturally observe how instructors choose and implement their methods, including the practical limits associated with this ELF context.

3.4. Hypotheses

3.4.1. Hypothesis 1: Adults vs. Children

A common belief is that the sooner a person starts learning a language, the faster and the better they will master the language; this belief is deeply rooted within the CPH, first developed by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and later refined by Lenneberg (1967) (Siahaan, 2022). However, as seen earlier, this hypothesis was also at the end of a lot of criticism and was proven wrong on some levels with the help of studies led to prove the contrary (Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006; Stromswold, 2000; Birdsong, 2006). Research shows that various language teaching methods can be used and it appears that some methods might be more adequate for younger or older learners.

The hypothesis that my co-researcher and I will examine is that there might be a difference between the methods chosen depending on the learners' age. In fact, we suggest that it is not the age, only, that plays a factor in choosing the "right" method, but rather the lesson's (and teacher's) objectives, which, in this case, may vary according to the learners' age. For this reason, we hypothesise that age does not act directly on method selection, but indirectly, through a set of intermediate conditions that happen to covary with it in ordinary teaching settings: the linguistic composition of the class, the duration and scheduling of sessions, the institutional routines available to the teacher, and the teacher's own representation of what each population needs in order to understand. If this holds, then any method whose feasibility depends on one of these conditions should follow the condition rather than the age group—and should appear in the other population wherever the condition is met. Should method distribution instead track age even where these conditions are held, the hypothesis would not hold.

3.4.2. Hypothesis 2: Procedural and Declarative Processing in Instructional Behaviour

Furthermore, I hypothesise that the procedural/declarative processing distinction established in Section 2 may manifest behaviourally in instruction as a broader contrast between flexibility and rigidity. Because procedural processing is associated with sensitivity to context and immediate situational demands, I expect child-directed

instruction to display greater flexibility across materials, task design, and classroom procedures, whereas adult-directed instruction is expected to display greater rigidity in the way these dimensions are implemented.

I expect this asymmetry to be most apparent, however, in the correction of learners' output. Within Swain's (1995) *Output Hypothesis*, the *hypothesis-testing* function is activated through learners' attempts to produce language and their recognition of gaps between their intended and actual output. Corrective responses from interlocutors can subsequently provide information relevant to this process (see Subsection 2.2). If the procedural/declarative distinction conditions the consistency with which learner output is responded to, this dimension, being more directly connected to the mechanism described by Swain (1995) than materials, task design, or classroom structure, should reveal the predicted age-related asymmetry more reliably than other dimensions of instruction.

Two clarifications on scope are needed. First, what is examined here is the observable handling of correction—when it occurs, what form it takes, and whether it is applied uniformly across activity types—rather than its effect on acquisition, which this design cannot assess. Second, session format differs structurally between the two settings, and a slower or faster task rotation may on its own affect how much room a lesson leaves for systematic correction; this alternative account is returned to in Subsection 5.6.

This hypothesis does not assume that flexibility and rigidity will divide neatly along age lines across every dimension of instruction. Institutional constraints, available resources, and curricular design may independently shape materials and classroom structure. Rather, it predicts that the procedural/declarative asymmetry will be most directly and consistently observable where it is theoretically expected to operate most directly: in how teachers respond to learners' productive output through corrective feedback.

4. Methodology

4.1. Theoretical Framework

With the aim of establishing a rigorous framework to investigate the variety of teaching methods used by teachers in the EFL classroom between different age groups, this study employs a naturalistic inquiry⁶ approach. More precisely, this research adopts a multi-method qualitative data collection, framed within the naturalistic inquiry approach and structured as a comparative case study in order to map out pedagogical methods of ELT across different age groups. According to Coe *et al.* (2025), the naturalistic inquiry, which was originally conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is grounded in the use of participant interviews and field observations. Coffey (2010) characterises this approach as a way to deepen one's insight through the collection and assessment of "largely qualitative data" (p. 104). Additionally, the author notes that this process entails gathering extensive information to be interpreted so as to formulate conclusions. By adopting the naturalistic inquiry approach, the study provides a comprehensive vision of the diverse pedagogical methods utilised within different classrooms across the targeted age groups.

In order to have a clear understanding of the methodology used in this research, it is necessary to identify its specific design and distinguish it from other existing methodologies. Indeed, while the use of multiple data sources in this study might be conflated with a *mixed methods* design, it is essential to clarify that this research is strictly qualitative. As Almalki (2016) states, mixed methods research necessitates the integration of both quantitative numerical data and qualitative inductive analysis. In contrast, this study relies exclusively on qualitative data collection, namely, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the lack of numerical data and the sole presence of inductive practices confine this research within a multi-method qualitative data collection rather than a mixed-methods design. Indeed, this approach employs an inductive analysis that aims to identify recurring and/or different patterns of ELT methods across age groups. With regard to the analysis of the data in this study, triangulation is employed. According to Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021), data triangulation makes use of several data sources in a study, whereas "investigator triangulation" (p. 2) uses different researchers; in this thesis, my collaborator and I fulfil

⁶ Also spelt *Enquiry* in the scientific literature.

these roles. Incidentally, in this research, triangulation is not used as a tool to validate or refute a pre-established hypothesis, but to *cross-check* the entirety of the data collected throughout the research process. Thus, as observed by Nor *et al.* (2011), the use of qualitative triangulation, and more precisely the use of cross-checking, “contributes to a greater reliability and validity of results” (p. 62).

This collaborative qualitative data collection provided a significant advantage during the empirical phase of the research. By pooling our resources, we were able to conduct a broader range of observations and interviews, benefiting from a ‘cross-perspective’ analysis. The constant sharing of literature reviews and field data meant that the development of one thesis continuously informed the other. While I focused on the mechanisms of active language generation, the information shared by my partner regarding the receptive foundation provided the necessary context to understand why certain productive barriers exist. This intellectual exchange ensured that both works, though distinct in their focus, remain deeply interconnected and offered a comprehensive vision of the learner’s journey from understanding to expression.

Our research design was guided by the three-phase methodological framework designed in *Naturalistic Enquiry* by Coffey (2010): gathering existing data, obtaining evidence, and analysing the findings. Reflecting on this framework, our initial phase consisted of an in-depth literature review aimed at establishing a theoretical overview of ELT, the influence of age and of the multilingual context, and the development of each language skill. The second phase focused on conducting empirical observations of groups of children and adults in Brussels, respectively at a European School and an adult education centre. To ensure the consistency in data collection, we designed and implemented our own observation grids. At the end of this phase, we conducted guided interviews with each teacher, based on our pre-prepared questionnaires. To ensure a fair distribution of the workload, the observation sessions and interviews were divided equally among us, taking into account our respective availability. Finally, in the last phase, in accordance with the principle of triangulation mentioned earlier, we pooled our data to carry out a cross-analysis. This three-phase model enabled us to interpret the results from the perspective of the specific skills addressed in our respective theses.

4.2. Data Collection Method, Instrument, and Participants

4.2.1. Field Observations

This section details the context in which observations were conducted, specifically the environments and populations involved. As previously indicated, observations were conducted in two distinct educational settings, both in Brussels, Belgium: a European primary school and an adult education centre (a *Promotion Sociale* establishment). To ensure confidentiality, each teacher, from each school, is associated with an anonymisation tag. At the primary school, four teachers (referred to as Teacher A1, A2, A3, and A4) were observed twice across two separate levels: a fourth-year group (P4) and a fifth-year group (P5), and one teacher (Teacher A5) was only observed once in a fifth-year group. These two groups comprised beginners aged from 9 to 11. In this school, each observation session (nine in total) lasted for a period of 45 minutes. At the adult education centre, two teachers (referred to as Teacher B1 and B2) were observed on two separate occasions each, the lessons lasting three hours. The learners ranged from age 23 to 65. In this establishment, each session lasted three hours (see Table 6).

Table 6

Summary of Classroom Observations and Teacher Interviews

Age-group	Teacher tag	Number of classes	Lesson length	Number of visits	Interview
Primary	A1	2 (P5 & P4)	45'	2	☒
	A2	2 (P5 & P4)	45'	2	☒
	A3	2 (P5 & P4)	45'	2	☒
	A4	2 (P5 & P4)	45'	2	☒
	A5	1 (P5)	45'	1	☐
Adults	B1	1	3h	2	☒
	B2	1	3h	2	☒

Note. Own elaboration based on observations and interviews.

Key: ☒ = Interview conducted; ☐ = Interview not conducted. Teacher A5 could not be interviewed (see Subsection 4.2.2).

One asymmetry within the sample should be noted at this stage. Although every class observed was situated at a beginner level, the two cohorts were not beginners in the

same sense: the child classes included *false beginners*⁷, with prior exposure to English, including through their schooling, whereas the adult learners were absolute beginners who had started two months before the observations period. Both groups were therefore at an early stage of instruction, but not from an identical starting point. This distinction is returned to wherever proficiency is invoked as a possible explanation in Section 5.

To ensure the academic integrity of the data and minimise the natural bias inherent in qualitative field research, the observation phase was structured into two distinct stages: first, the design of an observation grid, synthesised from the scientific literature previously discussed, and second, the implementation of the field observations themselves.

The primary tool for the empirical phase of this research was a structured observation grid (see Appendix 1), designed to act as a descriptive repository for qualitative field data. A key objective in the design of this instrument was to ensure that the data collection remained unaffected by the specific expertise of either researcher. By focusing on observable indicators rather than immediate expert interpretation, the grid allowed each co-researcher to document all four macro-skills with equal precision. Consequently, while each researcher specialised in either productive or receptive skills for our respective analyses, the descriptive nature of the grid allowed both researchers to provide detailed accounts of all classroom activities. For instance, the researcher focusing on production could objectively document receptive elements—such as the types of texts used or the nature of comprehension checks—without needing to immediately categorise the underlying pedagogical method. This approach ensured that the grid functioned as a neutral vehicle for global data collection, providing a comprehensive evidence base for later interpretation through the lens of the established scientific literature.

The grid was organised into four main descriptive categories:

1. Classroom Context and General Atmosphere: this section records the fundamental logistics of the lesson, such as duration, student count, and the topic addressed. It focuses on documenting observable indicators of the

⁷ A person who has a basic knowledge of a language but has started to study it again from the beginning (Oxford Learner's dictionary, 2012).

classroom environment, including interaction types, the teacher's visible role, and the linguistic balance between English and the language of schooling.

2. Teaching of Productive Skills (Speaking and Writing): this dimension provides dedicated space to describe how language generation is handled in the classroom. It captures the specific types of activities performed, the nature of the tasks (e.g., creative writing or drills), and the visible feedback or correction techniques employed by the teacher.
3. Teaching of Receptive Skills (Reading and Listening): this section documents the use of input in the classroom. It records the types of texts or audio used, the purpose of the listening/reading tasks, and the observable pre- and post-activity phases, as well as the methods used for comprehension checks.
4. Materials and Resources: this final category focuses on the physical and digital tools used during the session. It records the specific textbooks or teacher-made materials present and provides space for field notes on how these resources appeared to be adapted to the specific age group being observed.

By prioritising a descriptive recording over immediate categorisation, we ensured a solid data set that remained independent of the specific pedagogical specialisations of each researcher. These descriptive results provided a neutral foundation that was later interpreted and categorised according to the specific approaches and methods discovered in the previously discussed scientific literature.

4.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

To gather comprehensive primary evidence, we developed semi-structured interviews to elicit detailed professional insights while maintaining a standardised framework across all participants. The interview question sheet was developed simultaneously with the observation grid. Our objective was to create broad questions that would capture each teacher's overall pedagogical methods and uncover contextual aspects that could not be fully collected through direct observation alone. Furthermore, the questions were designed to obtain specific clarifications on observed classroom practices, exploring the reasoning behind the chosen methods, including the influence of learners' age, the institutional context, personal teaching preferences, and the

specific guidelines of the establishment. The interviews were conducted via *Microsoft Teams* and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on the depth and level of detail of the teacher's responses. It is important to note that, owing to a lack of responsiveness, only four out of the five primary teachers were interviewed (see Table 6).

As mentioned previously, we designed a semi-structured question sheet (see Appendix 2) to ensure that all participants were asked the same set of questions, thereby minimising potential bias and guaranteeing consistency in data collection. In this regard, Pin (2023) explains that semi-structured interviews are commonly employed in qualitative research for data collection purposes. The author further elaborates that this type of interview is based on a predefined grid of questions while still allowing participants to respond in a flexible and open-ended manner. Consequently, this interview format aims to gather detailed information and to provide insights into individuals' experiences.

This question sheet was carefully developed to cover several key dimensions of our research and was organised into three main sections:

1. **General Background Information:** this first section aimed to gain a clearer understanding of each teacher's professional profile. It included questions about their teaching experience, the type of institutions in which they work, and the characteristics of their current learners. In addition, it explored how teachers continue their professional development, for instance through seminars, academic reading, or other forms of ongoing training.
2. **Teaching Methods and Pedagogical Approaches:** in this section teachers were asked about the methods they use to develop the four main language skills. Additional questions explored their familiarity with major EFL approaches, the reasons behind their methodological choices, and their use of teaching materials, including textbooks and self-created resources.
3. **Experiences and Adaptation:** this last section aimed to investigate how teachers adjust their practices according to different age groups or proficiency levels. Questions addressed their previous teaching experiences with other audiences, their perceptions of the differences between teaching children and adults, and

the ways in which they would adapt their methods when working with a different target group.

During the interviews, we also used follow-up questions whenever responses were too brief, prompting participants to elaborate further. This allowed us to obtain richer, more nuanced data and to gain deeper insights into their teaching practices and professional reasoning. This entire process provided concrete examples of different methods used for children versus adults in cases where the teacher had experience with both groups, but more precisely, these interviews enabled us to gather a precise insight into the teachers' perspectives and the reasoning behind the decisions made during the observations.

This process allowed the co-researchers to cross-check the field data against theoretical frameworks, bridging the gap between practical classroom realities and established pedagogy to ensure a rigorous qualitative foundation for the following analysis.

4.3. Data Analysis

Having gathered the empirical data needed for this study and having reviewed the scientific literature underpinning its state of the art, this thesis now turns to the process through which empirical data was analysed. Data analysis proceeded through a manual, colour-coded process comprising seven distinct stages, in the following order:

- 1) All observation grids and interview material relating to a single teacher were gathered into one discrete document; this yielded seven individual teacher documents in total, each subsequently printed in full.
- 2) An anonymisation tag was written by hand on each printed document, allowing individual teachers to be tracked and cross-referenced throughout the remainder of the analysis without risk of confusion between participants.
- 3) A colour-code was developed by hand, associating each teaching method identified in the theoretical framework with a distinct highlighter colour; colours were deliberately chosen to contrast as strongly as possible with one another, and a reference key recording each highlighter's corresponding method was maintained throughout (see Appendix 3).

- 4) Every exercise or technique identified within each teacher's printed observation and interview document was associated, where possible, with a specific method using this colour code, supplemented by handwritten comments wherever a technique required further clarification or did not map cleanly onto a single method (see Appendix 4); because several productive and receptive skills' exercises are closely related, both researchers conducted this coding stage simultaneously, cross-referencing overlapping material as it arose. This colour-coded layer functioned as a first-pass indexing tool rather than as the analysis itself: each coded instance was subsequently re-examined qualitatively, drawing on the surrounding transcript or field note, the teacher's own framing of the activity, and the corresponding method definition established in Section 2, before being incorporated into the written analysis presented in Section 5.
- 5) Each teacher's fully coded document was analysed individually, and a preliminary conclusion was drawn, meaning that methods were associated for each teacher's activities in turn.
- 6) These individual conclusions were cross-checked against one another within each learner group, comparing patterns identified across the child-classroom teacher on the one hand and the adult-classroom teachers on the other.
- 7) The patterns established within each group were compared against each other, allowing this study to identify where children's and adults' classroom practices converged and where they diverged.

This staged design carries two concrete advantages. First, it builds a check directly into the coding process itself: because both researchers coded simultaneously, discrepancies in how a given exercise was categorised would be caught and resolved during coding, rather than only surfacing once conclusions had already been drawn. Second, moving from individual teacher documents (stage 5), to within-group comparison (stage 6), and only then to between-group comparison (stage 7), meant that no cross-group claim was made until a pattern had first been shown to hold across multiple teachers within the same group; however, the inequality in size between the two groups limits how far this safeguard can operate on the adult side.

5. Results and Discussion

Before presenting the empirical findings, a methodological clarification is needed regarding the data collection instruments; both the observation grids and the interview question sheets contain theoretical inaccuracies, which is one of the limitations of the methodology (see Subsection 5.6.1). Indeed, both were designed and conducted prior to the full theoretical refinement, such as the distinction between a *method* and an *approach* which was developed in Section 2 of this thesis. As a result, several parts within these instruments—interview questions and aspects to be observed—use “method” and “approach” interchangeably, occasionally listing genuine approaches alongside methods as though they belonged to the same category. For instance, the observation grid includes a field titled “Overall approach observed”, which should have been called “*Methods* observed”, given our research question. Moreover, within this field, “CLT/ Grammar-Translation/ Task-Based Language Teaching /CLIL /Audio-Lingual Method/TPR /other” was listed without any differentiation (see Figure 3); indeed, CLT (see Subsection 5.1.4) and CLIL have both been established as *approaches* while the others are considered to be *methods* (See Subsection 2.1).

Overall ~~approach~~ observed	CLT / Grammar-Translation / Task-Based Language Teaching/ CLIL / Audiolingual Method / TPR / other	
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Figure 3: Excerpt from the observation grid: section “Overall Approach and Classroom Atmosphere”

The same conflation occurs in the field titled “*Method* used” under the speaking section, where “CLT (interaction-based)” is again listed as a co-equal option alongside TBLT, ALM, and TPR (See Figure 4). And once again, this conflation appears within the Interview question sheet, in question 14, “methods” and “approaches” are listed without any distinction, putting CLT, GTM, TBLT, TPR and ALM in a single, homogenous list (See Figure 5).

Method ~~used~~	CLT (interaction-based), TBLT (task completion), Audiolingual (repetition drills), TPR (commands/actions)	
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Figure 4: Excerpt from the observation grid: section “Speaking”

14. Have you ever heard of the following EFL methods and approaches :

- ☐ CLT (Communicative Language Teaching): Focuses on using language for real communication. Students learn by interacting, speaking, and expressing meaning rather than memorizing grammar rules.
- ☐ GTM (Grammar-Translation Method): method focusing on grammar rules and translating between the first language and English, with little emphasis on speaking or listening.
- ☐ TBLT (Task-based Language Teaching): Learning happens through completing meaningful tasks like solving a problem or planning an activity. Here, language is used as a tool to achieve a goal, not as the main focus.
- ☐ TPR (Total Physical Response): Students learn language through physical movement. The teacher gives commands, and learners respond with actions, helping comprehension before speaking. (i.e. Simon says)
- ☐ ALM (Audio-Lingual Method): This method is based on repetition and habit formation and is used mainly for pronunciation and drills.

Figure 5: Excerpt from the question sheet: Question 14

Admittedly, CLT was categorised as a method due to its omnipresence across foundational reference works, although it does not fit the definition of a method established in this thesis (see Harmer, 2006; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This recurrent presence in the literature, combined with the fact that a strict definition had not yet been fully established, nor understood, at the beginning of our data collection, led to CLT being miscategorised.

Having clarified the confusion present in the data collection instruments, the remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: Subsection 5.1 examines the place of language-focused instruction in the observed classrooms, systematically contrasting its presence and its treatment between child and adult learners. Subsection 5.2 tackles the imperfect nature of English as a Lingua Franca in these multilingual classrooms, focusing on the first language (or another L2 than English) used by students and teachers alike. Subsection 5.3 considers the institutional constraints, including textbooks and a comparative overview of the overall structure of child and adult lessons. Subsections 5.4 and 5.5 examine the productive skills—speaking and writing—central to this study. Subsection 5.6 addresses a reflection on the methodology, such as its limitations and value. Finally, this results section closes with a conclusion (5.7) drawing these findings together against the hypotheses formulated in Section 3.

5.1. Language-focused learning methods

As stated in subsection 2.5, the foreign language classroom is divided into four strands, one being “language-focused learning” (Nation, 2007). This strand focuses on deliberate pedagogical interventions aimed at mastering specific linguistic features, including grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics among many others. In the empirical data gathered for this study, it was verified that this strand has, in fact, a place within the foreign language classroom. It is important to note that the theoretical study conducted in Subsection 2.6.1 underlines that language-focused oriented methods (GTM, SLT and TBI), tend to be adult-oriented. The following analysis of empirical data gathered for this thesis enables the verification of these theoretical affirmations in real-life settings, comparing how language-focused features are taught between child and adult learners.

5.1.1. Grammar-Translation Method

The data gathered did not make it possible to prove whether GTM’s presence or absence was driven by learners’ age as such or by a very concrete structural factor: whether teachers and learners share a common language. Teacher A4 stated that GTM is “not used at all as the class is multilingual”; Teacher A2, for her part, offers a more nuanced account, stating that some GTM related practice did occur (“the GTM also uses speaking and listening”) but that translation is minimal again “as the class is multilingual”. Teacher A3 confirmed the same pattern, reporting that she “does not do it”. Moreover, while Teacher A1 did not address GTM directly in her interview, no trace of translation-based instruction was recorded in either of her observations. Finally, even though an interview with Teacher A5 was not conducted, an informal discussion with her revealed that she only speaks English; therefore, the use of any other language was practically impossible.

By contrast, GTM was explicitly recognised and endorsed by both adult classroom teachers, and its concrete application was directly observable in practice. In Teacher B2’s classroom, one activity consisted of an introduction to new vocabulary by means of isolated translation, a typical exercise encountered in GTM according to Richards and Rodgers (2014). This observed practice aligns with the teacher’s own account of the method in her interview, where she offered an endorsement directly tied to the

presence of a shared first language: “it can be used when they have the same first language, it can be helpful [...]”. Teacher B1 was more categorical, checking GTM as a method he recognised but he also restricted its usefulness by age: “GTM is useful for teenagers and adults, when they compare with their L1, they understand better”. He added elsewhere in his interview: “for children, grammar is different and you cannot go deep in details, adults need to know more into details”.

Taken together, these accounts point to an overlap in this corpus that complicates a clean interpretation: age and shared L1 availability happen to align perfectly (the multilingual classrooms are all child classrooms); and the French-shared classrooms are all adult classrooms. This makes it difficult to fully disentangle which factor is truly driving GTM’s presence or absence. Teacher B1’s own framing, however, explicitly invokes age-related cognitive readiness alongside the L1 argument, suggesting that both factors may be operating simultaneously.

5.1.2. Situational Language Teaching

SLT was never named directly by teachers during the interviews, nor did it appear as a labelled option in the interview checklist. This omission does not reflect SLT’s pedagogical relevance, which remains well established in the literature (see Subsection 2.6.1). Rather, it stems directly from a limitation of the data collection instruments themselves, discussed earlier: only the ‘methods’ most frequently cited in the reference literature (CLT, GTM, TBLT, TPR, ALM) were included at the design stage, and SLT fell outside this narrower selection (see Subsection 5.6.1). Its presence in this corpus must therefore be inferred from classroom practice rather than self-report.

One clear example of SLT use comes from Teacher B1’s adult class: during the lesson, which focused on ‘the hour’, students received a flashcard showing an activity (“wash my hands”) and had to ask a classmate: “at what time do you wash your hands?”. The structure was practised through a concrete situation, with no explicit rule preceding it. A second example, retrieved from the same teacher’s classroom, illustrates a practice closer to SLT than to GTM within his teaching practice. Students first had to “guess when and why they use the present simple”. Only after letting his students guess did the teacher give them the use and spelling rules. This progression is inductive rather

than deductive, matching SLT's logic more closely than GTM's. However, this does not contradict Teacher B1's endorsement of GTM elsewhere in his interview; rather, it illustrates that a teacher may draw on more than one method within the same lesson, consistent with the methodological diversity found in the scientific literature and listed in this thesis.

This method could not be observed in the child classrooms. Flashcards were commonly used across several observations (Teacher A4's card game, for instance) but their objective and use differed drastically from the SLT example above. Rather than isolating a single target structure within one concrete situation, these activities served other pedagogical purposes, examined in their own right in later subsections of this analysis.

This scarcity may itself reflect a broader historical trajectory rather than a genuine absence from classroom practice. Richards (2006) notes that "Situational Language Teaching fell out of fashion" (p. 9) as attention shifted from grammatical competence alone towards the knowledge and skills needed to use language appropriately for different communicative purposes. This would account for its absence from the data collection instruments (see Subsection 5.6.1) and its rarity in this work, without implying that the method itself lacks classroom relevance—as seen in Teacher B1's activity. The corpus gathered here is, in any case, too limited to draw conclusions regarding age-related patterns in SLT use specifically, given that only a single teacher demonstrated it clearly and that it was not tackled during the interviews.

5.1.3. Text-Based Instruction

As with SLT, TBI was absent from the interview checklist and from every classroom observation conducted for this study, in both age groups. Teacher B1's own account of his writing practice: "I start with a sample text, analyse the grammar, [...] analyse the structure (how to organise a text)"—initially appeared to offer a rare instance of this method, given its focus on analysing a source text's grammar and organisation ahead of production. Considered alongside the fuller sequence established in Subsection 5.5.2.2, however—a collaborative rewriting stage based on the model, followed by independent writing—this account maps more precisely onto the Product-Based Approach (see Table 5) than onto TBI. The method's presence in this corpus is

therefore better read as unconfirmed, consistent with its absence from both the interview checklist and observation for every other teacher in the study.

5.1.4. Focus on Forms and Communicative Language Teaching:

Approaches, not Methods

Beyond GTM, SLT, and TBI, several isolated grammar and vocabulary exercises emerged in the data that fit none of the three methods. In Teacher B2's classroom, students completed a variety of grammar-related exercises: a present simple/continuous choice exercise, a word-reordering task and a fill-in-the-blank conjugation exercise. These fragments were not recorded as a distinct method in this study, for a specific reason: their theoretical home does not lie in a *method* as this thesis defines the term, but in Focus on Forms (FonFs), a traditional approach in which the curriculum is structured around a pre-determined syllabus of isolated grammatical, lexical, or phonological features, taught in a linear sequence and practised as linguistic objects to be mastered, rather than used in contextualised communication (Doughty, 1999; Ellis, 2016). Unlike GTM, SLT, and TBI, FonFs prescribes no classroom procedure of its own; it typically surfaces as brief, punctual fragments inserted within a broader lesson. This may explain why such instances, though seemingly frequent in this corpus, escaped classification within this study's method-based framework: their theoretical status is that of general orientation, not a procedure comparable to the three methods examined above. As with these methods, no equivalent instance of FonFs was recorded in any child classroom.

Read together, this means that none of the four *language-focused learning* methods/approaches examined appeared in a single one of the child classrooms observed. The four primary teachers interviewed provided indirect support for this pattern, by checking Communicative Language Teaching⁸ (CLT) among the 'methods'

⁸ According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) and Richards and Rodgers (2014), CLT aims to enable students to use the target language in real-life communication situations. To achieve this, simply knowing the rules of the language is not enough; learners must understand how words and sentences can have different meanings depending on the context and the person they are speaking with. In the classroom, nearly all activities have a communicative purpose and are based on practical tasks such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving exercises. The teacher's role is to lead the class, in addition to acting as a facilitator or participant: they create communicative situations, guide learners, and note errors so they can be corrected later through exercises focused on accuracy.

they recognised and used, which is consistent with, though does not by itself confirm, the absence of the four *language-focused learning* categories examined above. This might mean that this absence was not incidental; indeed, all five child classroom teachers showed clear evidence of a broadly communicative approach overall. The fifth teacher, A5, could not be interviewed, yet her observed lesson demonstrated the same orientation as it was built extensively around exchange and interaction in the target language. Communication itself appeared to function as the principal vehicle through which language, including grammar, was learned. The adult classrooms present a noticeably different picture. Teacher B1 did not check CLT among the methods he recognises, nor did he mention it spontaneously at any point. Teacher B2 did check it but attached a condition that none of the other teachers expressed: “starting with it is a bit complicated, it is only used with questions [...] We start using it around A2- level”. This statement is particularly notable given that every class observed was situated at a beginner level—though not in precisely the same sense, since the child classes included false beginners while the adults had begun learning EFL two months earlier (see Subsection 4.2.1). That difference may partly account for the withholding itself; it, alone, does not account for the reason the teachers give for it. Teacher B2 not only describes CLT as premature for learners who know too little, but also for learners who have not yet been given a reason; she explains that adults need everything explained and that they want reasons. The threshold invoked is one of proficiency and explicitness.

Therefore, a tentative hypothesis can be suggested: the child-classroom teachers appear to have moved decisively away from traditional, form-focused methods towards a communicative orientation, regardless of proficiency level, while the adult-classroom teachers have not made the same shift, or have made it only conditionally. Their own words suggest why: Teacher B2, though teaching only adults, notes that older learners in particular need “everything explained; they want a reason” behind tasks, which follows an explicit approach, opposed to CLT’s more implicit logic. Teacher B1’s emphasis on adults needing to “know more into details” points the same way. For these two teachers, communicative teaching may be perceived less as an entry point than as something requiring prior comprehension, one that explicit instruction is expected to supply first.

This asymmetry echoes the age-related cognitive processing already developed in subsection 2.3.4, where child learners are associated with procedural, implicit processing, and adult learners with a declarative, explicit processing (Paradis, 2004, cited in Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006; Skehan, 1998). Therefore, communicative teaching, grounded in implicit, use-based learning, sits naturally with the procedural system associated with children, which may explain why it could be implemented from the beginning, without threshold. Conversely, as seen with teachers B1 and B2, adults are expected to build explicit, declarative knowledge first (through the methods cited above), consistent with the more conscious, rule-based system the earlier Subsection 2.3 attributes to adult language learning.

5.2. English as a Lingua Franca

When designing the interview and observation instruments for this study, the presence of French in the classroom was anticipated as a relevant criterion to track, given the Brussels context in which this research was conducted. However, once the search for participating schools began, it became apparent that few primary institutions in the area offered English as a Foreign Language lessons. This constraint led to the selection of a European School for the child-classroom part of this study. The assumption at that stage was that, even within a European School, students would share a common L1, streamed into linguistically homogeneous sections. This assumption proved incorrect once observations began: students within the same EFL class were, in fact, linguistically mixed, not sharing a single common L1.

A comparable, though inverted, oversight emerged on the adult side. It had not been anticipated that some adult learners would not speak French at all, prioritising learning English rather than one of the languages of their country of residence (in this case, French or Dutch).

Among child learners, a further distinction emerged across classrooms. In some classes, students never resorted to a language other than English (such as in teachers A1's and A2's classrooms); in others, they could not help doing so, prompting teachers to intervene directly. This raises a question this study cannot fully answer: why might students choose to speak their mother tongue amongst themselves—out of boredom, or to help one another? Several factors plausibly contribute to this variation, among

them classroom dynamics, the teacher's own role and presence, and whether a given activity leaves room for informal chatter or instead demands sustained engagement.

Some of these teachers frame this expectation explicitly as a rule rather than a mere default. Both teachers A1 and A4 described relying on an "English only rule" as part of their strategy. In practice, this rule appears aspirational rather than fully enforceable: Teacher A4's own account of correcting students who "use another language when speaking together" suggests it sets an expectation students do not always meet, rather than a boundary they never cross.

Nonetheless, a further nuance emerged in both classes among adult learners; some students were observed explaining the lesson content to one another in Arabic. Because both researchers have experienced this and both share this language, it was possible to confirm that these exchanges constituted genuine mutual assistance rather than mere off-task conversation, an interpretive advantage not available for the other languages overheard in this study (Ukrainian and Portuguese among others).

However, whether a shared language could be used at all depended entirely on classroom composition. For teachers A4 and A2, the answer was structurally negative: both teachers underlined the multilingual composition of their classrooms which led to the total absence of any kind of translation. In both classrooms, and more broadly across every child classroom observed, no single L1 was shared widely enough to make its use viable—a structural constraint on the student side, independent of either teacher's own linguistic repertoire (A2, for instance, does speak French herself). Nevertheless, Teacher B2's account complicates this picture: she argues that it is not simply a yes-or-no matter as even within her adult class, "some do not have a common language", yet French remained usable as a "transversal language" because most students shared it. This partial feasibility narrowed over time by design, rather than by necessity, according to Teacher B2: "until the end of 1st level, other languages can be used", after which reliance on another language was expected to fade. Teacher B1's classroom represents the clearest case: French was shared widely enough to be used as a matter of course throughout his lessons, with no structural barrier comparable to that faced in the primary school (as in this classroom, a majority of students and the teacher share a common language, here French).

5.2.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of L1 Use

Neither teacher group was asked directly to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of L1 use, and neither volunteered a structured reflection on the matter. What can be inferred from their practice, however, points to two related advantages. The first is comprehension support: both teachers B1 and B2 turn to French specifically as a repair strategy, deployed when understanding breaks down rather than as a default mode of instruction. The second aspect that can be considered an advantage, more particular to B1, is a decoupling of content mastery from linguistic form: by accepting a correct answer in French without requiring its reformulation in English, he appears to prioritise verifying comprehension over enforcing target-language production at all times, an implicit hierarchy of pedagogical goals never made explicit elsewhere in the findings.

A plausible disadvantage, though not one explicitly named by any teacher in this corpus, follows from the concept of language transfer: Odlin (2003) defines this as “the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired” (p. 436). Fitri and Alawiyah (2023) describe its negative form as arising “when differences between L1 and L2 cause difficulties in the learning process” (p. 12). Frequent recourse to L1, particularly when used as a structural crutch instead of a targeted repair strategy, might reinforce such interference at the expense of target-language processing.

5.2.2. Translanguaging

This overall pattern, deliberately managed L1 recourse among adults, and a stricter, more sparingly used equivalent among children, calls for a theoretical lens not otherwise present in this thesis: *translanguaging*. García and Wei (2014) define *translanguaging* as the way in which bilinguals or multilingual speakers do not keep their languages in separate boxes; instead, they draw on all the languages they know as a single, combined, resource, moving between them as needed rather than switching from one “closed system” (p. 31) to another. They argue that bilinguals’ language practices “do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system” (García & Wei, 2014, p. 14).

This concept maps directly onto what was found in this study. Among adults, the teacher deliberately organises this movement between languages, using French as a planned support (Teacher B2) or a temporary bridge before returning to English (Teacher B1): a top-down, teacher-led form of *translanguaging*. Among children, the same movement between languages appears, but informally, among students themselves, and only at the margins of an official “English only” rule the teacher has set: a bottom-up form, tolerated (not always) rather than planned.

Beyond its effect on comprehension support, the classrooms’ differing linguistic composition also structures production itself. Children were expected to respond in English regardless of confidence, with no viable linguistic fallback available to them, since no single L1 was shared widely enough to permit an alternative. Adults, by contrast, could retreat to French when uncertain, treating it as a safety net rather than persisting through English production under difficulty. This asymmetry matters specifically for productive skills: Swain’s (1995) *Output Hypothesis* (first developed in 1985) holds that producing language, rather than only receiving it, plays a distinct role in acquisition by pushing learners to notice gaps between what they want to say and what they are actually able to say (see Subsection 2.2). Structurally, children in this study were pushed into this gap-noticing process more consistently than adults, who retained an escape route unavailable to their younger counterparts. Multilingualism, though not anticipated as a variable when this thesis was first designed, therefore appears to condition productive-skill outcomes directly, by shaping how much genuine target-language production learners were required to sustain.

5.3. Lesson Design

Many factors are taken into account while designing a lesson. As stated earlier, the age group seems to be a central one, however the observations and the interviews revealed that other factors might have an impact on the method choice—namely the material used and the lesson’s structure (pace, group size, length, etc.).

5.3.1. Material Constraints: Textbook Standardisation vs. Teacher Autonomy

A contrast emerged regarding course materials and textbook reliance, though a more layered one than a simple presence or absence of teacher choice. At the European School, every teacher was recorded using *Kid's Box 5* (see Appendix 5) (for fifth-year learners, and *Kid's Box 4* for fourth-year learners) during observed lessons. Teacher A1 explains that this reflects a genuine, if bounded, act of teacher choice: “publishers came to present and we choose”, indeed the teachers themselves have selected the book from among competing options put forward to them. What follows the initial choice, however, is a period of relative fixity, driven less by an absence of teacher agency than by cost and parental investment, as explained by Teacher A1 who underlined that the books are expensive and that parents wanted them to be used, discouraging frequent change once a choice is made. Within this fixed frame, teachers still supplement freely: Teacher A4 situated the textbook at only two-thirds of her practice, reserving a third for her own material. Teacher A2 did so as well, as her worksheets use attests, including the recurring book review assignment discussed in Subsection 5.5.1.1 (see Appendix 6). This choice of textbook is not merely a logistical detail: a book's own internal structure orients which methods it makes available to a teacher in the first place, plausibly contributing to the method patterns established in Subsections 5.1, 5.4, and 5.5—a constraint operating upstream of the methods themselves, not merely alongside them.

At the adult school, material selection follows a comparable logic from the opposite direction. Teacher B2 describes the “use of a textbook made by the school's teacher; own material created and put together as a syllabus”, explicitly framing this as “a base but sometimes there are complementary exercises added”—a workbook authored by the teaching staff themselves, used as a scaffold rather than a script. Teacher B1 made the administrative expectation explicit in his own words, stating that the institution's director wanted them to use a syllabus, while simultaneously reporting that he freely supplements it by adding additional material that can bring something different. Both adult teachers, in other words, operate under an institutional expectation of a shared, internally authored syllabus, while retaining considerably more day-to-day autonomy over how it is supplemented.

5.3.2. Structural Schedule, Attention Management, and Pacing

Beyond activity count alone, the physical and temporal conditions surrounding each session differ sharply between the two groups (see Table 7).

Table 7

Average lesson structural design

Structural Variable	Children	Adults
Average class size	19 students	13 students
Session Timetable	Morning schedule	Evening schedule
Session Duration	45 minutes	3 hours
Number of exercises (per session)	6.2 exercises	10 exercises
Average number of exercises (per hour)	8.2 exercises	3.3 exercises
Break	No	Yes

Note. Own elaboration based on the observations.

A note on sample composition: two of the five child-classroom teachers (A2 and A5) were excluded from the calculation above. Both teachers indicated, in informal discussion during the observed sessions, that the lesson being observed was atypical of their usual practice: Teacher A2's session took place during the class's fortnightly library visit, while Teacher A5's was built around a single paired long-term project. Both teachers reported that their regular lessons typically featured a greater number and diversity of exercises than what was observed on these particular occasions. Including these two sessions in the calculation would therefore have understated, rather than overstated, the pacing density typical of child classrooms—making their exclusion a conservative methodological choice.

Read together, these structural parameters explain the pacing contrast established in the field data: children experience more activity shifts per hour (8.2) than adults (3.3), despite completing fewer exercises in absolute terms per session.

Where adult sessions are long enough to require a scheduled mid-lesson break, primary teachers manage sustained attention through activity variety and rapid task rotation. This is consistent with the methodological recommendations of Shin (2006) regarding young learners' cognitive limitations: he argues that children aged 8 to 10 possess limited attention spans, making it essential to keep individual tasks within a 10-to-15 minutes window. The observation data illustrates this rotation concretely: in Teacher A1's P4 session, the class moved from eight distinct activities through a 45-minute block—an oral warm-up ("how was your weekend?") combined with a review of the past simple, a topic-guessing activity, a song, a video episode, a second song, a sing-along with subtitles, a listening exercise, and a closing brainstorming task in the learners' notebooks. Similarly, Teacher A4's P4 lesson cycled through a video episode, a group role-play, a spelling task, and a phonics song within the same window.

Furthermore, the high density of exercises per hour observed at the children's school aligns with Scott and Ytreberg's (1990, cited in Shin, 2006) framework for young learner engagement, which advocates maintaining a dynamic balance across multiple instructional axes: energy levels (quiet focus alternating with active, noisy interaction), skills and modalities (listening, speaking, reading and writing shifting within a single block), and interactional patterns (individual work, pair work, small-group tasks, and whole-class guidance rotating throughout). Teacher A4's card game—where forming a correct sentence about a job allows a student to keep the card—exemplifies this convergence of a language-focused task with a game-based, individually-paced format designed to sustain engagement.

In contrast, adult evening sessions operate under an extended three-hour format. This contrast may be partly explained by a broader developmental pattern in learning itself. Comparing children's and adults' capacity for executive control of learning, Kuhn and Pease (2006) found that this capacity increases between middle childhood and adulthood, allowing older learners to more easily hold and coordinate two things at once: their prior expectations, and new information that may contradict them. The authors are careful to note, however, that this developmental trend coexists with substantial individual variation as some children in their study performed at the same pace as typical adults. Their sample (11- to 12-year-olds and young adults in their twenties) does not map exactly onto this study's own age ranges, so the findings are applied here with caution. Read this way, Kuhn and Pease's (2006) study suggests

that sustained, single-focus engagement may be comparatively less effortful for adult learners than for children—consistent with the extended, single-target sequences observed among adult teachers. For instance, Teacher B1’s sequence built around a single “present simple + spelling rule” focus, developed across revision, flashcard practice, two parallel time-telling exercises, a listening task, and a grammar-conjugation exercise—a longer, more analytically layered progression around one grammatical target rather than a fast rotation between unrelated skills. This does not mean, however, that attention management disappears entirely from the adult classroom: Teacher B2 explicitly described adapting the timing of the built-in break itself when needed—“[I] adapt everything, change the break moment, as you cannot focus too long on an exercise. I need to switch fast from one point to another”—suggesting that even within a longer, break-structured format, some of the same fatigue-management logic observed among child-classroom teachers is present, only exercised at a more general level (by adjusting a single scheduled break) rather than through a continuous rotation of tasks at the micro level.

5.4. Analysis of the Speaking Skills

Within Nation’s (2007) Four Strands model, oral production falls under *meaning-focused output*—learners actively producing language to convey a message. The following section starts by focusing on child classrooms and then on adult classrooms. It maps the concrete task types and interactional patterns through which output occurred across the corpus, directly followed by an establishment of the methods identified, itself followed by the types of corrective feedback observed. Finally, a cross-checking analysis is carried out, identifying the divergences and convergences between both age groups.

5.4.1. Child Classrooms’ Observations and Interviews Analysis

5.4.1.1. Task Types

Across the five child classrooms, oral tasks fell into three broad categories rather than a single dominant format. The most common was open, low-stakes discussion built around familiar or personal content (pupils recounting what they did on the weekend and discussing a song they had just heard —Teacher A1—, or describing a cultural

topic such as Saint Nicolas and debating about its existence in their own countries — Teacher A3—). Teachers' own accounts of encouraging speech broadly support this picture: Teacher A3 described simply inviting pupils "to have pair and group work", while Teacher A1 emphasised that learners "speak every lesson", linked directly to the lesson's topic. These exchanges shared a common logic: the teacher initiated a topic already close to the pupils' own experiences, and content flowed from the pupils themselves rather than from a script.

A second, less frequent but more sustained category involved collaborative, outcome-oriented tasks, in which pupils worked towards a shared product over an extended stretch of the lesson such as reconstructing a scene from an episode of *Lock and Key*⁹ as a group—Teacher A4—or preparing a paired PowerPoint presentation across several sessions—Teacher A5. Teacher A4's session illustrates this category precisely as she herself describes it in her interview: learners were not asked to invent new language, but to re-enact, as a group, a scene already watched, from a script already provided. She explains that her students have "a structure: there is no inventing" —an account borne out in the classroom, where the task took form of a collaborative staging rather than individual drilling.

A third, narrower category consisted of tightly controlled, form-focused exchanges such as brief vocabulary checks built around a single image and word—Teacher A1 and A4—or dialogue practice paired with immediate correction—Teacher A2. This most closely matches Teacher A2's own account: she describes making her students "sing in English and use sentences from the songs in short interactions" alongside the use of direct questions: a mix of patterned repetition and open questioning that mirrors the controlled dialogue-and-correction format observed in her sessions.

5.4.1.2. Methods Within the Child Classroom

ALM is the most consistently confirmed method among the five teachers, present for four out of five through interview, observation, or both. Teachers A1, A3, and A4 all confirm using it directly in interview, while Teacher A2 confirmed it indirectly by explaining that in class they did a lot of "habit formation and repetition". Teacher A4's own account frames child-directed ALM as loose and holistic, stating that pupils just

⁹ A cartoon developed in the textbook (*Kid's Box*) which introduces new topics.

“knew the song as a whole” rather than isolating its structures, suggesting repetition here serves memorisation and rhythm more than analytical drilling.

TBLT is almost as broadly confirmed, with a clear gradient from declarative to behavioural evidence. Teacher A2, A3, and A4 confirmed using it directly in their interview, the latter two and Teacher A5, supplying direct behavioural confirmation. Teacher A3’s Saint Nicolas-themed task offers a further instance: pupils were given prepared questions but also required to devise additional ones themselves before presenting an interview to the class, combining scripted preparation with genuine, on-the-spot language production. Teacher A4’s role-play required pupils to think and communicate to reconstruct a scene, while Teacher A5’s session—built entirely around a deferred, shared outcome, a prepared oral presentation supported by a PowerPoint presentation—offers the clearest, most complete instance of TBLT in the entire corpus. Students had to work in pairs on an environment-related topic, discussing and sharing information read or seen. Only Teacher A1’s data leaves TBLT unconfirmed beyond simple recognition in Q14 (see Appendix 2).

Direct Method is confirmed for two of the five child teachers, through different types of evidence. For Teacher A4, this is supported directly in her own words, describing how to encourage speech, she mentioned using “gestures connected to words” used with chanting and songs, corroborated in her observation notes on pupils knowing “what gesture to use with the context”, meaning that her pupils knew the lyrics and were able to sing them, especially when she did the gestures associated. For Teacher A1, the observation grid documents a vocabulary-checking activity built around different jobs, recorded as an orally-oriented job-recognition and spelling exercise; the field recollection confirms this activity was preceded by a picture-based elicitation step, where students had to give the jobs’ name out loud. No comparable instance, documented or recalled, appears for teachers A2, A3, or A5.

CLL, the Silent Way, and Desuggestopedia produced no evidence whatsoever across the entire child corpus, not in a single interview response nor in a single observation. The absence in the interviews can be explained by the limitations the instruments and the methodology present as explained in the further subsection 5.6. It is important to note that absence of the translation-needing method, CLL, might be justified by the multilingual context of the child classrooms.

5.4.1.3. Correction

As established repeatedly throughout this thesis, as reviewed in Subsection 2.2.2.1, correction plays a structurally central role in production. This section accordingly turns to how correction was actually delivered across the classrooms observed.

Applying Lyster and Ranta's (1997) six-type framework to the child correction instances documented above, all five teachers can now be assigned to a specific category. Teacher A2's echoic correction pattern (an error is made, she corrects it and the student repeats the correct form) constitutes *explicit correction*. Teacher A3's technique follows the same category: confronted with an error, she explicitly flagged the error before supplying the correct form. Teachers A4 and A5 reformulated the errors correctly without flagging them which constitutes a clear *recast*.

Teacher A1, for her part, stands apart: while she, too, used on some occasions recasting to correct errors, she is also the only teacher to have made use of a *prompt*. Rather than supplying a correction, she named the grammatical category alone—when a pupil said “yesterday, I am tired”, she responded “Past Simple”, leaving the pupil to produce the correct form independently. This represents a clean instance of *metalinguistic feedback*.

Read together, *reformulations* dominate the child data as every teacher relied on *recasts* or *explicit correction*, with Teacher A1 alone using *metalinguistic feedback*—the single instance representing a *prompt* in the child corpus. This pattern is broadly consistent with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) own corpus, where *reformulations* were likewise the more frequent category overall, even though *prompts* proved more reliably linked to successful repair.

What varies across the child classrooms is the form correction takes, not whether it occurs: *explicit correction*, *recast*, and *metalinguistic feedback* are distributed across the five teachers without converging on a shared procedure. Whether it also varied in frequency across activity types cannot be established here; activities were logged as a list per session, with no per-activity marker (see Subsection 5.6.1).

5.4.2. Adult Classroom's Observation and Interviews Analysis

5.4.2.1. Task Types

Adult sessions leaned more consistently towards guided, whole-class formats than open, learner-driven talk. Teacher B1 ran group guessing games—pupils identifying an action from mime—alongside a flashcard exercise in which one pupil asked another “at what time do you...?” filling the question with an action written on a drawn card. Teacher B2 built comparable activities around pronunciation drilling (pupils had to listen to the word and repeat with the right pronunciation) and gesture-elicited vocabulary, alongside oral grammar exercises. Teachers' own accounts frame this differently: B1 explicitly rejects a single-method description, stating that he did “not use a single method, there is a mix of methods and a focus on communicative approaches”, citing language games and role plays, while B2's account centred on accommodating a multilingual, mixed-level starting group rather than on activity type as such.

5.4.2.2. Methods Within the Adult Classroom

Direct Method is the clearest adult-specific finding: both teachers conveyed meaning through gestures, cards, and/or drawings rather than translation. Teacher B1 mimed when his students failed to make a guess, and Teacher B2 elicited a verb through mime as well, both teachers matching the method's signature procedure directly. A further instance strengthens this for the second teacher specifically: before a direction-giving task documented in the grid—pupils using a map drawn on the board to indicate the way, the teacher started by pointing to individual elements of the map, such as a roundabout, naming each directly in English without translation—; afterwards, pupils had to use the discovered vocabulary in their presentation. The map task itself, once pupils took over, shifted towards a more task-oriented, TBLT-consistent format; the vocabulary-labelling step that preceded it is the clearer Direct Method instance of the two.

ALM is confirmed in interview for both adult teachers: B2 elaborated at length, stating that she “really use it, especially with English with a focus on pronunciation and drills on grammar”, matching her observed drilling in the classroom, while B1 confirmed it more briefly, without further detail, though his observed choral repetition follows the same procedure. TBLT is confirmed for both adult teachers at the level of observed practice, through more bounded, single-activity instances: Teacher B2's map-based

direction task, and Teacher B1's flashcard exercise, both meet the method's core criterion. Moreover, while both teachers have recognised using it in Q14 (see Appendix 2), neither provided further elaboration.

Once again, CLL, the Silent Way, and Desuggestopedia produced no evidence either in a single interview, due to the limitations of the question sheets, as explained later (see Subsection 5.6.1.) or in a single observation.

5.4.2.3. Correction

Applying Lyster and Ranta's (1997) corrective feedback framework, the two adult teachers drew on a broader range of feedback types than any child teacher. Teacher B2's correction—supplying the correct form with an explanation—combines *explicit correction* with *metalinguistic feedback*. Teacher B1 offers a clear instance of a *prompt*: rather than supplying an answer, he indicates that there is an error and lets the student think about their sentence which matches *elicitation* precisely. Alongside these, both classrooms also yielded *recasts* and instances of *repetition*, the teacher repeating the erroneous utterance with adjusted intonation.

An observation follows: unlike the child classrooms, neither adult teacher settled in a single procedure; five of Lyster and Ranta's (1997) six types are attested across only two teachers. This breadth cannot, however, be interpreted at face value. Each adult teacher was observed for roughly six hours against roughly 90 minutes for four of five child teachers and only 45 minutes for Teacher A5 (see Table 6), and a longer observation window mechanically increases the probability of capturing a wider range of feedback types. Whether adult correction is genuinely more varied or merely more fully sampled, cannot be established from this corpus.

5.4.3. Cross-Analysis of the Speaking Skills

Table 8

Summary of the methods used for the speaking skills by children's and adults' teachers

Method	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	
Desuggestopedia	□	□	□	□	/	□	□	Interview
	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Observation
Direct Method	□	□	□	☒	/	□	□	Interview
	☒	□	□	☒	□	☒	☒	Observation
TBLT	□	☒	☒	☒	/	☒	☒	Interview
	□	□	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	Observation
ALM	☒	☒	☒	☒	/	☒	☒	Interview
	□	☒	□	☒	□	☒	☒	Observation
CLL	□	□	□	□	/	□	□	Interview
	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Observation
Silent Way	□	□	□	□	/	□	□	Interview
	□	□	□	□	□	□	□	Observation

Note. Own elaboration based on observations and interviews.

Key: □ = no evidence ☒ = method confirmed / = not applicable

Across task types, methods, and correction alike, no single axis of flexibility versus rigidity holds consistently by age; each dimension examined points in its own direction, and the two groups trade places depending on what, specifically, is being asked of them. Linguistically, the adults observed are the more flexible of the two: as established in Subsection 5.2, they could retreat to French as a safety net when production faltered, a genuine linguistic fallback unavailable to children in this corpus, who were structurally required to sustain English regardless of confidence. Task content shows the reverse: children's oral tasks were more often learner-generated—pupils recounting their own weekend, debating Saint Nicolas in their own terms—while adult tasks leaned more teacher-structured, built around guessing games, choral repetition, and fixed prompts. Method enactment splits similarly: ALM appears looser and more holistic among children, built around songs pupils knew as a whole with time, rather than isolated structures, against more deliberate, analytically drilled repetition in both adult classrooms—consistent with Stakanova and Tolstikhina's (2014) guidelines for younger learners specifically (see Subsection 2.4.1).

Correction resists the reading proposed for method enactment: forms varied in both age groups. Child teachers each tended to settle on a single procedure (see Subsection 5.4.1.3) whereas neither adult teacher confined themselves to one (see Subsection 5.4.2.3). Read literally, this points away from the asymmetry Hypothesis 2 predicted rather than towards it. However, this reading alone cannot be sustained either, given the observation-time asymmetry noted above. Nor can the more specific prediction be tested: whether correction loosened during extended, task-based speech was not recoverable from the data, since activities were logged as a list per session with no per-activity marker (see Subsection 5.6.1). These two teachers constitute the entire adult cohort of this study, and any pattern identified here is accordingly reported as theirs rather than as a property of adult instruction generally.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the only methods explicitly assigned in the scientific literature to a single age group—namely Desuggestopedia and CLL, both adult-oriented (see Tables 3 and 4)—were neither observed in practice nor confirmed in interviews. This empirical absence is, once again, a result of the limits of the instruments (see Subsection 5.6.1), which renders it impossible to either fully support or challenge the theoretical claims surrounding their adult-specific applicability within this corpus.

This level of detail, obtained by associating the tasks with specific methods, however, should not obscure the broader picture it sits within. Talk was near-constant across every classroom in this corpus, yet only a fraction of it maps onto three of the six methods established in Tables 3 and 4: ALM, TBLT, and Direct Method (see Table 8). The remainder of the output produced—open questioning, spontaneous discussion, personal exchange—corresponds to no specific method, but to a broader communicative orientation established in Subsection 5.1.4, where CLT was recognised as an approach rather than a method in Anthony's (1963) sense. The methods identified throughout this section, in other words, mark the moments where instruction becomes procedurally specific, against a backdrop that is, for most of what was actually said in both types of classrooms, simply and consistently communicative.

5.5. Analysis of the Writing Skills

Where speaking unfolds in real time and leaves little behind it, writing produces something that remains on the page—open to revision, to rereading, and to a different kind of scrutiny altogether. As with the analysis of oral production, this section examines written production through the same three-part structure for each age group: task types, method identification, and correction—before closing with a cross-synthesis of children and adults.

5.5.1. Child Classrooms' Observations and Interviews Analysis

5.5.1.1. Task Types

Within the child classrooms, writing tasks fell into four categories. The most institutionally consistent was a recurring book review: every two weeks, all five classes visit the library, and pupils complete a fixed template (title, author, summary, likes/dislikes, and favourite character drawing) (see Appendix 6)—directly observed only in Teacher A2's classroom, but confirmed school-wide by the other teachers' interviews and during informal interviewing having taken place during the observations. A second category involved free or input-based writing: Teacher A1's comprehension-check and narrative tasks, and Teacher A3's open, self-chosen topics. A third consisted of short, controlled exercises—Teacher A4's workbook fill-ins, or Teacher A1's sentence-reordering. A fourth was identified, specific to Teacher A5, folded writing into the same task-based project as the PowerPoint itself (see Subsection 5.4.1.2) constitutes the written output.

5.5.1.2. Methods Within the Child Classroom

None of the three writing-specific methods—Product-Based Approach, Genre-Based Approach and Writing Workshop—is cleanly confirmed for any child teacher. The book review's fixed template, observed in Teacher A2's class but stated to be used in every other teacher's classroom, invites a comparison to the Product-Based Approach, insofar as pupils reproduce the same structure each time, though no evidence confirms the method's defining first step—analysing a model text before writing. Teacher A3's statement of “finding a topic the students are interested in and letting them write on

their own afterwards” echoes Writing Workshop’s emphasis on learner control over topic, but once again, without confirmation of its other defining features—the mini-lesson, individual conferencing, or group sharing. No comparable trace of Genre-Based Approach appears anywhere in the child data.

Among the three inter-skill methods, TBLT is the clearest fit: Teacher A5’s PowerPoint is not only a speaking task, but a writing one as well, the same deferred, shared outcome driving both—pupils write directly towards the project’s communicative goal, not as an isolated exercise. Desuggestopedia, as with speaking, produced no evidence whatsoever in the child writing data.

Finally, a possible gap in the scientific literature emerges once the writing methods reviewed in Section 2 are set against the data. In fact, every writing-oriented method seemed to be oriented towards writing full texts instead of decontextualised words, or short sentences as observed in the child classrooms. Indeed, in every child classroom observed, the learners have, at some point, written in their textbook or in their worksheet short answers to open questions, fill-in-the-gaps exercise, or even guessing a specific topic-related word. These exercises, also referred to as *techniques* do not fit any of the methods, apart from TBLT, gathered in Tables 3 and 5.

5.5.1.3. Correction

Written correction is structurally different from oral correction in one respect this study’s observation format could not fully capture: because reviewing written work takes more time, most written correction happens in a delayed form, often after the lesson observed, not within it—leaving little for classroom observation to record. The available evidence nevertheless suggests a predominance of indirect correction among the child teachers, although the evidence is uneven across classrooms and should not be treated as a systematic pattern. Teacher A1’s one confirmed written instance follows this pattern: when an answer was wrong, she told the pupils to correct it for next time, without supplying the form herself. Teacher A4 is the only teacher to confirm using both types, *direct* and *indirect* correction, deliberately, by her own account stating that sometimes she gives the right answer away and sometimes she lets them find it themselves. Teacher A5’s procedure follows a similar but more structured logic—pointing out an error in pupils’ PowerPoint text, then guiding them towards identifying

it themselves, with *direct correction* supplied only as a last resort if self-correction failed; this graduated approach, and her underlying willingness to treat grammatical accuracy, alongside lexical accuracy, as worth pursuing at all, aligns her more closely with Ferris's (1999) position in the debate reviewed in Subsection 2.2.2.2 than with Truscott's (1996). Teacher A2's feedback—written on the sheet, elaborated orally, accompanied by a mark out of five—leans towards the more explanatory, metalinguistic end of Ellis's (2009) typology.

5.5.2. Adult Classroom's Observation and Interviews Analysis

5.5.2.1. Task Types

Adult writing tasks were generally controlled; Teacher B1's writing centred on copying and controlled completion—pupils copying model sentences from the board into their books, linking images to vocabulary by themselves after first doing so orally, and completing guided prompts such as “In the morning I ...”. Teacher B2 relied on dictation and short, word-level tasks rather than sentence-level writing with vocabulary study. Those were followed by matching exercises, and word-guessing games on the board in a written form (first and last letter written). Beyond word-level practice, Teacher B2 explains that writing culminated in a longer text at the end of each unit, based on the topic seen, though the exact procedure was not detailed further. This, she underlines, occurred in every classroom of the school, but she adds that she, afterwards, proceeds to private or group correction. Both teachers' accounts converge on writing as a controlled, teacher-directed activity built around a fixed model or target item.

5.5.2.2. Methods Within the Adult Classroom

Product-Based Approach is confirmed for Teacher B1 through his interview with unusual completeness, compared to the other data gathered, matching all four of the method's defining steps (see Table 5); his observed practice corroborates the latter steps directly, pupils copying sentences from the board into their books before completing guided prompts on their own. This progression—model analysis, controlled practice, guided reconstruction, independent adaptation—distinguishes this instance from the TBI (see Table 2). Teacher B2's end-of-unit writing task, built on unit content, gestures loosely towards the same logic as Product-Based Approach, but without

confirming the method's specific procedure—no single source text is described as being analysed or copied. It is best read as a plausible but unconfirmed instance, distinct from B1's clearly staged progression. Teacher B2's use of writing in her classroom seems to be language-focused-learning oriented, using writing as the skill medium only.

5.5.2.3. Correction

Written-oriented exercises among adults were only sparsely observed, and correction of that writing sparser still. Teacher B1 was observed correcting in real time while students were working on short sentences, addressing errors as they appear in the students' notes. This type of correction is confirmed as immediate in timing, though the record does not specify whether the correct form was supplied directly or only flagged—insufficient detail to categorise it against Ellis's (2009) typology with confidence. Teacher B2's data remains too sparse to characterise beyond group correction, recorded without further detail in either observed session. Taken together, these observations do not provide sufficient evidence to establish a characteristic adult pattern of written corrective feedback.

5.5.3. Cross-Analysis of the Writing Skills

Table 9

Summary of the methods used for the writing skills by children's and adults' teachers

Method	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	
Desuggestopedia	☐	☐	☐	☐	/	☐	☐	Interview
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Observation
TBLT	☐	☒	☒	☒	/	☒	☒	Interview
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	Observation
Product-Based Approach	☐	☐	☐	☐	/	☒	☐	Interview
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	Observation
Genre-Based Approach	☐	☐	☐	☐	/	☐	☐	Interview
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Observation
Writing Workshop	☐	☐	☐	☐	/	☐	☐	Interview
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Observation

Note. Own elaboration based on observations and interviews.

Key: ☐ = no evidence ☒ = method confirmed / = not applicable

Writing extends the pattern already established for speaking, most clearly in method rigidity and task structure, rather than reversing them. Task variety continues to favour children (four categories against a narrower, controlled adult range)—consistent with the learner-generated task content already noted for speaking. Method identification confirms, rather than contradicts, the adult-side pattern of greater procedural structure already visible in oral method enactment and correction: none of the three writing-specific methods was clearly confirmed for any child teacher.

For its part, Teacher B1 offers the single most complete method match in the entire study: Product-Based Approach, confirmed across all four defining steps—a highly structured enactment of the kind already observed in his deliberately drilled ALM, now extended to a further dimension rather than appearing for the first time. It rests, however, on a single teacher account, and is neither replicated nor claimed by the second adult teacher. It cannot, therefore, be treated as inherently age-related, nor can the possibility that it is be entirely excluded. The literature does not assign this method to either age group (see Table 5), and the child corpus offers only a partial counterpart: the recurring book review template, in which pupils reproduce a fixed structure without the model-analysis step the method defines (see Subsection 5.5.1.2). This partial presence is worth noting, since the method's low analytical demand—reproduction and adaptation of a model rather than manipulation of an explicit rule—might have been expected to sit comfortably with the procedural processing generally attributed to younger learners (see Subsection 2.3.4). What its distribution here suggests instead is that a method's procedural rigidity for the teacher and its cognitive demand on the learner might be separable dimensions, which the flexibility/rigidity framing of Hypothesis 2 treated as one. This remains a reading of a single case, and is offered as such.

TBLT carries over cleanly from speaking, driven by the same deferred outcome; Desuggestopedia, as with speaking, remains entirely absent, in both interviews and observations, for every teacher regardless of age. Direct Method plays no role here, as an inter-skill method primarily oriented towards oral interaction, production and reception alike. Correction, finally, offers insufficient basis for a robust age-based comparison: the available child data suggest a tendency towards *indirect correction*, identifiable in several classrooms, whereas the adult data consist of only one under-specified case and a single unelaborated mention. Written correction therefore

appears to occur largely outside what this study's observation format could capture, making any difference between the two age groups impossible to establish confidently. Table 9's sparseness is itself telling: it visually reflects how rarely writing instruction followed the kind of rigid, step-based procedure the literature associates with these methods (see Table 5), rather than simply reflecting a gap in the data.

5.6. Reflections on the Methodology

5.6.1. Limitations of the Study

Before these findings are drawn together in the conclusion that follows, it is necessary to situate them within the limitations, and the methodological trade-offs, of the research design that produces them.

This study's conclusion rests on a limited empirical base: 13 observed lessons across seven teachers, drawn from a single primary school and a single adult education centre, both located in Brussels. This narrowness carries concrete, traceable costs, several of which surfaced directly during the analysis of this study's own data rather than remaining abstract concerns.

First, the sample's structure led us to a partial conclusion regarding GTM's use. In subsection 5.1.1, age and shared-L1 availability were found to covary perfectly across the corpus: every multilingual classroom observed was a child classroom, and every French-sharing classroom was an adult one. This made it impossible to determine, from this data alone, whether the presence or absence of GTM is driven by learners' age, by classroom linguistic composition, or by some interaction of the two. A sample spanning multiple schools, ideally including at least one linguistically homogeneous child classroom, or one linguistically mixed adult classroom, would be needed to disentangle these two variables from each other.

Second, the geographic concentration of this study in Brussels limits how far its findings can generalise. Brussels' unusually high linguistic diversity, itself central to the findings of Subsection 5.2, is not necessarily representative of foreign-language classrooms elsewhere, including elsewhere in Belgium. The absence of translation-based instruction observed among child learners here may be less a function of age

than of this specific, multilingual urban context; a comparable study conducted in a linguistically homogeneous region might well find GTM used with children too.

Third, the data collection instruments themselves imposed real constraints on what could be captured, beyond the method/approach conflation already discussed at the opening of this chapter. Several interview questions required a binary yes/no or checkbox response, which risked flattening more qualified positions into a simple presence/absence marker. Teacher A3's case illustrates the risk concretely: an initial note-taking slip recorded her stance on GTM as its opposite, a reversal only caught and corrected during the writing of this chapter, through cross-referencing against her full interview transcript. Had this cross-referencing not taken place, this single flattened answer could have altered the conclusion drawn in Subsection 5.1.1. Similarly, the observation grid's own structure proved unable to capture certain dynamics this study would have benefited from tracking systematically: pacing and activity order were logged as a list of activities per session, but the grids provided no mechanism for a single, time-stamped or per-activity measure of student engagement, meaning any shift in participation over the course of a session could not be verified against the coded data itself, only against the researchers' own memory.

Finally, one planned interview could not be completed, leaving that teacher's classroom practice documented through observation alone, and her single observed lesson had to be treated throughout this study as an atypical, non-generalisable data point.

5.6.2. Improving the Data Collection Design in Hindsight

With the theoretical grounding this study has since developed, several aspects of the original data collection design would be approached differently.

The most immediate change concerns timing. The method/approach distinction developed in Section 2 of this thesis was only fully articulated after the observation grids and interview sheets had already been designed, and, in several cases, already administered. Finalising this theoretical distinction first would have prevented the terminological conflation acknowledged at the opening of this chapter, and would likely have produced cleaner, more directly usable data on method-level classification from

the outset, rather than requiring the retrospective disentangling this chapter had to perform.

A second related change would be to conduct the observations before drafting the interview questions sheet: doing so would have allowed the interview instrument itself to be shaped by what actually occurs in these classrooms, rather than by a predetermined list of methods drawn primarily from the reference literature. Several methods identified inductively in this study—SLT, TBI, Direct Method—were absent from the interview checklist entirely and had to be inferred after the fact from classroom practice; an observation-first design might have surfaced these categories early enough to probe them directly in interview, rather than relying on single, self-reported, or unprompted occurrences.

Third, and most concretely, this study's structured grids proved too rigid a format for real-time classroom dynamics. A format combining the existing structured grid with free-form running notes—recording at minimum, the order and approximate duration of each activity, and any visible shift in participation or language use as the session progressed—would have allowed dynamics noted informally by the researchers but never logged in a form that could later be verified, to be treated as data rather than as memory. Audio recording via Dictaphone was, in principle, another option that would have allowed near-verbatim researcher notes to be placed with fully verbatim transcripts; this was not pursued, both because of the length of several sessions, particularly the three-hour adult classes, which would have made transcription substantially more burdensome, and because of the high level of background interference typical of an active classroom (overlapping student voices, ambient noise), which would have made much of the recording difficult to use reliably. Given more time and a quieter recording setup, this would be worth reconsidering.

5.6.3. The Value and Cost of a Complementary Research Design

This thesis was conducted as one half of a two-part, complementary project: this half examines productive skills (speaking and writing), while a parallel thesis, conducted by the second researcher using the same fieldwork, examines receptive skills (listening and reading). This structure was a deliberate choice, intended to mirror the relationship

between input and output central to second language acquisition itself, rather than an arbitrary division of labour.

This complementarity brought genuine advantages. It allowed each half of the project to reach a depth of analysis, across all four of Nation's (2007) strands, and across both age groups, that a single researcher covering all four language skills alone could plausibly not have matched within the same timeframe. It also meant every classroom was observed, and every teacher interviewed, through two distinct analytical lenses simultaneously, generating a single, richer shared corpus rather than two smaller, disconnected ones.

This benefit came at a cost, however, one this study should acknowledge rather than pass over. The data collection instruments, namely the observation grids and interview sheets discussed above, had to serve both research agendas at once, productive and receptive alike. This almost certainly constrained how deeply either could be probed on its own terms: a data collection instrument designed solely around this thesis's own research question might have dedicated considerably more space to fine-grained aspects of speaking and writing production specifically—length of student utterances, self-correction during production, drafting and revision behaviour in writing—rather than the broader, shared checklist this project in fact used. What this study gained in scope and shared fieldwork, then, it plausibly lost in productive-skill-related specificity; a solo-authored thesis, with an instrument built around productive skills alone, might have yielded a thinner overall classroom picture, but a sharper one on the specific questions this thesis set out to answer.

5.6.4. Directions for Future Research

Beyond the scope of this study's initial framework, both researchers observed signs of situational motivation shaping engagement in ways this thesis was not designed to measure systematically—such as children's heightened enthusiasm during a culturally significant lesson, or adult learners' own accounts of choosing, and in some cases paying, to attend class. Future research could examine more directly how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation interact with the productive methods examined here, and whether this interaction itself varies by age.

5.7. Conclusion of the Results

This section set out to test two predictions against the same corpus: a first, shared with the parallel study, holding that methods vary between child and adult classrooms not because of age itself but because the objectives attached to each population differ; and a second, specific to productive skills, holding that the procedural/declarative distinction would surface as a rigidity/flexibility asymmetry, most reliably at the point of correction. They are taken in turn.

Hypothesis 1 is consistent with the productive-skill data, though the corpus cannot fully discriminate it from the competing account in which age acts directly, and in more specific terms than it was originally proposed. At the level of *language-focused learning* instruction, methods themselves remained genuinely restricted by age: GTM and SLT were confined to the adult classrooms, and TBI was confirmed nowhere in the corpus, against a communicative orientation shared by every child teacher. At the level of *meaning-focused output*, however, methods proved to be centralised rather than age-restricted, ALM and TBLT common to both groups alike; what varied, in the sense in which Anthony (1963), as reported in Harmer (2006), distinguishes the two, was *technique* rather than *method* (see Subsection 2.1)—ALM as loose, song-based repetition for children against deliberate, drilled repetition for adults; TBLT as an open, negotiated task against a bounded, single activity instance.

What the data suggest is that age did not need to act directly on these choices: the conditions accompanying it seem sufficient to account for the patterns observed, such as the availability of a shared L1, which governed the presence of GTM far more closely than age did (see Subsection 5.1.1); the session format, which set pace at which techniques could rotate (see Subsection 5.3.2); and the teachers' own representations of what their learners need explained before they can use the language. Hypothesis 1 proposed that objectives mediate between age and method; the corpus identifies which objectives, and which structural constraints, do the mediating. It, therefore, cannot establish whether these would still align with age elsewhere, since in this setting they consistently did.

Hypothesis 2 requires a more qualified verdict. It predicted a behavioural signature: because procedural processing is associated with sensitivity to context and immediate situational demands, child-directed instruction was expected to display greater

adaptability and flexibility across materials, task design, and classroom procedure, while adult-directed instruction, drawing more heavily on declarative, consistently applied rules, was expected to display greater rigidity across the same dimensions. Tested against the data, no single axis holds consistently by age: on some dimensions it is the child classrooms that appear the more flexible of the two, and on others the adult ones. Materials resist a clean label: children's textbook is externally fixed once chosen, yet chosen by the teachers themselves and freely supplemented; adults' syllabus is internally authored, yet still institutionally expected (see Subsection 5.3). Linguistically, adults seem to be more flexible of the two, retaining French as a safety net unavailable to children, structurally required to sustain English regardless of confidence, which might be due to the ELF context of the institution (see Subsection 5.2), in response to the multilingual composition of the child classrooms. Task content splits by activity rather than age: children's book review followed a fixed, recurring template, while their open discussion and free-topic writing remained learner-generated in a way observed adult tasks generally did not.

Correction was the dimension Hypothesis 2 singled out as most theoretically privileged, being more directly connected to the *hypothesis-testing* mechanism Swain (1995) describes than materials, task design, or classroom structure are—and it is therefore the dimension on which the hypothesis stands or falls. It is also the dimension the corpus proves unable to adjudicate.

Correction was systematic in both settings: in every session observed, across both age groups, learner error was, at some point, addressed. What differed was the shape of each teacher's repertoire. The five child teachers each converged on a single observable feedback type, with one exception; neither adult teacher did, five of Lyster and Ranta's (1997) six types being attested across the two of them. Taken at face value, this reverses the prediction, with the adult classrooms displaying the wider, more context-varied observed repertoire. But it cannot be taken at face value: each adult teacher was observed for roughly four times as long as each child teacher was (see Table 6), and repertoire breadth is precisely the kind of measure that may expand with sampling time. The writing data further limits this comparison, since written correction was only sparsely captured. Nor could the more specific prediction—that child correction would loosen during extended task-based speech—be tested.

Hypothesis 2 is therefore not supported. Across materials, task content, and linguistic flexibility, no single axis of rigidity versus flexibility divides the two groups consistently; and on correction, the dimension the hypothesis identified as decisive, the observation design cannot distinguish a genuine difference from an artefact of unequal observation time. This is a limitation of the instrument rather than a refutation of the underlying procedural/declarative distinction, which remains well established at the level of the learner (Skehan, 1998; Paradis, 2004). What this study establishes is narrower and methodological: testing that distinction at the level of instructional behaviours requires an observation design with matched exposure across groups and a per-activity record of corrective moves, neither of which the shared instruments used here provided.

Set against the literature, the corpus is markedly narrower than the field it was mapped from. Running beneath both productive skills is a further asymmetry: the total absence of CLL, the Silent Way, and Desuggestopedia, none of which the interview instruments were designed to probe. Two kinds of absence must nonetheless be separated. SLT was missing from the interview checklist yet surfaced in observation, so its underrepresentation is an artefact of the instrument. For their parts, the three methods above left no trace at all, in a corpus recorded through the deliberately descriptive instrument detailed in Subsection 4.2.1, which imposed no prior categorisation and could in principle have registered any of them; within this corpus, then, their absence is closer to a gap in what was looked for. Where instruction did become procedurally identifiable, it did so against a backdrop that was, for most of what was said and written in both classroom types, simply and consistently communicative; CLT functioning throughout as the broad, age-neutral approach within which the age-specific methods documented here take shape.

Age, in other words, shapes this corpus, less through which methods appear than through how they are enacted once chosen. Whether it also shapes the way learner output is responded to is a question this design leaves open.

6. Conclusion

This thesis set out from a simple assumption: producing language, as Swain's *Output Hypothesis* argues, is not merely a display of what has already been learned, but one of the mechanisms through which learning itself takes place. Investigating how productive skills (speaking and writing) are taught across a primary school and an adult education centre in Brussels yielded an asymmetrical verdict on the two predictions tested: the first proved consistent with the data without being decisively testable against its competing account, while the second was not supported, the correction evidence on which it rested proving inconclusive, particularly given the uneven observation time and the limited capture of written correction, rather than confirmatory (as detailed in Subsection 5.7). Ultimately, age shapes classroom practice less through which methods teachers select than through how tightly those methods are enacted once chosen.

Methodologically, this thesis underscores the necessity of separating *method* from *technique* in Anthony's (1963) sense when evaluating age-related instruction. What initially appeared as differential method choices across cohorts was, upon closer inspection, more accurately characterised as differential techniques within shared methods, especially orally-oriented ones like ALM and TBLT—executed with procedural looseness for children and analytical rigidity for adults. This distinction is the study's clearest positive finding, and the one least dependent on the instrument's limitations: it rests on observed classroom procedure rather than on frequency or consistency measures the design was not built to capture.

A second finding emerged from outside the framework this study set out with. Because no first language was shared widely enough in the child classrooms to serve as a fallback, those learners had no linguistic escape route: uncertainty had to be worked through in English or not at all, whereas the adult learners could step out of the target language whenever production faltered. Structurally, the younger learners were therefore pushed into the *gap-noticing* Swain (1995) describes more consistently than the older ones—not by pedagogical design, but by the linguistic composition of the room. Unanticipated at the design stage, this may be the most consequential result reported here: it identifies a variable that conditions productive output directly,

independently of any method a teacher selects, and one that a study framed around age alone would not have been positioned to detect.

The field data gathered across both age groups confirmed, and sharpened, an expectation already raised in the State of the Art. A structural imbalance emerged across all observed classrooms: spoken output recurred far more frequently than written production, which was systematically reduced to brief, controlled activities or deferred outside the lesson altogether. Subsection 2.5 anticipated that an even distribution across the four strands (Nation, 2007) would not always be workable in practice, particularly with younger learners; what the corpus adds is that the imbalance was not confined to the child classrooms at all, but held just as clearly among adults, in a setting where none of the constraints invoked there—emerging L1 literacy, limited attention span—were applicable. Whatever drives this asymmetry, it seems that it is not specific to young learners.

Practically, this suggests that teacher training programmes framing method selection as the primary tool for age adaptation may target the wrong operational level. The most consequential adaptation in productive skills may lie in the flexibility of execution rather than in the choice of method itself.

As fully detailed in Subsection 5.6, this study's empirical scope—13 observed lessons across seven teachers in two institutions within a single, highly multilingual city—cannot claim universal generalisability, and shared-L1 availability remained unavoidably confounded with age. Two further constraints bear directly on the verdict reached above. The two cohorts were observed for markedly unequal amounts of time, which limits what comparison of behavioural range between them can establish. Conducted as the productive half of a collaborative dual-research project, this thesis traded some skill-specific depth for the breadth of a shared corpus, analysing the same classrooms examined from the receptive perspective by my co-researcher.

When juxtaposed with the parallel findings on receptive skills (Bellazrak, 2026), the empirical evidence from this collaborative project points towards a convergence across modalities. While receptive instruction demonstrated a shared reliance on intensive processing—differing across age groups primarily through the nature of teacher scaffolding—the productive data collected in this study suggest a comparable dynamic. Rather than establishing mutually exclusive methodological worlds, both branches of

this fieldwork indicate that age conditions instruction less by restricting which methods are selected than by shaping how flexibly or rigidly their procedures are executed and mediated in the classroom. Adult output was met with explicit, analytically structured treatment just as reading and listening required explicit, analytical text-deconstruction. Conversely, child production was enacted through looser, more varied procedures, echoing the multimodal, low-anxiety scaffolding observed during input processing. Read together, these complementary datasets suggest that whether learners are decoding incoming discourse or generating output, age conditions the degree of structural control surrounding the task rather than the method itself—a convergence that two parallel studies drawing on a single shared corpus can indicate, but not independently confirm.

Within these boundaries, this thesis offers a precise, nuanced answer to its overarching question: age does not determine what a teacher does, so much as how tightly the chosen procedure is held to once instruction is under way—and, in the multilingual setting studied here, how much target-language production learners are left with no alternative but to sustain.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Observation Grid

OBSERVATION GRID		
Date : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Institution : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Class level : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Lesson duration : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Number of students : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Teacher's surname : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
Topic of the lesson : Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.		
OVERALL APPROACH AND CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE		
Aspect Observed	Indicators	Field notes
Lesson organization	Structure	
Interaction types	Teacher-fronted/ pair work/ group work	
Teacher's roles	Facilitator/ authority/ guide/ instructor	
Use of English by the teacher	English only/ occasional translation/ frequent L1 use	
Use of English by the learners	English only/ occasional translation/ frequent L1 use	
Overall approach observed	Communicative Language Teaching / Grammar-Translation / Task-Based Language Teaching/ CLIL / Audiolingual Method / Total Physical Response / other	
Skills taught :		
☐ Speaking		
☐ Writing		
☐ Listening		
☐ Reading		
TEACHING OF PRODUCTIVE SKILLS		
SPEAKING		
Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	CLT (interaction-based), TBLT (task completion), Audiolingual (repetition drills), TPR (commands/actions)	
Type of activities	Role plays / pair discussions / dialogues / presentations / drills	

Focus of instruction	Fluency/ accuracy/ complexity both	
Correction technique	Immediate correction/ delayed feedback/ peer correction/ none/selective vs comprehensive	
Student engagement	Many students speak/ few students speak/ reluctant participation/ teacher chooses/students ask questions to support their speaking/students do not do the speaking task (speak French, talk about holidays,...)	

WRITING

Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	Process Writing, Project-Based, CLIL, Grammar-Translation	
Process followed	Product-based / Process-based (drafting & revision) / Genre-based / teaching strategies	
Type of tasks	Sentence building / creative writing / authentic tasks/ guided composition (guided/semi-guided/free)	
Feedback style	Teacher-led / peer feedback / group correction / use of technology / selective vs comprehensive	

TEACHING OF RECEPTIVE SKILLS

READING

Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	CLIL, Communicative Reading, Grammar-Translation (focus on structure)	
Approach	Top-down / Bottom-up / Interactive	
Type of text used	Story, textbook passage, article, authentic material	
Pre-/post-reading activities	Vocabulary pre-teaching, prediction, discussion	
Comprehension check	Questions, summary, group discussion, using language or not, Pictures, actions (following directions, responding to instructions,...)	

LISTENING

Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	Audiolingual (drills), CLT (interaction), TBLT (task-oriented)	
Type of input	Audio recording, teacher talk, video, dialogue (authentic? AI? Teacher?)	
Listening purpose	Global comprehension / specific information / inference	
Pre-/post-listening activities	Vocabulary pre-teaching, prediction, discussion	
Comprehension check	Questions, summary, group discussion, using language or not	

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Type of materials	Textbook, teacher-made materials, technology	
Adaptation for learner age	Visuals, games, simplified texts for children / analytical tasks for adults, ...	

8.2. Interview Question Sheet

QUESTION SHEET

TEACHER INFORMATION

Surname : Teacher x Institution : Primary school

1. How long have you been teaching EFL?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

2. When did you obtain your teaching diploma?

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3. Who are your current learners (age group, background, ...)?

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4. The classes we have observed have a beginner/intermediate level, have you ever taught learners with an advanced level? If yes, is there a difference in the teaching method?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

5. Have you ever taught adult learners? If yes, have you noticed a major difference?

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6. What type of institution do you teach in (primary school, adult education, private institute)?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

7. Do you also teach in other types of institutions? If yes, which kind?

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8. Do you teach any other foreign languages?

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TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES

9. What methods do you use/What do you do in order to encourage your students to speak in English?

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10. What methods do you use in order to encourage your students to write in English?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

11. What methods do you use in order to encourage your students to read in English?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

12. What methods do you use in order to encourage your students to listen in English?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

13. Have you ever used a method or activity that did not work as expected? What did you learn from that experience?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

14. Have you ever heard of the following EFL methods and approaches :

☐ CLT (Communicative Language Teaching): Focuses on using language for real communication. Students learn by interacting, speaking, and expressing meaning rather than memorizing grammar rules.

☐ GTM (Grammar-Translation Method): method focusing on grammar rules and translating between the first language and English, with little emphasis on speaking or listening.

☐ TBLT (Task-based Language Teaching): Learning happens through completing meaningful tasks like solving a problem or planning an activity. Here, language is used as a tool to achieve a goal, not as the main focus.

☐ TPR (Total Physical Response): Students learn language through physical movement. The teacher gives commands, and learners respond with actions, helping comprehension before speaking. (i.e. Simon says)

☐ ALM (Audio-Lingual Method): This method is based on repetition and habit formation and is used mainly for pronunciation and drills.

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

15. I will now briefly explain each method. And now, does one or more sound more familiar to you ?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

16. How did you choose your current method(s)? (personal choice, institutional policy, training background, professional experience or theoretical framework)

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

17. Do you mainly use a textbook/manual, or do you create your own materials? Why?

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EXPERIENCE AND ADAPTATION

18. From your experience, is there something specific in teaching languages to children or adults and what are the main differences between both levels?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

19. If you were to teach a different age group (children ↔ adults), would you adapt or change your method? If so, how?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

20. Additional comment ?

Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte.

8.3. Methods' Colour-Code

Desuggestopedia	125
Direct method	31
TBLT	163
Intensive reading	59
Extensive reading	58
Extensive listening	111
Intensive listening	144
TPR	175
Natural Approach	133
ACH	55
CLL	24
Silent Way	31
Product-based Approach	158
Genre-based Approach	116
Writing Workshop	40
Aura	165
GTM	193
SLT	33
TBI	56

8.4. Excerpt From a Completed Observation Grid

TEACHING OF PRODUCTIVE SKILLS		
SPEAKING		
Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	CLT (interaction-based), TBLT (task completion), Audiolingual (repetition drills), TPR (commands/actions)	When speaking, it is interaction based, especially within the scope of explication or justification of their choices (the answers given, the drawing drawn, the book chosen, ...)
Type of activities	Role plays / pair discussions / dialogues / presentations / drills	dialogues
Focus of instruction	Fluency/ accuracy/ complexity both	Accuracy, good use of general English
Correction technique	Immediate correction/ delayed feedback/ peer correction/ none/selective vs comprehensive	Immediate correction by use of repetition (Student: she have-, Teacher: she has ..., Student: she has ...)
Student engagement	Many students speak/ few students speak/ reluctant participation/ teacher chooses/students ask questions to support their speaking/students do not do the speaking task (speak French, talk about holidays,...)	When needed, they all speak
WRITING		
Aspect Observed	Indicators	Results
Method used	Process Writing, Project-Based, CLIL, Grammar-Translation	A book review based on a book personally chosen (as a homework) They also have a reinforcement exercise at the back of the sheet related to the tense that has to be used in their summary
Process followed	Product-based / Process-based (drafting & revision) / Genre-based / teaching strategies	They have to read a book, and answer to different kind of questions (title, author, summary, likes and dislikes, ...) They have to do the reinforcement at the back which depends on the week and topic
Type of tasks	Sentence building / creative writing / authentic tasks/ guided composition (guided/semi-guided/free)	Semi-guided task, sentence building on a specific topic with a specific tense

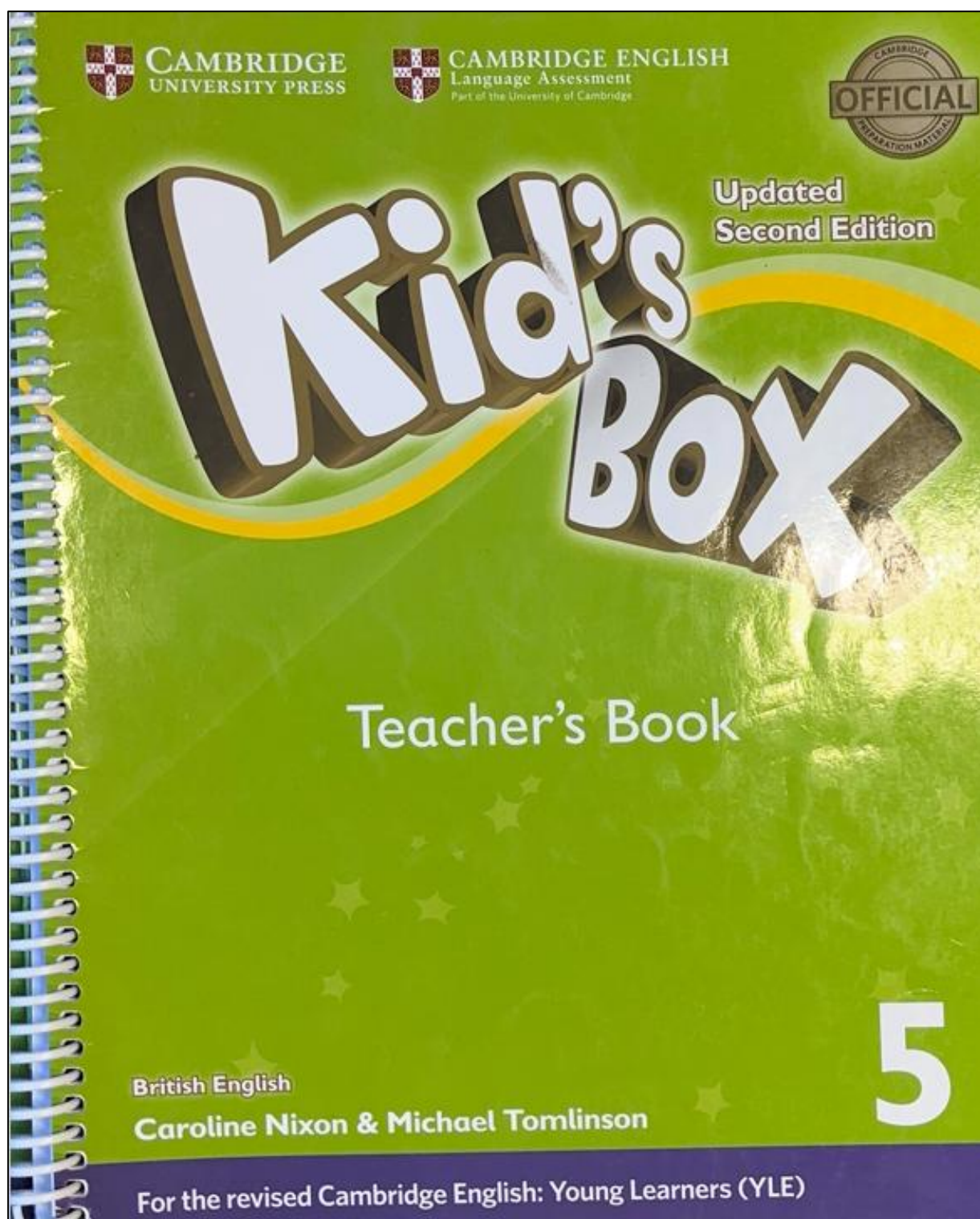
CLT Approach

re correction

Process-based

Product-based

8.5. Kid's Box 5—Children Textbook



8.6. Book Review

L2 P5			P5											
Title: _____ Author: _____ Publisher: _____ Summary: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			Book Review What I liked best: _____ _____ What I didn't like: _____ _____ _____											
Word difficulty ✓ box <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Too easy</td> <td>Just right</td> <td>Too hard</td> </tr> </table>			Too easy	Just right	Too hard	Illustrations ✓ box <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Too few</td> <td>Interesting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Just right</td> <td>Boring</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Too many</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Too few	Interesting	Just right	Boring	Too many	
Too easy	Just right	Too hard												
Too few	Interesting													
Just right	Boring													
Too many														
Comment: _____			Name of reviewer: _____ (= your name) Date started: _____ Date finished: _____ Favourite character/passage _____ Picture of favourite character/passage _____ _____ _____ _____											
Recommendation ✓ box <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Highly recommended</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reasonable</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not recommended</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Highly recommended		Reasonable		Not recommended							
Highly recommended														
Reasonable														
Not recommended														

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