



EFFECTIVE WAYS OF TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the problem of studying modern methods and techniques of teaching a foreign (English) language. As an example, several modern and relevant methods of teaching English are given. In this article, special attention is paid to the specifics of using these methods in the educational process. The effectiveness of methods of teaching a foreign language is also considered, since it contributes to the formation and development of various abilities, skills, general educational and professional competencies that are important for a modern specialist.

KEYWORDS: *methods and techniques of teaching English, young learners, classroom, individual and group work with learners*

DISCUSSION

Young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language. We need to identify those and make the most of them. For example, children: are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words; already have great skill in using limited language creatively; frequently learn indirectly rather than directly; take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do; have a ready imagination; above all take great delight in talking!

How does each of these qualities help a child in the foreign language classroom and how can the teacher build on them?

Children's ability interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words

We know from experience that very young children are able to understand to grasp meaning what is being said to them even before they understand the individual words.

Intonation, gesture, facial expressions, actions and circumstances all help to tell them what the unknown words and phrases probably mean [4, 167]. By understanding the message in this way they start to understand the language. In later life we all maintain this first source of understanding alongside

our knowledge of the language itself. It remains a fundamental part of human communication.

Children come to primary school with this ability already highly developed. They continue to use it in all their school work. For example, even though their mother tongue skills are already well established, they may well find it difficult to follow purely verbal instructions and information. When this happens, or sometimes simply out of laziness or inattention, children will tend to rely on their ability to 'read' the general message. In fact we can see this happening most clearly when they get it wrong! More importantly, particularly in terms of language development, their message-interpreting skill is part of the way they learn new words, concepts and expressions in their mother tongue as their language expands to meet the new challenges of school [5, 58].

So when children encounter a new language at school, they can call on the same skill to help them interpret the new sounds, new words and new structures. We want to support and develop this skill. We can do this by making sure we make full use of gesture, intonation, demonstration, actions and facial expressions to convey meaning parallel to what we are saying. At the same time, we must also try not to undermine the children's willingness to use the skill. This can happen when we try to 'pin down' understanding too precisely.

Language activities which involve children in guessing what phrase or word someone has thought of are very good examples of this phenomenon in



action. As far as the children are concerned, they are not trying to learn phrases: they are concentrating on trying to guess right. However, by the time they have finished the repeated guessing, they will have confirmed words and structures they only half knew at the beginning. They will have got the phrases firmly into their minds. They will probably even have adjusted their pronunciation. Guessing is actually a very powerful way of learning phrases and structures, but it is indirect because the mind is engaged with the task and is not focusing on the language. The process relates very closely to the way we develop our mother tongue. We do not consciously set out to learn it. We acquire it through continuous exposure and use.

Both conscious direct learning and subconscious indirect learning, or 'acquisition', are going to help someone internalize a new language. Experience tells us that we all seem to have something of both systems in us. It will depend on a mixture of intellectual development, temperament and circumstance whether we are more inclined to use one system rather than the other. In practical terms each system has its contribution to make. Conscious direct learning seems to encourage worked-out accuracy [2, 167]. Unconscious indirect learning, or acquisition, encourages spontaneous and therefore more fluent use. Ideally we want both accuracy and fluency to develop. So in the classroom we need to provide scope for both systems to operate. You may also notice that in your class you have children who are temperamentally more inclined to operate in one way than the other. In all aspects of life there are people who like to get everything sorted out and others who like to 'muddle through'. The children who like to get on with something no matter how it comes out will need encouragement to work at conscious accuracy, and others who are keen to be precise will need encouragement to risk getting things wrong sometimes in order to communicate. We must be clear in our own minds which we are trying to encourage at any given moment and must also make it clear to the children in the way we set up activities what it is we are asking them to do. This is because each of the processes can easily get in the way of the other.

In general terms, however, it is probably true to say that at primary school level the children's capacity for conscious learning of forms and grammatical patterns is still relatively undeveloped [6, 187]. In contrast, all children, whether they prefer to 'sort things out' or 'muddle through', bring with them an enormous instinct for indirect learning. If we are to make the most of that asset we need to build on it quite deliberately and very fully.

For this reason, we can see why it is a good idea to set up real tasks in the language classroom if we can. Real tasks, that is to say worthwhile and interesting things to do which are not just language

exercises, provide the children with an occasion for real language use, and let their subconscious mind work on the processing of language while their conscious mind is focused on the task [3, 198]. We can also see again why games are more than a fun extra. They too provide an opportunity for the real using and processing of language while the mind is focused on the 'task' of playing the game. In this way, games are a very effective opportunity for indirect learning. They should therefore not be dismissed as a waste of time. Nor should we regard them just as something we can introduce as a filler for the end of the lesson or as a reward for 'real work'. They are real work. They are a central part of the process of getting hold of the language. This is perhaps just as well because children have a very strong sense of play and fun.

Depending on your approach, these cute kids can either be the nicest young people you will have the pleasure of teaching or a nightmarish group of unruly children that reduce grown men to tears! Teaching young children properly is not for the fast quitter as it will take time to get into the swing of it. There is a good chance that at some point you will have to deal with crying, toilet issues, screaming and students who have the attention span of a gold fish. Some useful tips are:

Be clear and direct in how you speak. Use simple 1 or 2 word commands and be prepared to apply a firmer tone to your voice when need be. Be animated and lively. Not everyone will be comfortable with jumping around, singing and dancing for an hour but it will certainly make you more likable if you are able to act silly in class. Kindergartens tend to respond extremely well to TPR (Total Physical Response) based activities whereby they produce the language through physical actions. If you are teaching animals, have the students doing the actions and noises, when teaching them feelings; have them performing the emotion etc.

Short, sharp games and activities: The best way to keep your kids' attention and save time dealing with bored students is to keep things moving all the time. When planning your lessons, start off by introducing your grammar point or vocabulary then run through a series of 5-10 minute games and ALWAYS have back up plans. When you see students losing focus, move onto the next activity. Change the environment: mix up your classroom setting often to steer them away from boredom. Get them on their feet, swap the seating plan and sit them in a circle on the floor. Don't be afraid to use your teaching assistant: younger learners will struggle more than anyone to grasp your meaning in English. To save time and tears of despair, translate the commands and tasks to them before you start playing. Use gimmicks: any small change or new object that you bring into class will feel like a completely new adventure to your young students.



Surprise them by bringing in a simple gimmick to use in your activities such as a ball, a dice, a puppet or some pictures. Reward them: sweets/candy obviously gives young children an incentive to learn but without this kind of luxury you can easily keep them eager by giving them other kinds of rewards. A high-five or pat on the back after a successful activity and at the end of class will make them feel like they have achieved something, as will the opportunity to do some drawing or coloring activities during the lesson. The most effective songs for kindergarten children are about animals and parts of the body.

Such songs can be sung by the teacher as well as the kids and involves moving and interacting, which is always a fun way of learning especially for kinesthetic learners. A pre-task could be that the teacher talks about the song and asks her pupils if they have heard it before. After that, they can go through the body parts orally with the movements. The task itself involves singing the song in the second language for the children and then asking them to stand up and sing along. Since most of the children will already know the melody of the song, it is ideal for singing together. A post-listening activity could be that the teacher shows the pupils pictures of each body part, one at a time and the pupils have to raise their hand to say what body part is being displayed. Since the song only teaches eight body parts, this subject has to be taught again where the teacher includes other body parts such as arms, legs stomach or back. After that, the teacher can move on to clothes and connect them with each body part so that the pupils will not forget what they already learned.

There are numerous things that can be taught to young children through songs that will remain with them throughout their lives and there are songs to be found about most elementary concepts like letters, numbers, colors, weekdays, months, seasons, body parts and clothes that will make the lessons full of life and excitement.

Children usually learn the alphabet from an early age and since almost every child knows how to sing their ABCs in their native language it is ideal to teach it in the target language as well. During pre-listening activities, the teacher can go through the alphabet on the blackboard with his students to get them used to hearing the right pronunciations of each letter. The assignment itself could be that the teacher plays a simple version of the alphabet song for the class where the letters are displayed one by one on the screen or the board. Playing the song twice will make it more effective because many of the children will be hearing it in the target language for the first time.

Teaching numbers through music is also a fun way for young children to learn. Most children already know how to count in their first language and quite a few will even know how to count in the target

language as well. An ideal pre-task would be for the teacher to draw each number from 1-12 on the board in numbers. The teacher will then tell his students about the song that they will be hearing to get them prepared for the main assignment. It is important to teach numbers from 1-12 because it will make it easier for the students to learn about the time as well as the months later on since there are twelve hours in a day and twelve months in a year.

One of the great moments in the foreign language classroom is when a child makes a joke. The child who insisted with a grin that he had 'one and half (sic) brothers and when questioned about the half by the puzzled teacher, said, 'Very small' (showing baby size with his hands), had broken through a crucial barrier. He had made the language his, a tool for what he wanted to say. He was using half-known bits of the language to give shape to the thoughts going through his mind. We have heard a great deal about authenticity. This is the greatest authenticity of them all. This small and apparently trivial incident encapsulates what we are trying to achieve [2, 167]. We want our learners to want to and dare to use the language for their own purposes. We want them to use it accurately if possible, inaccurately if necessary, but above all we want them to make it theirs.

Primary language work, in contrast, can give emphasis to the attitude goals. It should not lose sight of the content goals but should at the same time give clear priority to promoting the attitudes and responses mentioned above, i.e. confidence, willingness to 'have a go', risk taking. At primary school we have more freedom to do this because most of us are not yet too tightly constrained by the content focus of the public examinations system. It can also be argued that we have a responsibility to give high priority to the attitude goals at primary level [2, 190]. After all, if we do not establish risk taking, confidence and general goodwill towards language learning at this early stage, our colleagues at secondary level will have a very difficult task ahead of them. In all subjects, of course, not just in foreign languages, the learners' response to the work is central to their later progress. In languages, however, this aspect is particularly crucial. This is because of the special nature of language.

There are plenty of classroom activities which provide an extremely useful combination of real communication and quite deliberate rehearsal of a clearly identified set of fairly restricted material [1, 213]. They can involve any of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, but their biggest contribution at primary level is probably in the field of spoken interaction between children. Because the range of language items can be limited without destroying the element of real communication, the teacher can leave the children talking to each other without fear that the need to



communicate will lead them to lapse totally into the mother tongue. That is why so-called 'information gap' activities continue to be so popular in the language classroom. Look at the following example. It is a 'describe and arrange' activity.

Children at the age of 6 and 8 are very sensitive and interested in active games in language acquisition. They are very enthusiastic about learning something new and they acquire it by practicing it physically and visually. Children at this age are keen on being told short stories and fairy tales of which we can take the advantage in teaching a second language. Young children, especially at the age of 6 or 7 are not very good at writing and reading in a foreign language but they are very good listeners – they love drawing, they like acting out fairy tale heroes by imitating them. We must take these factors into consideration while planning a lesson for young learners – we must use communicative and total physical response approach techniques to have a better result.

Almost all communicative methods are appropriate for the “before, while and post activities” in regards of music in class.

Motivation is the key to success of any classroom activity. The teacher should try to use authentic materials, make tasks life – related. The psychological atmosphere in class is also very important in reaching the desirable effect of the activity. The teacher should try to make the teaching student – centred. He should more be the leader of the team than authoritarian supervisor. Don't forget to praise your students.

Modern information technologies give teacher a great variety of tasks and the teacher can easily choose the appropriate song for the appropriate topic.

All of the mentioned above activities and can confidently say that music really works and gives positive results if used correctly. The teacher should take into consideration the following items: the choice of song by the topic, vocabulary, authenticity; study of lyric and vocabulary; sing aloud; let the young learners improvise; review the material. Gradually every teacher adjusts himself to the needs of his students, masters his or her proficiency and finally becomes a real professional in teaching trade.

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