

The Role of Songs in Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Learners

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Abstract:

This article is devoted to the role of songs in teaching foreign languages to young learners. It is fundamentally essential for children to learn English from a young age in this rapidly globalizing world. English knowledge will help to open many opportunities for them in the future and it will be invaluable in their future careers. However, teaching English to children is not an easy job. But it is also not difficult, if we already know how to do it. Many teaching positions involve teaching children - a unique experience that is both challenging and fun. Compared to adults, children are more energetic, have shorter attention spans, and learn language according to specific stages of development; these present planning challenges for the teacher. The key to teaching English to children is to understand the principles of language acquisition and apply it in ways that keep children motivated to learn. Children's world is playing and imitating. The present paper deals with the following subjects: what are the principles of teaching English to children, what are the characteristics of a language teacher, why do we teach children a foreign language, teachers social and psychological preparation, the emotional and physical aspects of young learners, the teachers main roles in class and finally some practical tips and teaching techniques for beginner teachers of English language.

Key words: Teaching approaches, teaching techniques, Total Physical Response, scaffolding, giving feedback, visual aids, coherence, teach teaching methods, creativity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to young learners is a rapidly growing field around the world, and English education is increasingly found at the primary levels. The main goal of teaching young learners is to encourage children to use the target language in their life. It means developing their communicative skills, competency and culture. Therefore, at the lessons of foreign languages the teachers should

use some strategies which encourage pupils to be active participants of the lessons, to develop their communicative skills, to form their interest and motivation to study the language. Different effective innovative ways of teaching English to young learners are being used, such as playing English games, watching English cartoons or interesting TV programs in order to encourage pupils to use English in real communication. While communicative activities are in progress, the teacher no longer “teaches”, she organizes, sets up activities and “monitors” her pupils using different interaction patterns. Thus, knowing the abilities and capabilities of the children of different ages is of vital importance to teach them effectively and one of the most essential ways of teaching young learners is using songs in teaching process.

2. METHOD

Teaching English with songs is a brilliant idea because music is a global language. Songs are a very effective means of learning English for young learners who are between 5-9 years old. Songs tend to be repetitive and have a strong rhythm. They help learners memorize the vocabulary or structures very easily although they do not know how to read or write. Melody, rhythm and harmony go far beyond linguistic obstacles and can be accepted by any individual.

3. RESULTS

Songs are easily learnt by primary children and quickly become favorites because of their familiarity. At primary level, vocabulary teaching tends to concentrate on single word items, and songs allow learners to learn ‘chunks’ or meaningful phrases of language rather than single words, as well as to learn about how sounds connect and run together. They allow language to be reinforced in a natural context, both with structures and vocabulary. All songs build confidence in young learners and even shy children will enjoy singing or acting out a song as part of a group or whole class. This also develops a sense of class identity. Many songs can help develop memory and concentration, as well as physical coordination, for example when doing the actions for a song. For the teacher, songs can be a wonderful starting point for a topic and can fit in well with topics, skills, language and cross-curricular work.

4. ANALYSES

We know that young learners are energetic; most of them are kinaesthetic and tactile and that’s why they like to move and act out by singing the song, in addition teaching through songs will be more interesting and effective because the learners will not just repeat the new words, they will memorize them in a new and creative way. Kinaesthetic and tactile learners can benefit from actions added to the songs; work with the melody, rhythm and lyrics to provide actions that will help these learners absorb knowledge in a way that makes the most sense to them. Auditory learners easily learn from songs - the rhythm and phrasing provide the perfect vehicle for teaching vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as delivering the words in context. Visual learners can be aided by story pictures or vocabulary flashcards relating to the song, as well as by watching the other learners and joining in on the actions that match the different words.

Songs are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value and it can be used in the classroom to make learners use the language instead of just thinking about learning the correct forms.

Songs are used for three purposes:

- to warm up the class at the beginning of the lesson (“Good morning”, “Hello”)
- to practice language or a structure which is being studied in the lesson
- to recycle the learnt material

Some songs lend themselves naturally to teaching or reinforcing grammar points. They may be integrated into lessons with a particular grammar focus and provide much-needed variety, while contributing to the overall aim of a lesson. Particularly at lower levels when children are still learning basic key grammar patterns, songs can play a role as input, because when learners sing they do the action. This combination of singing and doing actions really helps stimulate the memory of the child. Research into child language acquisition has shown that lexical items may need to be repeated many times before they are internalized by the child. Songs provide an excellent means of repeating and reinforcing vocabulary and are suitable for children of all abilities. Young learners may accomplish a great number of achievements through the songs in foreign language, including following aspects:

- analyzing the rhythm, pitch contour and imitate the native speakers
- learning new words through the songs
- learning grammar and examine the tenses used in the songs
- learning speaking.

DISCUSSION

According to methodologists songs have a place in the classroom for helping create that friendly and co-operative atmosphere, and it is obvious that children not only improve their language skills, but also their cultural views. While listening, the pupil improves his both listening and speaking skills as what he hears gets stuck in his mind and he automatically gets used to language. Not only this, songs are beneficial for physical development of children as they move, dance, clap and jump. All these movements strengthen the memory, which enables the young learners to listen to patterns of the language as they sing and use the song several times. So, the role of songs is great in improving young learners' speaking skills, as they help:

- to enrich pupils' vocabulary;
- to improve their listening, thinking and speaking skills;
- to open their unknown features (talent);
- to create an unusual and friendly atmosphere in the class;
- to revise the new words by singing.
- But there are some disadvantages in the process of using songs:
- Sometimes pupils cannot catch the main meaning of the song;
- It takes a lot of time and teachers won't be able to do everything that they planned beforehand;
- Sometimes there can be a productive noise.

But anyway we consider that songs are the best and most beneficial ways of teaching English to young learners as it is an easy way to attract their attention, in addition with songs children can get more interested in learning English.

In conclusion we can say that songs are fun and motivating, because pupils enjoy singing along and it can really improve not only motivation, but also the pronunciation and intonation patterns.

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