

Methods of teaching English to young learners

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Annotation: This article is devoted to techniques of teaching English to young learners. Young learners' interests and their age should be taken into consideration when choosing teaching strategies. More activities could be used for the purpose of the lesson more fascinating and exciting. The teachers' techniques in teaching English to young learners were singing a song, games, presentation practice and production, drilling, demonstration, story-telling, reading aloud, and dictation. The best teaching techniques implemented by the teachers were playing games, demonstration and presentation practice and production.

Keywords: Young learners, teachers' techniques, activities, teaching English, resources.

Young learners' is a term that is used to refer to children from their first year of formal schooling (usually somewhere between 5-7 years old) to when they are 11-12 years old, or to when they move on from primary to secondary school. They enjoy learning through playing. Young learners learn best when they learn through games. They will be enthusiastic if they are taught using fun activities or being involved in activities, love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves.

Techniques of teaching English to young learners Considering young learners' characteristics in the previous section, experts suggest interesting techniques to teach them English. Some of them are through storytelling, drama, songs, and games.

1. Storytelling

Storytelling is a technique of teaching English to young learners where the teacher tells a story using a story book or picture book or puppets. There are some reasons for using storytelling to teach young learners: (1) helping children master the rhythm and sounds of the language, (2) helping children master the vocabulary and grammar of the language, (3) helping children practice Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills, (4) helping children learn about the world through picture books, (5) helping develop children's imagination, and (6) helping children deal with their feelings, so they can accept their own feelings and understanding other people's feeling.

2 Playing games

Game are any fun activities that give young learners chances to practice English. One of the ways to make students actively participate in classroom is playing games. It helps:

- arousing students' interest and motivation in participating in the lesson.
- giving students a chance to communicate meaningfully.
- making students feel less anxious as they play games with only some of their friends.
- forming students' basic skills in using the Target Language (TL).

- building a learning spirit as student

Game example:

Twenty Questions

This game is a really popular game, once young learners know what to do. You choose one student to sit at the front of the class and show them one vocabulary (preferably one for review) and the other students must ask the student at the front of the class closed questions (“Do you ...?” “Are you ...?” “Can you ...?”). The students have only 20 questions to ask the student and the only reply the student can say is “Yes” or “No”. Students must calculate the word that the person has. If students guess the correct word, then they get a point. If they don’t know the word, then the person sitting gains a point. You could make this activity more competitive by putting students into teams. The team to guess the word correctly, gets a point.

3 Repeat previous lessons in every class

Assuming the average class duration is only an hour or less, that leaves a whole lot of time in the day to forget everything a student just learned. Children won’t retain as much information as adults, so repetition is key in English for young learners.

Rather than calling case closed at the end of a lesson and moving on after a test, be sure to pack every class with tons of repetition from lessons before. This also helps students to use vocabulary and grammar points all together, rather than depend on the same example sentences and templates they learn isolated in each lesson.

4 Use the mother tongue when needed.

While the goal of teaching young learners is to use as much English in class as possible, when teaching homogeneous classes, it is quite appropriate to use the mother tongue when necessary to explain the meaning of words and expressions and to help explain activities. Occasional use of the mother tongue provides a comfort zone for young learners, though the teacher and students should not become over-dependent on it.

5 Involve students in creating resources that support their learning.

Learners can draw pictures of the characters they hear in a story or create puppets to help retell a story. They can colour pictures of items and characters from stories. They can find pictures in magazines, related to a theme or topic in a lesson, and bring them to class. In my Quebec primary classes mentioned earlier, we did not use a textbook. The children created their own course-book, as the course developed, using the resources that formed the basis of the course.

6. Set Up Routines

It is important for any young learner class to develop routines for the benefit of the students. It will make the delivering of lessons easier and students will feel at ease. There are a couple of things which will help you keep control of the classroom if you incorporate them into your routines. Here are some ideas to include throughout the lesson as part of a routine.

Before letting students into class, they could line up quietly outside the class. When you let them enter the class, you could say hello to the student and ask a question such as “What did you do last night?” This will get students into English.

Once students enter the class, they must put their coat away and their bag under their chair, find their name on the desk and sit down quietly. This takes a bit of training but before you know it the students will be doing this automatically.

Start the lesson with a vocabulary review from the day before for five minutes. You could have a game or competitive activity (back to the board, picture and flashcard matching task, etc.)

Conclusion

Those techniques are effective to be implemented in teaching English to young learners because they can help the students to have a good English learning experience. Those strategies are worthy for teachers conducting a learning process that is fun and suitable for young learners. Moreover, it is better for the teacher to create other creative teaching strategies (such as in-pair activity, group activity, and outdoor activity) so that the students as young learners are more engaged in the learning process. Tedious lessons should be skipped and interactive ones should be set that will both raise young learners' mood and enhance their language performances. To strengthen the taught lessons teachers can opt for activities rather than just questioning. One thing is sure, even adults till like being educated with the practice of games and activities.

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