

TEACHING VOCABULARY TO CHILDREN THROUGH KINESTHETIC ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

In order to develop teaching foreign language in classroom, previous researches demonstrated how learning styles have influenced the effectiveness of teaching students. Also, this study aims to add a positive change in classroom teaching with versatile useful activities. The information portrays that the majority of the children are kinesthetic learners. It is suggested that in order to enhance learning vocabulary and encouraging children to be active in class, their learning styles must be taken into consideration.

Keywords: foreign languages, learning styles, strategies, classroom, kinesthetic learners.

According to researches, every child has a certain way of learning. Howard Gardner outlined seven different learning styles: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and linguistic and logical-mathematical¹. Some students learn new vocabulary by seeing picture or listening to the explanation of new word in their target language while others learn by touching and moving. J. Perrin claims “Many young children appear to be essentially tactual or kinesthetic learners”². The word kinesthetic refers to the ability to sense body position and movement. This means

¹ G. Howard. 1983. “The idea of Multiple Intelligence”. New York: Basic Books

² J. Perrin. 2010. “Teaching young children through their Individual learning styles”. Practical approaches for grades K2 Boston: Allyn and Bacon

that in order to understand something, a person need to touch it, feel it and move it around. Gardner claims that kinesthetic learning is related to the solution of problems by using physical movement; children who have the ability to learn through this learning style, connect their mental abilities in order to coordinate their physical movements³. It includes activities such as simulations, case analysis, practice and utilization, and the use of materials connected to the reality. The methodology emphasizes on “body as a learning instrument” and its approach given for language teaching purposes, leading innovate activities to be used with young learners and providing opportunities for the development of all learning kinesthetic style and consequently learners might feel encouraged to take active in classes. Kinesthetic learners learn better when they move, the more they act, the more they can focus and learn vocabulary quickly. Teachers will be successful if they use different methods and activities to make children active during the classes. Luz Marlen Duran whose work sets around students’ perception channels for foreign language learning emphasizes on the body motion development as an essential requirement to learn a foreign language, generating a great stimuli for brain activity⁴.

There are some effective teaching methods for teachers to organize their lessons effectively:

1. Allow children to stand, bounce their legs during classes. That improves their activity in classroom.
2. Offer various methods, such as paired work, group work, experiments and plays
3. Plan several different activities throughout each class in order to be mindful of all your students’ learning ways.
4. After every 30 minutes of classes, pause the lesson and make the children do something energetic.

³ G.Horward. 1983. “The idea of Multiple Intelligence”. New York: Basic Books

⁴ L.M. Duran. 2006. “Kinesthetic Activities to Teach Vocabulary: Integrating Kinesthetic activities and EFL vocabulary for early aged students’ involvement in class” 15

5. In order to teach children new vocabulary by a kinesthetic method, it is important to prepare some flashcards and bring into account the material that they can learn by touching such as puppets, flashcards, paint etc.

Vocabulary teaching should be started by showing drawings, pictures, mimics and the lesson must focus in the practice of new vocabulary to make children think about word meaning in their target language.

When young learners are taught emotion adjectives like happy, sad, angry, they respond by making the corresponding facial expressions. Additionally, drawing and painting are also efficient ways of learning vocabulary in a short period of time. When children are taught new words about vegetables and fruits, it is an interesting activity to draw and paint them. While this activity, children are asked to use the words that they have already learnt like colors and adjectives related to the vegetables and fruits. Klimova argued that the use of visual materials such as posters, flashcards and videos combined with activities in which students need to use body movements facilitate students' retention of vocabulary⁵. Using colorful videos of new vocabulary helps children to learn easily. For example, in the sessions in which teachers introduce words of body parts, they can play a video called “Head, shoulders and toes” which shows some animated animals that dance and point to each body part. Children follow the movements presenting during the video, and also, they try to repeat the vocabulary words. It is recommended that students and teachers collaborate on the ‘acting’ depiction for each word. Using mimics to describe the meaning of a word is also very useful and interesting way for children to memorize vocabulary quickly. Agoestyowati argues that the use of game in learning environment will not only change to dynamic of the class, but it will also rejuvenate students and help their brain to learn more effectively⁶. Similarly, organizing role-play related to the new words in a group gives the children great enthusiasm to learn more vocabulary. According to Carol Livingstone role-play is a classroom activity which gives the students opportunity to

⁵ B. Klimova. 2013. “Teaching English to pre-school children”. Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences.

⁶ Agoestyowati. 2007. “102 English games” (From A to Z). Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

practice the language, the aspect of role behavior and the actual roles he may need outside the classroom⁷.

The activities related to kinesthetic learning style is the key to have a positive impact on children’s learning process. The use of games helps teachers to achieve their aims and also to make tasks authentic. As most of children are considered to be active, teachers can succeed in teaching by using different interactive methods as well as activities that make children move. Furthermore, teaching by kinesthetic activities helps children to learn new word easily and to increase their interest for the language.

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⁷ C. Livingstone. 1983. “The use of role playing technique in improving students’ vocabulary mastery”