

USING STORIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of writing this article to identify how is useful stories to teach young learners because they are interested in fiction and non fiction events that’s why teachers definitely can use different little stories to improve reading and speaking skills.

Key words: Formal schooling, special language program, grammatical categories, singing songs, saying rhymes, fiction, physical world, paradox, atmosphere.

Young learners are children from the first year of formal schooling to eleven or twelve years of age. They are relatively mature children with both adult and childish features. I would like to concentrate on young learners of eight and nine years of age. These learners have attended the third year of a special language programme. They can write and read in their first language but they do not have enough knowledge about grammar and grammatical categories. They are not competent to work with language as a tool although they can use it in everyday life. They are able to listen to a text and say what it is about. They still like playing games, singing songs, saying rhymes and introducing their own thoughts and ideas. The following list shows general characteristics and language development of a young learner according to Wendy and Ytreberg (1990, p. 3)

- They can tell the difference between fact and fiction.
- Their basic concepts are formed. They have very decided views of the world.
- They ask questions all the time.
- They rely on the spoken word as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning.
- They are able to make some decisions about their own learning.
- They have definite views about what they like and do not like doing.
- They have a developed sense of fairness about what happens in the classroom and begin to question the teacher’s decisions.
- They are able to work with others and learn from others. Language development:
 - They understand abstracts
 - They understand symbols (beginning with words)
 - They generalize and systematize.

Young children learning languages We can learn a lot from how little babies acquire their first language. As Brumfit, Moon and Tongue claim: “An intriguing paradox in the development of young children is their ability to establish their first language at a time when they are unable to understand anything about the system which they come to use with such competence. From experiences of learning other languages at later ages there is much that indicates that learning a language is not easy. Yet young children the world over persist and make progress even though it later appears to be difficult. The fact that young children learn their first language such speed and competence must mean that if the process can be better understood, it should be possible to design methods through which children learn a second language in much the same way as they learn their first language”. (Teaching Eng. to Children, 1991, p.213) Babies learn through voice, gestures, speaker’s face and tone of the voice and they perceive an atmosphere around them. Then they observe the world they live in and try to give things some titles. At first children operate with concrete words and later then they develop their abstract thinking and try to use abstract words in their speech. The more concrete the words are the more children learn. They need many real things, pictures and associations to create a second language. According to my experience they learn very quickly when they can play with real things or are able to imagine situations or actions. The best way is observing new language through real actions which are motivating for them in a right way. They do not like being taught in a directive way they enjoy active involvement.

How can children be helped to learn a foreign language?

In “Teaching Engl. to Children” (1991, p. 7) Brumfit, Moon and Tongue say: “It is not surprising to note that a child’s concentration span increases as he/she grows older. Children cannot concentrate on one thing for a long period and therefore the authors recommend that lessons should be divided into a series of activities lasting no longer than five or ten minutes. This is because children are bombarded with new experiences and information. Teachers should introduce a reasonable number of new language items and present and practise them in a number of different ways. I definitely agree with this theory. Children who are tired after their school work are not able to concentrate on my after-school language course very much and I must plan my lessons carefully and then be creative during them and change prepared ones according to the pupils’ mood. A teacher should recognize that an activity is not good in a very short time and must be prepared to change it.

Using a story in English teaching

According to the above mentioned theory and my experience I will take a story as a suitable resource for teaching and learning a foreign language. A story is something that everybody is familiar with, a majority of people used to listen to stories and like

them very much. Children want to enjoy a character's adventures and like to distinguish between good and evil. Having worked with children's stories I have made my own theory. Although I work with children who are involved in learning English very much, it is very important to choose a suitable level for a certain class. They study English as their hobby and this is why they are very involved. They want to learn and I have freedom to create lessons in my way. Stories give me many opportunities for practising everything children have learnt.

In The Storytelling Handbook (Ellis and Brewster, 1991, p.1) state:

- Stories are motivating and fun; they create a deep interest and a desire to continue learning.
- Listening to stories is a shared social experience; it provokes a shared response of laughter, sadness, excitement and anticipation.
- Stories exercise the imagination; children can become personally involved in a story as they identify with the characters and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations.
- Stories are a useful tool in linking fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world; they provide a way of enabling children to make sense of their everyday life.
- Listening to stories allows the teacher to introduce or revise new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing the children to language.
- Stories help students of all levels to understand literature, they carry ideological messages.
- Children books offer universal truths, moral appeals to one generation after another

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