SELECTING TEACHING APPROACHES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated different theories and approaches in teaching foreign languages. The most outstanding that psychologist like J.Piaget, M.Montessori, L.Vygotsky and Elconin pointed that language acquisition at age of 7 -12 depends on children language learning environment and using suitable methods of teaching to this ages. Teachers must systematically consider their learning goals and their pupils, the subject matter they want pupils to learn, and select pedagogical strategies that will enable pupil learning. Storytelling has been widely examined and practiced by several teaching scholars and were given examples of the advantages of using storytelling in language teaching.

Keywords: Theory, young learners, comprehension, environment, average child, 5 senses, zone of proximal development, storytelling approach, scaffolded.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Nowadays you may see that great attention is being paid to young generation`s education with latest reforms in education system and other fields social life in Uzbekistan. Concrete educational system that can be appropriate for world standards was created. The branches of foreign well-known universities (Westminster University, Korean institution named after INHA, MDIS in Tashkent, and Polytechnic University of Turin) were established by the President of Uzbekistan to exchange scientific and educational experience and methods with high developed countries.

Great attention is being paid for learning and teaching the English language as it is considered to be most important means of communication in the world. Nowadays English is common communicative system that gives us opportunity to speak, share ideas or inform our scientific researches to anyone around the world. If you know this language, you can easily communicate with half of the population of the world.

Educational Standard of the republic of Uzbekistan points that the primary goal of education is «development of the multilingual personality with the basic national and world cultural values, ready for socio-cultural interaction and self-realization» along with «building up communicative competence on the basis of state and other socially important languages acquisition».(SES, 2013)

Thus, the schooling system faces the task of presenting new approaches to learning, guiding children to such ways of thinking and interacting, that would be useful in solving any problem arising in front of them at any age.

Recent analyses of the system of organization of learning foreign languages revealed that educational standards, curricula and textbooks did not fully meet modern requirements, especially in the use of achievements of foreign language teaching methodology, IT and media

technologies. This situation led to the issue of the presidential decree No. 1875 on December 10, 2012 On Measures of Further Improving the System of Learning Foreign Languages, which clearly outlined the further aims and tasks of reforming the system of learning foreign languages. One of the first steps that have been taken after the decree, in order to implement the reforms, was designing and adoption of a new national educational standard for continuing education system (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2013) which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001).

According to the new standard teaching foreign languages in schools begins in the first grade of the primary schools, when children are at the age of 6-7. And by the end of primary stage (grades 1-4) of education pupils have to achieve A1 level according to the national curriculum and CEFR.

Introduction of English language teaching in primary education around the world, including in Uzbekistan, is described by Johnstone as "the world's biggest policy development in education" (in Copland, Garton, and Burns, 2014, p738). There are several reasons for this. First, it is better to begin learning foreign languages as early as possible (Copland, Garton and Burns, 2014). Second, wide use of English in the process of globalization and integration of market economies, workforce with English language skills considered to be an advantage.

Most of the pupils in primary schools are monolingual learners with few or no previous experience of learning foreign languages, as most of the kindergartens and nursery schools do not provide foreign languages instruction. Average class size of first graders in Uzbek schools is 28 to 30 pupils and English language classes are conducted by dividing the class into two small groups of 14 to 15 pupils. According to the results of recent research conducted by Blatchford (2007), class size has a great impact on the efficiency of teaching English to YL of 7 to 11 age group. As Blatchford (2007, p168) points out that small class size provides individualized teaching, makes it easier to control the classroom, and allows more time for marking, assessments and planning, and less teacher stress.

Observations shows that there is a misunderstanding in defining the term "young learners" yet. The following definition was suggested by the Slatterly, M., & Willis, J. (2001). English for primary teachers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

VYLs (under 7)	YLs (7-12)
- acquire through hearing and experiencing lots of English, in much the same way they acquire L1 - learn things through playing; they are not consciously trying to learn new words or phrases – for them it's incidental - love playing with language sounds, imitating, and making funny noises - are not able to organize their learning - not able to read or write in L1; important to recycle language through talk and play - their grammar will develop gradually on its own when exposed to lots of English in context	- are learning to read and write in L1 - are developing as thinkers - understand the difference between the real and the imaginary - can plan and organize how best to carry out an activity - can work with others and learn from others - can be reliable and take responsibility for class activities and routines

Although it is hard to prove the superiority of young learners in learning a foreign language (Cook, 2008), a lot of researches show that age plays a crucial role in the effective learning of languages. In regards to the question of how a child's imagination differs from an adult's, we may marked the following theorists views:

J. Piaget developed the concept of discovery learning. His theories broke from traditional methods and theories of teaching and formed the backbone of current systems of education in the West. He said that children learn language and concepts through active exploration and by interacting with other children and their environment. He also said that children develop differently and learn new things when they are ready to do so. In other words, there is no 'average child' and no fixed process of learning. He said that education systems should therefore allow for children to learn at their own pace and encourage learning without teachers being the centre of this process.

Piaget's model, which focuses on how children acquire the ability to think, has both good and bad points. Piaget shows the four main stages of cognitive development, he doesn't consider some important factors, such as children learn at different rates, learning disabilities, his theories based on a small number of children, both under and over estimates children's cognitive abilities, he doesn't consider that with adult support, children can be developed to progress to higher level thinking skills, he doesn't consider the quality of a child's informal and formal education.

Around the same time as Piaget, **Montessori** was also developing her own curriculum based on same theories as Piaget. Like Piaget, she recognized that children take responsibility for their own learning and develop their learning process at different stages. She started her own school to encourage this style of learning at the beginning of the 20th century. Today there are a lot of Montessori schools around the world. They are set up to allow children to actively explore and discover new things from each other, independently and from the environment encouraging the use of all 5 senses. Teachers are not central to activities and there are no white boards in use. All children are put together and are not grouped by age, sex or level. She concluded that children naturally respond to an authority figure as this is their reality outside the classroom.

The Montessori philosophy encourages pupils to develop their "soft skills," the unquantifiable life skills such as responsibility, fairness, independence, adaptability and positivity. Montessori educators believe that allowing children to determine the ways they spend their time in the classroom helps train them to be self-disciplined later in life. Studies show that Montessori nursery pupils do have superior soft skills to those of other children their age, displaying better behavior and greater willingness to cooperate and collaborate with their peers.

But some parents worry that Montessori schools don't prepare children for public school. Critics of the Montessori system believe that pupils need testing, grades and homework to teach them discipline and to measure their progress. Some parents also worry that their children will not transition well to more competitive environments later in life. The program deliberately lacks structure, which may not be an ideal fit for all children; some young children function better with more instruction. Also, like many private nursery schools and preschools, Montessori schools can be expensive, which may make the program infeasible for some families.

L. Vygotsky's research also showed that children learn better from more competent partners. He developed the concept, 'zone of proximal development', which describes the gap between what a learner can do alone and what he is able to achieve with help and guidance.

A child therefore learns better if he is guided or 'scaffolded' rather than left to his own devices. The ideal environment for learning would therefore be one where children are placed in small groups of mixed ability within a classroom so that weaker individuals can learn from stronger individuals. The teacher is not central to activities but should move around the classroom to give guided discovery. He/She should demonstrate and assist children in finding out and trying by themselves. Children should be actively involved in activities which allow them to learn and discover something new.

Next important aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the role of games. According to this perspective teachers need to provide children, especially young children, many opportunities to play. Through game, and imagination a child's conceptual abilities are stretched. Vygotsky argued that game leads to development. "While imitating their elders in culturally patterned activities, children generate opportunities for intellectual development. Initially, their games are recollections and reenactments of real situations; but through the dynamics of their imagination and recognition of implicit rules governing the activities they have reproduced in their games, children achieve an elementary mastery of abstract thought." (Cole, 1978).

Sociocultural theories describe learning and development as being embedded within social even ts and occurring as a learner interacts with other people, objects, and events in the collaborative environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

Since language holds a central role in Vygotsky's theory, and is essential to the development of thinking, the school needs to provide many opportunities that allow children to reach the third stage of speech, which is inner speech, since it is this stage which is responsible for all higher levels of functioning.

There are several criticisms to the Vygotsky approach. They are as follows:

 1. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is unclear in that it does not account for a precise picture of a child's learning needs, a child's present capability level, or a child's motivational influences. The ZPD also does not explain the process of development or how development actually occurs (Chaiklin, 2003, pp. 42-46).

2. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory disregards the role of the individual, but regards the collective. Vygotsky asserted that the mind is not considered separate from the group. That is, Vygotsky maintained that knowing is relative to the situation in which the knowers find themselves. In turn, the theory does not recognize that individuals can rise above social norms based on their ability to bring about personal understanding (Lui & Matthews, 2005, p. 392). Such individuals would include gifted pupils or child prodigies.

3. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory does not seem to apply to all social and cultural groups. That is, social groups may not be whole and equal with all learners being able to gain the same meaning from engagement. However, collaboration and participation vary from one learner to another, hence the inequality for each learner. As well, there are differences in skill set for each learner, which produces learning constraints. Learners with learning disabilities or learning difficulties, for example, might not (be able to) take away the same meaning from group interactions as those learners without learning disabilities or learning difficulties (Lui & Matthews, 2005, p. 392).

4. Regarding the development of play, Vygotsky believed that the ability to adhere to rules is the key capacity for school preparedness, not the ability to imagine. However, engagement in play – that has implicit, internalized rules that can be negotiated among the players – requires

a greater level of cognitive, social, and verbal functioning than following explicit, external, and immutable rules. Furthermore, the use of the imagination in make-believe play is at a greater cognitive level (involving more complex and deeper thinking over a longer period of time) than the imagination used during rule-based play such as games and sports. Overall, regarding the development of play, rules governed Vygotsky's argument, whereas the role of the imagination did not (Saifer, 2010, p. 40).

Elkonin was a pupil of Vygotsky's who summarized his teacher's work on play in his book, "Psychology of Play" (2005), published in Russian in 1978. Elkonin's (2005) main argument is that Soviet psychology crystallized an approach in which play is described as an activity performed by the child that embodies the child's relationship to the external world and to social reality. Vygotsky's (1987, 2004) claim is a rebuttal to those theories of play that position imagination and realistic thinking in opposition to one another. Elkonin (2005) states that the play theory of Vygotsky and his pupils, through the realization that imagination and realistic thinking act as a unity in the processes of invention and creativity, overcomes the naturalistic and psychoanalytic theories of children's play[2]. As stated above, Lindqvist (1995, 2001a, 2003) agrees with Elkonin concerning the importance of Vygotsky's (1987, 2004) claim that imagination and realistic thinking act as a unity in the processes of invention and creativity, but argues that Elkonin did not sufficiently focus on Vygotsky's assertion that children's play is a creative cultural manifestation in humans[3].

Just as pupils cannot learn football only by listening the how coach tells about it, they cannot learn history, languages, literature, and other academic disciplines only by listening to him. They need to do the same work that scholars in these sphere do—piecing together evidence, understanding the leaps necessary to make inferences, noting when they have to rely on their own theories of human behavior. Experiences such as these help pupils develop a critical eye, enabling them to become consumers and users of knowledge. Part of this process involves testing ideas out in public with peers. But to do so, pupils—like mathematicians or historians—will need to learn how to present and discuss their ideas with others in intellectually productive ways.

Teachers often have their pupils consider a hypothetical episode, making explicit various possible responses. Then the players might think through various responses and consequences. In the same way, a teacher might lead a discussion in which pupils speculate on alternative interpretations of a particular piece of literary or historical text (Hartoonian-Gordon 1991; Wineburg 2001). This type of discussion is one example of how teachers might make visible to learners not only what is to be known but also how one comes to know it as a literary scholar or historian.

In addition to helping pupils learn through doing and structuring classroom discourse, coaches must do even more. A coach needs to know each player's individual talents and craft team strategies that take advantage of those talents. Central to the task is helping all players accept the value of individual differences. According to this sample of teaching, the ideal classroom will no longer be one in which 30 pupils are always listening to the teacher or silently working. Part of learning would still involve lecture, drill, and practice, for some basic knowledge must be routinized so that it will inform interpretation and debate. However, pupils would also work in alternative arrangements—small and large groups—talking to each other, making public their personal knowledge and beliefs, constructing and testing their knowledge with peers and teachers. To help them, teachers would have to understand when and how to use different pedagogical approaches. To argue for a more varied, eclectic range of teaching methods is not

to say, "anything goes." Rather, contemporary learning and teaching theorists propose quite the opposite. Teachers must systematically consider their learning goals and their pupils, the subject matter they want pupils to learn, and select pedagogical strategies that will enable pupil learning. Those strategies ought to be selected thoughtfully, varied in their approaches, and refined over time through reflection.

Storytelling is considered one of the most efficient and motivating approaches to teaching young learners, and there are numerous books and articles on the subject by different authors (Nunan 1988; Brumfit et al. 1991; Ellis and Brewster 1991; Wood 1998, Wright 2004 and others). Rokhayani (2010) holds that with meaningful contexts, natural repetition, engaging characters and interesting plots, stories can be used to develop children's language skills, such as listening, using their imagination and predicting. In addition, young learners are always eager to listen to stories, naturally want to understand what is happening in the story and enjoy looking at story books, which increases their motivation to grasp the meaning of new English words, when they start English lessons (Rokhayani 2010).

Storytelling has been widely examined and practiced by several teaching scholars, Andrew Wright, Jean Brewster and Gail Ellis among others. Authors provide many examples of the advantages of using storytelling in language teaching. Ellis and Brewster (1991) give several reasons why teachers should use storytelling in the English classroom:
• Storybooks can enrich the pupils' learning experience. Stories are motivating and fun and can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language.
• Stories exercise the imagination and are a useful tool in linking fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world.
• Listening to stories in class is a shared social experience.
• Children enjoy listening to stories over and over again. This repetition allows language items to be acquired and reinforced.
• Listening to stories develops the child's listening and concentrating skills.
Stories create opportunities for developing continuity in children's learning (among others, school subjects across the curriculum) (Adapted from Ellis and Brewster 1991:1-2). 31 Wright (2004) holds that stories, which rely so much on words, offer a major and constant source of language experience for children. Moreover, he suggests that stories can motivate children, stimulate children's imagination and arouse children's interests, etc.
Wright provides the following reasons for advocating the use of storytelling in the classroom:
1. Stories provide meaningful contexts. Language is used to communicate. When we use storytelling, we are not only using language in the text but also the whole context which brings out the meaning. In stories, children learn the language in a meaningful way. In the teaching and learning process, when the teachers are telling stories while the pupils are listening, they focus on meaning first. Some teachers may present the new language by repeating the stories several times, and they require pupils to listen carefully. They think that the more the teacher repeats the new language, the better the children will remember it, and that in this way, they will learn some single words or some sentences. However, some children complain that it is hard to retain them. They quickly forget the new words or sentences because the new language is not presented in a context. They would probably remember the words if they encounter them in a story.
2. Stories can provide natural repetition. When the pupils read the stories, they tend to pay attention to the key words, and new language can be naturally repeated in stories.
3. Children have another instinct in language learning – picking up chunks.
4. Children's listening skill can be developed. The use of storytelling also enhances pupils' listening skill. While children listen to stories, they try to guess the meaning of the new words

and to grasp the main idea. Thus storytelling develops children's listening skill – seeking details. Some teachers require children to listen carefully when they begin to say the new sentences or words. The result may be that while listening, the children just concentrate on the pronunciation of the words or sentences, but not their meaning or the meaning of a context (Wright 2004:2). Here are some more specific recommended storytelling techniques adapted from Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2004):

a. If pupils are unfamiliar with storytelling, begin with short introduction which do not demand too much time to extend their concentration;

b. Read slowly and clearly. Give the pupils time to relate what they hear to what they see in the pictures, to think, ask questions, make comments. Use different paces when the story speeds up;

c. Make comments about the illustrations and point to them to focus the pupils' attention;

d. Encourage pupils to take part in the storytelling by repeating key vocabulary items and phrases. Teachers can invite pupils to do this by stopping and looking at them with a questioning expression and by putting the hand to the ear to indicate that they are waiting for them to join in, then repeat what they have said to confirm that they have predicted correctly, and if it is necessary, expand by putting the word into a full phrase or sentence;

e. Use gestures, mime, and facial gestures to help convey the meaning;

f. Vary the pace, volume and your voice;

g. Pause where appropriate to add dramatic effect or to give children time to relate what they hear to what they see, and to assimilate details in the illustration;

h. Change your voice for the different characters as much as you can to signal when different characters are speaking and help convey meaning;

i. Ask questions to involve the children;

j. Do not be afraid to repeat, expand and formulate.

CONCLUSION

As James C. Maxwell pointed out - "There is nothing as practical as a good theory." As experienced teachers, we believe that all teachers operate according to theories. Our practice is driven by our "theories" about what will work for our students. Some of those theories are explicit and are learned in school; some are tacit and are the products of years of experience in schools—as teachers, parents, and students. The theories we briefly explore here have enormous potential both for helping teachers explain why they teach in the ways they do and for disturbing those patterns and prompting teachers to rethink their practice. We believe that good teaching requires teachers to create and use, expand and reject, construct and reconstruct theories of learning and teaching. In this way, a story provides the starting point and rich context to develop a wide variety of related language and learning activities involving children creatively and actively in an all-round whole curriculum approach. Besides, the analysis of the stories can be a potential tool to improve more critical awareness towards social relation in the society. Most notably, using a story-telling approach in Uzbekistan may help learners use their imaginations and learn the participants being taught more enthusiastically.

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