

THE MAIN CONCEPTS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN KINDERGARTENS

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ABSTRACT

In this article the problems of teaching and learning foreign languages in kindergartens have been discussed. Furthermore, there are given many methods and suggestions to foreign language teachers in order to obtain their goals in teaching in kindergartens' bright future.

Keywords: English classes in kindergartens, method of instruction, age, aptitude, attitude and motivation, imitate the sounds, mental translation, babies are geniuses, rote-memory and better motor ability, teachers' pronunciation, teaching and training experience.

Teaching and learning English with understandable input: The theory of understandable input is very crucial in language teaching. Many investigators believe that the learners must have equal understandable input before they can speak in a foreign language. I consider the sufficient comprehensible input is especially essential for preschoolers. However, how can sufficient comprehensible input be provided to nursery school children in the class? First and foremost, I believe the English classes must be taught in English, without any suitable language speaking, using a child's first language will find input more understandable. I accept that in order to give young children equal input, the English classes should be taught in English. If English educators can use various teaching aids, gestures and body language, their input can be comprehensible without the first language. On average, the class time for English classes in Uzbekistan's kindergartens is very limited. Accordingly, the whole class should be taught in English. Otherwise, there will only be limited comprehensible input available. Secondly, in order to let children have sufficient comprehensible input, other subjects, such as mathematics, science and art, must be explained in English. The benefit is not only that it supplies more vocabulary, but it also gives an opportunity for natural communication. An English class alone does not frequently make many new words in the sphere of geography and science. If children can adapt subject matter in English, they can adjust it to vocabulary in other subject matter. It aids children communicate better in the future and in achieving on an academic level. Next point is that tape and video are best sources of comprehensible input. They help children to accept comprehensible input after the English course in kindergarten and at home, especially in countries like Uzbekistan where English is a foreign language. Nearly all language tapes on the store are spoken by native English language trainers, therefore they are particularly precious for kindergarten children if their English teachers are nonnative speakers. In kindergartens, the children have a snooze time every afternoon. The kindergarten teacher can select a short time every day, e.g. lunch time, snooze time or other free time, to permit them listen to English tapes. It can also be a revise time for the English class every day. Besides tapes, kindergartens should also propose their children written information, e.g. textbooks, in order to provide background text and visuals to help the aural input understandable. Textbooks are also useful for parents at home to help their children review. Fourth, in order to build children understandable input, visual materials are beneficial in English class, e.g. images, flash cards, true objects, designs and video films.

2. Caretaker language / schoolmaster talk. As mentioned above, facilitative language such as caretaker speech and teacher speech can help children and language learners to comprehend better. In preschool English classes, the English masters can use Total Physical Response and use “schoolmaster talk” to help with descriptions. Furthermore, the pronunciation of the English teacher must be clear and correct. For new vocabulary, the English teacher must repeat each word many times enduringly, as parents or caretakers as they talk to their young children.

3. Reducing emotional strain: reducing or weakening emotional strain is an essential part of language teaching. I consider that an English teacher can reduce children’s emotional strain in class by revealing sympathy to his or her pupils, supplying interesting teaching, discussing all his or her children equally (whether they are excellent or bad in English) and inspiring their dependence. Besides, children are keen on being praised and to be respected by the teacher. In kindergarten, if the English teachers can build a good atmosphere with their pupils, it can decrease the children emotional strain, as well. Ideas vary about whether it is better to use the target language to teach language two, or whether it is crucial to use the students’ first language to help in explanation. There are various teaching approaches, such as the Direct Method and the Audiolingual Method, which insist on practicing the target language to teach language two. But, there are teaching approaches, e.g. the Grammar-Translation Approach, for which it is important to practice a children’s first language to describe certain language ideas. I believe it depends on the age of the children to decide whether language one must be practiced in foreign language teaching. For English classes in Uzbekistan’s kindergartens, I suppose it is better to only use English in class. There are many benefits in doing so:

A) If language two is taught through language two, more language spheres in the brain will develop: According to neurological research, various languages spoken by the same person can practice various areas of the brain. William explains that “strokes damaging language areas in bilingual patients most commonly impair both languages equally or in proportion to how both languages equally or in relation to how well they were spoken before the injury” [10, 115p.]. For a stroke-injured patient, his or her native tongue or the language in which he or she was most fluent, is most likely to restore first, with an exclusion. After a stroke, a grandmother talked only Croatian, which she spoke for a few years as an adolescent. However, at the time she had the stroke, no one else in the family spoke Croatian [10, 126p.]. When we learn a foreign language, a language sphere will progress in the brain. When we learn two languages at the same time, two language spheres will develop. As a result, a child who learns more than 2 languages at the same time will develop more language spheres than the child who only learns one language. If a child learns English through Uzbek, then only the Uzbek language sphere of the brain will develop. If he or she learns English using only English, then the English language sphere of the brain will develop. From that, we assume if a child learns English through English, more language spheres in the brain will develop.

B) To learn L2 through L2 will prevent interference of word-pair Uzbek nation, after they have learned English for many years, have an uncertain listening to and speaking English. When they listen to or speak English, their brain cannot work immediately and quickly enough to speak or to comprehend the input. But, if one is taught English directly through English, he or she may think immediately in English without translation. He or she may have less challenge talking with other people in English than those who is taught through translation.

C) Supplies the chances of listening and speaking in L2: “That is to tell that although some pupils will learn better if they are given the chance to speak in the language, others will learn just as well if they spend most of their time listening” [2, 130p.]. Training a second language practicing only the target language gives children both the chances of listening and speaking in that language. There are some English teachers, who claim that without using Uzbek to explain, children cannot comprehend the accurate meaning of what they are being taught. This is especially vital when teaching grammar. For elementary school children, adolescents and

adults, occasionally it is important to describe in Uzbek. But, for kindergarten children, I suppose that teaching English using only English is optimum. One of the causes, this is preferable is that kindergarten children have the skill to learn languages with greater ease than older students. They learn second language immediately through target languages and comprehend them perfectly. Next reason teaching in the target language is an asset is that it is not important to teach kindergarten children grammar because they learn their foreign language much like their first language, through repetition and correction. Therefore, there is no way to use Uzbek during English classes in kindergarten. On the contrary, for adults or adolescents it is sometimes better to use Uzbek. I can give myself as an example. I began to learn English when I was in junior high school. Three years later, I was attended to a junior college where English classes were taught only in English. At that time my English was extremely weak. It was an inconvenient and impatient time for me because I could not really comprehend what was being said in class. It took me a while until I could comprehend in class. Therefore, for adolescents it is better to explain using a student's first language in order to give challengeable concepts. I believe there are separations between teaching kindergarten children and teaching adolescents. An English teacher should think the age of their students and choose the most suitable teaching approaches for their students. For teaching English using only English, one very necessary idea is that the English teachers should have good language competence. They must have good pronunciation and converse English properly. Otherwise, students will often listen to the error sentences and it will have a negative effect on students. The main goal of teaching English is that students will be capable of the language in true positions. It is crucial that we introduce realistic usage to children at an early age. "The younger the learners, the more they will benefit from the skill of listening the target language in suitable positions" [2, 129p.]. Therefore, it is better to use the target language to teach young children at the beginning of foreign language learning. Furthermore, if other subjects are also taught in English, have more chances to listen the target language in various positions.

3. Teaching kindergarten children according to their characteristics: If teachers are frank with the characteristics of children, they will be capable of selecting and using suitable and profitable methods in their teaching. In this article, I will explain the characteristics of young children between 3 and 6 years old. Then, I will discuss what should be done in second language teaching according to young children's characteristics.

A) Do not use only words; objects and pictures are necessary: Children of kindergarten age are still at "the concrete operational stage" offered by Piaget. They cannot go beyond imagination if they have not skilled something. Children of this age learn well with concrete events. They need to know how to feel about something in order to learn it well. Therefore, the English teachers of kindergarten children cannot rely only on the spoken word. They need to have enough designs and pictures to help them in their teaching. As compare with pictures, real objects are easier for young children to comprehend. Therefore, it is better that the English teachers show real objects or models to class when they teach unknown words [4, 23p.]. It differs when teaching elementary school children and teaching kindergarten children. For elementary school children, images and flash cards are sufficient in English classes. But for kindergarten children, concrete and real objects are better than images. If the English teacher cannot bring concrete objects to class and has to use pictures as substitution, it is better to bring pictures which are big.

B) Praise young children: In the classroom, children need constant changes of energy, and they need to be valued by their teacher. Young children are enthusiastic and positive about learning. Children love to be praised by their teacher. This gives to expressions of enthusiasm and feelings of success. However, if teachers label children as unhappy, then they believe it [9, 65p.]. Therefore, English teachers should pay more attention to this need and supply more praise for their young learners.

3. Use rhymes, chants, songs and stories: Young learners have problems on sitting. They are keen on playing, moving and touching objects. What can English teachers do to permit them to walk around and still learn things in the classroom? The best way to achieve this is to practice some activities, such as rhymes, games and songs, supplying children the chances to move around within the classroom. They can be taught rhymes with activities like jumping or dancing and can choose games requiring physical activity. If the activity is suitable for the children and can make them have fun, even if they are playing, they will still be listening and involved [3, 15p.]. Rhymes and chants are beneficial in other spheres of learning as well. Children like rhymes and chants and love to repeat them many times. They can learn by heart rhymes and chants well. Chants and rhymes help children in foreign language learning by helping them revise words and sentences. When it comes to telling stories in the English classroom, Scott [9, 21p.] gives some suggestions: "... when we are talking and the children are listening, it's necessary to say things clearly, and to repeat them. When you are telling a story, for example, you don't have to tell it from beginning to end without pauses. You can re-tell it many times as you go along." In fact, many stories are full of repetition in themselves. It helps children remember the words and sentences [9, 97p.].

4. Colorfulness in the classroom: We always say that children have short attention spans. Brown [1, 92p.] proves that if we put children in front of a TV with a favorite cartoon, they will sit for a long time. This means if the lesson is interesting, the children may maintain their concentration and focus for the whole lesson. If the English teacher can make the lesson interesting, lively and fun, the children may love the English lesson. What can English teachers do to help children love their lessons? English teachers should plan a lesson full of variety and changes of activity. Scott / Ytreberg suggest some varieties in the classroom: "variety of activity, variety of pace, variety of organization, variety of voice" [9, 129p.]. When children cannot maintain their interest in an activity, they will also cannot maintain their concentration, and then little or no learning can be achieved. I suppose, it is better to alter an activity before children lose interest and get bored. How often should an activity be altered? I can offer that the English teachers should alter their activities every 5 minutes. If the activity is 10 or 15 minutes, young children cannot maintain their concentration. Teachers of young learners should moderate activities often to make the classroom atmosphere more fun and interesting.

5. Make children laugh: One foreign English answered regarding the characteristics of children and how to teach them according to their characteristics: "First, the children have to get to know you and not to be afraid of looking at you. Then you speak with your body making funny gestures about the material you are teaching: children love to laugh." These characteristics of kindergarten children are well explained. For elementary school pupils, if teachers behave like that, they will not laugh, but kindergarten children love laughing. Kindergarten English teachers should often think about what young children love and what they consider about, in order to improve young children's enjoyment of English class.

6. Well planned English lessons: As mentioned above, young children are full of energy, therefore the activity in English class must be altered often. If English teachers don't plan their work in advance, they will not have time to think during the lesson. Young children have enthusiasm for learning. If the English teacher can maintain children's interests by showing well planned lessons, the children will be interested in English, make progress, and think they are good at English. Through good plans, the children can gain maximum enjoyment and learning out of the lesson. English teachers should plan their lessons well in advance to offer children an interesting lesson with good content. A strong foundation in English language learning may foster a life-long interest in the English language for the children [3, 17p.].

Successful English learning factors for children: There are many factors that influence a child's success in learning English. These are: qualified English teachers, curriculum planning, teaching materials and teaching methods. Moreover, motivation and attitude of the parents are

also factors for success in learning. Planning a foreign language course for kindergarten children should take the following points into consideration: motivation, the qualifications of the teacher, size of the class, the length of the lesson, the structure of the course, methodology, and the circumstances in which the children are learning [4, 98p.].

Motivation: Motivation can be two types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is showed when learners wish to integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group. If the learners think that acquiring a second language is instrumental in furthering their educational or career targets, their motivation is referred to as instrumental [1, 197p.]. For kindergarten children in Uzbekistan, it seems that neither instrumental nor integrative motivation is a factor in enhancing their foreign language learning. The motivation for learning a foreign language for kindergarten children may be various from that of older learners, because young children do not usually ask to learn a second language. Where does their motivation come from? First and foremost, their motivation comes from their parents who enroll them in the kindergarten English course. Therefore, during the learning of a foreign language, parental supply and encouragement are also necessary. The expectations and attitudes of parents in a society regarding the foreign language can also influence the results of children's learning. If society and parents have a positive behavior toward the foreign language, it gives children motivation to learn that language. On the contrary, if society and parents have a negative attitude toward the foreign language, it will reduce the interest in learning that language. Second, the English learning results of a young beginner are to a large extent dependent on the teacher. The teacher can give children encouragement and respect to motivate them. The personality of the English teacher and the teacher's treatment of students also has an impact on young children's ability to learn a foreign language. Children often look for their teacher's approval. They want the teacher to notice them and respect what they are doing. Whether or not the pupil loves the teacher may also influence on their motivation. A teacher's positive behavior can motivate children's interest in learning English. Respect by parents or teachers is crucial motivation for young children's second language learning because children want to be appreciated for their efforts. "If parents are interested in their children's achievements in English and show appreciation of their success, the children will be motivated" [3, 17p.]. Thirdly, "if the teaching is suitable, children investigate that learning another language is within their ability, and this knowledge improves their motivation" [10, 156p.]. Children's motivation "comes from the enjoyment and pleasure experienced in the learning situation" [4, 98p.]. If the class is boring, children will feel unmotivated. An essential feature of language teaching is to increase children's motivation with enjoyable teaching methods. Children have the ability to learn language through games and activities which they think joyful. How can a learning situation be joyful? This joyfulness can be seen in English classes full of play. Fröhlich-Ward suggested that, "play combined with structured teaching so that the children are only aware of the play content and learn the foreign language without noticing" [4, 99p.]. Classroom atmosphere, teaching methodology, teaching content, teaching aids and teaching materials can also impact children's motivation in learning English.

Kindergarten English teachers' qualification: What qualifications should a kindergarten English teacher have? First and foremost, English kindergarten teachers should have competence in English – including clear and accurate pronunciation and speech. Secondly, English teachers should have the knowledge of second language learning processes and teaching methods [8, 155p.]. Thirdly, kindergarten English teachers should have ability and experience working with young children or have been trained in teaching English to young children. They must feel how to give children the encouragement and respect important to motivate them. English teachers have to comprehend children's development, needs, interests, and the children themselves. These qualifications are crucial for both Uzbek English teachers and foreign English teachers. I believe that for kindergarten English teachers the order is similar:

making the course interesting, teaching good pronunciation, explaining clearly, speaking good in English, showing the same interest in all children, making all the children participate, showing great patience, insisting on the spoken language, making pupils work, using an audio-lingual method. The list accentuates that the most valued quality of a teacher is her ability to do the course interesting. The second, third and fourth qualifications are connected with the teacher's competence in English. Competence in English is essential for English teachers.

The language competence and pronunciation of teachers': As mentioned above, children have the ability to learn foreign pronunciation as well as native speakers. Children have a special facility for accomplishing comprehensible pronunciation and intonation of second language and are sensitive to sound. When the English teacher in kindergarten is a native speaker, the children may have a good opportunity of acquiring a very good accent. But, if the English teacher in kindergarten speaks poorly, the children may have incorrect pronunciation. Once children have error pronunciation and use it regularly, it takes more time to correct them than to teach beginners. Therefore, accurate pronunciation of English teachers is required. Most people believe that people who come from English speaking countries may have clear pronunciation, but this is not always true. For example, people from some areas of New Zealand or Australia may have unclear or unusual pronunciation. Incorrect pronunciation from teachers may have a negative impact on young learners, because young children have a superior ability to imitate the teacher's pronunciation. As mentioned above, if the teachers' pronunciation is good, the young learner's pronunciation will also be good. If the teachers' pronunciation is inaccurate, the young learners will also imitate the inaccurate pronunciation. Kindergartens should be careful when they employ English teachers and take steps to ensure their pronunciation is accurate.

Teaching practice and training: Teaching practice with young learners is also crucial for kindergarten English teachers. Kindergarten English teachers should have teaching practice with young learners or should be practiced to teach English to young learners. Because young learners can only learn something when they listen, kindergarten English teachers should be practiced in order to have the ability to communicate with young children in a way that keeps them quiet and listening to what the teachers say. Some kindergartens employ native English teachers who do not have teaching practice and have not been practiced in teaching English to young children. Kindergartens do not suggest practicing. It is a notion that not all of the native speakers of English know how to teach English to young children well. They need to be practiced to be qualified English teachers for young children. Therefore, kindergartens should pay attention to teachers' qualifications when they employ new foreign English teachers. Additionally, there should be government guidelines informing the qualifications and educational background of foreign English teachers. The situation regarding Uzbek English teachers is the same. Some are excellent, but some are not qualified. In order to improve the qualifications of Uzbek English teachers, government must encourage improvements in the quality of English teaching in local universities.

Class size and time: Class size is one of the most essential feature of a successful second language program, especially for preschool children. Fröhlich-Ward [4, 125p.] suggested that the ideal size of the foreign language teaching group should be ten children, at the most 12 children. In Opal Dunn's book "Beginning English with Young Children" [3, 201p.] it is suggested that the ideal number of pupils in an English class is between twelve and twenty. I suppose the optimal class size for young children is between eight and ten. If class size is too big, there will not be ample opportunity for all students to practice individually. The English teacher cannot pay attention to all children and cannot correct each student's pronunciation. Young children like to be treated as individuals by the teacher. If kindergartens want children to have positive learning results, the English classes should not be too big. Class size should not be too big, but it should not be too small, either. Classes that are too small or too big are

not good for learning. “Too few children make it difficult to play some games and there is less interpersonal communication.” Time is also an important factor which may reduce learning results. Met and Rhodes [7, 438p.] suggested that “foreign language instruction should be scheduled daily, and for no less than 30 minutes.” Their suggestion concerns curriculum in elementary schools, but I think it is also suitable for kindergartens. The English course should be provided daily, otherwise children will forget what they have learned previously. If kindergartens want their children to progress in English, the English class should be more than 30 minutes a day. The best option would be two hours per day in addition to using English to teach other subjects.

In my conclusion from the description above, we know that children are capable of learning foreign languages more naturally and easily than adults. Studies show that for second language learning, it is the earlier the better. Although there are also investigations which claim that adults or adolescents are better language learners than children, one thing that can be assured is; if teachers, teaching materials and learning environments are suitable, it is fruitful to learn foreign languages in early childhood. Personal interest, teaching materials, methodology, classroom management, the frequency of teaching English per week, family background, and the help of parents in doing review also determine second language learning effectiveness. Simply starting to learn a second language in early age cannot assure that the pupil will learn better than others who start to learn at an older age.

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