

USING ART AND CRAFTS TO TEACH ENGLISH TO YOUNG CHILDREN

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Abstract: Majority of young learners feel anxiety when it comes to language learning and especially grammar rules. The article discusses the ways of teaching children in anxiety free environments and using arts and crafts as a solution to this problem.

Key words: arts and crafts, vocabulary, input, language, anxiety, grammar rules,

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays more and more people are willing to learn foreign languages as it has myriads of advantages. (Ghasemi and Hashemi, 2011) states that language learning, except native language, can provide develop a lifelong ability to more communicate with others. One of the important advantages of mastering a foreign language is access to better job opportunities and the person will find deeper understanding to their own culture and other nations. Because of the fact that the English language is gaining popularity these days and because modern parents realize the benefits of being bilingual they are preferring their children to learn English from early ages.

METHODS

However, teaching a language to young children is not as easy as it may seem. First of all, as children tend to be playful it might be very hard to keep their concentration for a long time. Their unwillingness to learn a language can also be one of the reasons for teacher failure in teaching. Not every child is interested in languages. In addition, most teachers start language teaching from explaining grammar rules. Memorizing grammar rules can be confusing and mundane not only for young learners

but also for some adults. Thus, majority of young learners feel anxiety when it comes to grammar. As a result of which they may be demotivated and fail acquiring the language. According to Krashen (1982) language acquisition should occur in an environment as anxiety-free as possible. He claims that anxiety creates an emotional obstacle that interferes with the natural ability to acquire languages. Krashen refers to this obstacle as an “affective filter”. Teachers should try to lower their students’ affective filter as much by programming activities that engage their interest, motivate them to interact with the target language, and enable them to feel successful. During the learning process it is very important to have children motivated with the things they enjoy and they like to do, they need to have self-confidence and low anxiety in order to have better results and not to create any mental block which will affect them in their future.

RESULTS

In this case, I would suggest to teach English in arts and crafts lessons. The term, “Arts and Crafts” refers to a wide variety of activities involving making things with one's own hands, in other words all the handicrafts based upon making decorative and useful things manually. Children enjoy arts and crafts: they may learn skills such as coloring, making crafted items or making things with all sorts of material, Prins (2008). The author also mentions that Arts is a form of expression or an ability to do human activities and the products of those activities, usually involving imaginative or technical skill. Not only children but adults also enjoy arts and crafts. So what if combine arts and crafts with teaching English.

According to this idea a teacher teaches a group of children to make things from a range of materials such as colorful paper, plasticine, glue, fabrics or waste materials. During the lessons the teacher shouldn’t speak learners’ native language and should try to keep only English as much as possible. The students don’t have to be able to speak English to understand the teacher’s instructions as long as she (the teacher) demonstrates what she is instructing. For example, the teacher instructs to cut a circle from a red sheet of paper spontaneously showing this action herself. Even if the young learners don’t understand the words “cut”, “circle”, “red” and “paper”, they still realize what they are being asked to do from the teacher’s movements. For the first couple of

weeks or even months they may just follow the instructions without understanding the language. Nevertheless, the ability to follow instructions is an important skill for young children to learn, and it's also a great opportunity to recycle and repeat the language. After sometime the children should start comprehending the words and communicating in the target language. It is like a TPR method in which learners first receive input during a particular amount of time and when they are ready they begin producing the language.

CONCLUSION

If you do arts and crafts regularly with your young learners you'll be constantly recycling vocabulary for materials like glue, sticky tape, paper, pen, pencil, eraser, paint, paintbrush, water, stickers, glitter, bin, scissors, card, string, wool and so on. Moreover, your students will become very familiar with a variety of action verbs: press, stick, draw, paint, cut, fold, turn over, hold, tape and put. In a word, using arts and craft as many vocabularies as possible can be taught and memorized. Besides, handy craft activities are a great way to support language learning, as well as many other skills that are important for children. They make a lesson engaging and fun and are extremely helpful in forming a positive association with a new language. Furthermore, they improve children's creativity and imagination

As stated by (Farokhi and Hashemi, 2012), because serious work in the arts requires persistence, students develop self-discipline and come to understand what it means to make multiple revisions to achieve high standards. Because so many art forms are collaborative in nature, students often develop the crucial ability to work on a common project with others. The authors also mentioned that the arts help develop intellectual skills, contribute to social and emotional growth. Students who participate regularly in the arts develop self-confidence.

Teaching any foreign language to young children can be challenging, as they generally have short attention spans and get bored very fast. Teachers' job is to have an arsenal of activities and games in order to keep their classes engaged.

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