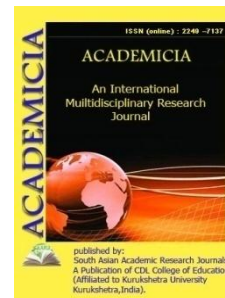




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ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AND HOW TO USE THEM IN THE YOUNG LEARNERS CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Today, teaching preschool children foreign languages in kindergarten has not become the first link in the chain of lifelong learning, but the issue of early education remains relevant in modern society, a huge number of educational materials and scientific papers indicate an unflagging interest in teaching foreign languages to preschool children. It is important that all language learning in the more formal environment of the early childhood classroom should be guided towards the real needs that children will have as they progress in education.

KEYWORDS: *Spoken Interaction, Socialization Skills, Complex Language, Activities, Formal Environment, Primary Classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

The early language learning targets for young children are indicated under the headings Listening, Spoken Interaction, and Spoken Production at A1 level. That's why it's very important to use activities that will develop these particular learning targets. This article presents a range of typical or model classroom activities designed to support the development of the necessary language, learning and socialization skills. Some considerations when using the activities in the young learner classroom for many children, their only source of exposure to English will be you, the teacher. For this reason, it is advisable to take all possible opportunities to speak English in the classroom. However, this does not mean that your English has to be perfect or that you have to speak English all the time. Indeed, switching between different languages is common in many everyday contexts for many people, and the classroom is no different in this regard. In this article, I have suggested where using the children's first language might be effective, but this does not mean you should avoid it at other times. You are the best

judge of how to support your children's learning in the classroom. There are lots of different ways that you can use English, however. You can use English to organize the activities, to control the class while they do them and to talk to the children on a one-to-one basis. Many of the activities have steps that involve the children in quiet tasks, such as drawing, colouring and so on, but do not practice explicitly new structures or vocabulary. While children are engaged in these, you can chat with them more informally.

As Fiona Copland mentioned it is not necessary to use complex language; simple, encouraging comments are effective and might include things like, Cut the shapes carefully. You can use all the colours you want. How are you getting on? Have you nearly finished? What colour are you going to use next? and so on. Slattery and Willis [3] is an excellent source of English expressions to use in the primary classroom. But what about the children's language use? We cannot expect children to use English all the time. It is not only unnatural; it can also damage children's confidence. Of course, children can be encouraged to use English in whole-class activities and also while working with their peers in pairs and groups. However, if children use their first language in these activities, it should not be seen as a problem, particularly if the input is in English or some part of the output requires children to use English. At some stage of the activity, children will be involved with English, and this is what is important for young learners [1].

Teachers play a critical role in creating an environment in which children feel happy trying out their English skills. As well as encouraging children and praising their efforts, teachers need to have confidence in their own English speaking skills, whatever their level. If children see their teachers speaking English with enjoyment and enthusiasm, not worrying about making mistakes or knowing every word, then they have a very positive model for using English themselves.

Activities also divided into the whole class and for individual, group and pair work. Whole class activities involve all the learners and are important for developing a positive classroom approach to learning English, good relationships between learners and the opportunity for students to learn from both the teacher and from each other. Many of the whole class activities involve students becoming physically involved in the learning experience, by holding up cards, for example, or by working in teams. The teachers who suggested these whole class activities certainly do not view whole class work as a passive experience!

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many of the activities in this article involve children working in groups or pairs. Some teachers are reluctant to try these approaches, especially if their classes are large. These teachers argue that they cannot monitor what all the children are doing, that the children will speak their first language, or that the class will get out of control. Therefore, teachers often turn activities that are meant to be done in groups or pairs into whole-class activities. There are several reasons why we would encourage you to use pair and group work where the activity states this mode of organization, even if you have never tried it before.

- First, if activities are done as a whole class, the children may not be directly involved in participating and can become bored and distracted. This is especially true in large classes. On the other hand, if children are working in pairs and groups, they will all have the opportunity to use English and to be engaged in the activity.

- Second, pair and group work can also help children to develop other skills such as listening to others, co-operating and reaching a consensus. These skills are useful to children no matter how good their English is!
- Third, pair and group work can provide a change of pace in a lesson and so revitalize the class atmosphere.

Besides, activities should be in three stages of the lesson:

- Pre-activity (warm-up activities);
- During activity (introducing activities);
- Post-activity (main activities);

At the beginning of the lesson, it's very helpful to use warm-up activities before expressing a new theme. Because warm-up activities help to make interest and attention to the lesson and it agitated your learners to the next lesson. Besides, you shouldn't have any mystery to find more warm-up activities because they can be similar and should be used several times at the beginning of the lesson. Here is one of the warm-up activities from my experience which my young learners love very much:

Hi everybody,

Hello everyone

It's time to English,

We have lots of fun! (by dancing with body language)

Children can be kept on the task in pair and group work in several ways. For example, one child can be nominated a group monitor, or group captain' and it is this child's responsibility to ensure that the task is completed. Alternatively, you can have a points or rewards system and award points to groups that stay on task and complete the activity. Working in groups and pairs inevitably increases the noise level of a class, even where the children are closely monitored. For example, the following activity can also be group or whole class activity:

Find the unrelated words.

Farm animals:	cow	horse	elephant	chicken
Vegetables:	carrot	pine-apple	tomato	cabbage

Fig. 1. Find the unrelated words

Here I gave just a written version but when you use this activity it would be better if you use flashcards of animals, fruits, vegetables, etc. As you know young learners (6-9 years) can't read L2 that's why it's possible to use pictures only. If you use this activity in the whole class, hang flashcards of them on the blackboard and let pupils find unrelated ones but it will be noisier

because all of them shout to say the answer to be first. Many of the activities can be repeated for different themes that's why you can use such kind of activity in any lesson you want. But the best way is to use it in small groups because it helps to develop friendship and respect each other. If you work in a context where noise is not tolerated or is associated with lack of discipline or work, you can try to explain to the headteacher, and teachers who are affected by the noise, what you are doing and why (or show him/her/them this introduction). You can also warn teachers when the children will be doing pair or group work to demonstrate that you understand the inconvenience but also to show that these activities are planned into your teaching and part of your pedagogic practices.

CONCLUSION

Some of the activities suggest giving rewards to children who *win*. Some teachers take sweets or other prizes into the classroom to give to children who complete an activity first, behave particularly well, do an activity successfully and so on. However, you need to consider whether it is appropriate or acceptable in your context to use rewards. Even if it is, you need to consider the effect of rewards on the children. If the same children constantly get the rewards (or do not get them), it can be de-motivating and could have negative effects on the classroom dynamics. Rewarding as many children as possible is one way of dealing with this: children can be rewarded for effort as well as success. I hope the activities in this article play their part in providing the kind of fun and engaging activities that can motivate children to use English in class.

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