

A Lesson Plan for a Specific Teaching Language to Young Learners Classroom

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Abstract: Teaching English to Young learners is different from teaching adults, hence the methodology of teaching young learners is vivid and special. It is proposed by considering children's cognitive development and two practical teaching method, songs and TPR. In this article, it attempts to design a lesson plan which mixed these two method and shows a complete lesson plan in the Appendix. According to Piaget, young learners have their own concrete thinking towards the reality, teachers can use concrete media help them build motivation and interest. This article tries to design a lesson plan and teach young learners in a more efficient and effective way.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that English is the most frequently used language in China. Introducing English in primary level in china is positively accepted. In order to give young learners a more interesting and comfortable language learning environment, this lesson plan use a variety of interesting activities to attract young learners. The lesson plan was designed for the first grade children in China and I use two main approaches songs and TPR to help students gain oracy skills. Firstly, it talks about the background of this lesson plan and target people educational policy. Then a lesson plan was proposed based on learner's needs and teaching content. In the third part, I will evaluate and explain how I design this lesson plan from children's cognitive development, the importance and the reason why I use songs and TPR.

2. Context and policy

According to English Curriculum for Chinese, it emphasizes the needs to focus on each student's emotions, stimulate their interest in learning and help them build self-confidence. As for primary school students, they are able to play games and respond under teachers' command. And they could sing English songs and rhymes or have a conversation with others in using simple sentences.

According to Chinese law, it denotes that the curriculum is designed on the principle of diversification or development related with the educational unit, the specific and diverse area and also learners. This means the educational outcome is adjustable in terms of specific potential that diverse in different regions.

The class was conducted in an EFL oral abilities in a primary school in China. Students are at the age of seven to eight. They are beginner of English learners. The purpose of this class was to help students develop their oral ability about these simple words: left, right, back, forward, sit down, stand up, and jump. The lesson plan I designed for this course, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2:

Table 1: The course design

| Title of course: Simple locative nouns and verbs | | | |
|--|------------|---|---|
| Nber. of students | 20 | Students' prior knowledge relevant to the lesson: | Have a simple conversation with others. Introduce themselves. |
| Date of lesson | 10/09/2023 | Aims: | Children's listening and speaking are taught. |
| Duration of lesson | 45 mins | Learning outcomes: | Children can understand and use these vocabularies. |
| Age group | 7-8 | Materials: | Video, picture, colourful pens, whiteboard. |

Table 2: Stages of the lesson

| Time | Teacher activity | Students activity | Materials used | Other comments |
|--------|---|---|---|--|
| 5 mins | Teachers help students to think about previous lesson. Ask them some questions: Eg: what's your name? How are you? And check whether they could introduce themselves to other students. | They can be divided into pairs to practice the conversation; Eg: what's your name? How are you? And check whether they could introduce themselves to other students | No specific material needed, there is an oral conversation between teachers and students. | In this step, teachers ask students question to get them involved in this class. |
| 6 mins | Teachers can use colorful pens to draw these words: left, right, backward, forward, sit down, stand up, spin around and jump. Teacher should teach them to pronounce these words and explain with Chinese meaning. | In this step, students should repeat these words several times. | Whiteboard, colourful pen. | This stage is to help students to have a better comprehension before they use these words. |
| 8 mins | Teachers use a video to ask students to follow the step. This is a video about how students act this song so students here can watch the video and have a better understanding about what they are going to do. Here, teacher should also introduce the parts of the body to make sure they understand left and right in Chinese meaning. | In this stage, students should watch the video carefully and if they have any questions, they should ask for teachers. | Video. | Here, whether students have understood the meaning is important. |
| 7 mins | Teachers should give a command and act out the command while students listen and watch them. Teachers should do the same thing as which shown in the video I played and ask students to follow me | Students are asked to respond physically what teachers says. | Video | Students are young learners so they might unable to catch the action very clearly so I can react the command and make sure they can understand and follow with my command. |
| 5 mins | Teacher should give the command while both teacher and students could repeat and act it out. | Students are able to do this command without mimicking the teacher | No other materials. | So in this way, students are able to remember the words both in meaning and pronunciation. |
| 7 mins | Teachers should pay attention to their performance. If they can't read out the word, teacher can be scaffolding here. Teachers can repeat again. Teachers should pay attention here whether students pronounce correct and ascertain the meaning of this word. | After this psychical movement, students are asked to read these words aloud when pointing to each letter with their fingers. | No other materials. | If students can not pronounce it correctly teachers should reteach until students can pronounce it correctly. |
| 7 mins | Teachers can provide five pictures showing a kid turning left, right, forward and backward, stand up and sit down. Then teachers can ask students what each picture is about and ask them to explain. | Students should look these pictures and try to identify the meaning of these pictures. | Pictures about these vocabularies. | This stage is designed to strengthen the memorization of these words. |

3. Rationale

3.1. Cognitive development

There are diverse models and theories which are meaningful but researchers have identified that Piaget's theory has a far-reaching impact. According to Piaget, certain ways of thinking might simple for adult but not for children. In the past decades, Piaget's construct of schema has been accepted by many researchers in the field of language teaching. Piaget defined schemas as categories of mental systems or perceptions and experiences that can be invoked whenever we encounter new situations or information. There are two types of processing related to listening, bottom up processing and top down processing. In this lesson plan, I have applied top-down

processing, based on what we have already known to comprehend what we are going to learn. According to Lynch[1], when learners learn something related to what they have known before, then they will find the comprehension is much easier. Learners were given an introduction about these words and a video was played in order to enhance their comprehension.

According to Piaget that pupils aged 7 to 11 were in the stage of concrete operation. Students are all in the first grade and they are at 7-8 years old. The children before age of seven are considered to be able to think beyond here and now, but they are unable to perform mental transformations. Age seven are capable to view and react the reality analytically[2]. In this stage, students have logical thinking, but still limited to specific things, which means children are solving problems that they face directly. Teachers should pay more attention to learner's cognitive development and use some methods to help them study and understand in their developmental stages. Concrete media can be applied by teachers to help learners increase their interest and comprehension which aims to achieve a better learning result. According to Astuti & Putu[2], concrete media is an effective tool to create good language learning condition and to reduce only verbal understanding. It may also arise learner's language motivation. By using these concrete media, learners' motivation and comprehensive can be enhanced. Piaget claims that if teachers use these concrete media, children are capable to accept the material and teaching content in concrete operational age.

Gardner's framework of multiple intelligences has provided some implications for teachers to teach students in a more diverse method. Perhaps the easiest cognitive factors for teachers to use are visual-spatial, since this method is easy to use. Teachers are likely to use multisensory methods to present lessons. With the developmental of technology, children have more opportunities to get in touch with digital media in an early age. In my lesson plan, I have prepared some pictures to enhance learner's understanding and memorization.

As for the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, the ability to use your whole body or part of your body, such as your hands, feet, mouth, to solve a problem [3]. Learners are using TPR in my lesson plan, learners learn to dance and use their hands and bodies to learn English vocabulary. So the lesson plan have utilized Gardner's framework of three intelligences.

According to Richards & Rodgers [4], "the foreign language learner will first internalize a "cognitive map" of target language through listening practices." Listening first accompanied with physical movement and speech should come later. Dargahi [5] illustrates that language activities and methods are carried out in the left-brain learning while the total physical response are acted in the right brain. Therefore, use TPR in foreign language teaching helps young learners work both parts of the brain which is beneficial for their physic and cognitive development.

3.2. Songs and TPR

All children need to be talked so that they can receive input and begin to learn to participate in interactions. As students are begin to learn the words and also get involved in this interaction so they can remember these words more efficiently. Listening to songs and rhymes can be useful strategies for children to learn the words and phrases by heart, because songs and rhymes contain reasonably fast connected speech in English. In addition, the wide popularity of English langue music worldwide is also conducive to students' English learning. Hence, it emphases the role of interaction through interaction and scaffolding children's language development, which illustrates Vygotsky's (1978) hypothesis on the role of social environment within language learning. In this lesson, the aim is to help children acquire these basic vocabularies, so songs and TPR approach is suitable and effective for them. Students could not only understand the words but also can speak them out which is the objective of this lesson.

Through repetition children can have a better understanding and memory of these vocabularies instead of monotonous word memory. It seems that the song-stuck-in-my-head (SSIMH) experience is usual to the majority of people [6]. "Having personally experienced songs Dinning through my head many times, Such contact may make it easier for children to learn English at school, as Lyczak

mentioned, previous exposure to language does influence subsequent learning, even when this exposure is not linguistically meaningful.” [6] It is interesting because I think most of us will have SSIMH experience when we at a tranquil situation such as in shower or do something alone. In other words, songs will be remembered but if we just learn vocabulary it might be difficult to remember outside of class. Murphey encourages children to practice L2 material outside of class.

However, I assume children should be taught with mixture of activities and approaches in order to inspire their creativity and enthusiasm. Young children have a short attention span so teachers should provide a short and attractive activity for them. Songs, rhymes and stories are suitable for TPR as Goodger claims “emotive and mnemonic power of rhyme with TPR lead to permanent memory acquisition.”[7] In other words, the integration of music, rhyme and body movement is bringing several intelligences at one time which is significant to children's cognitive and physical development. Also, the general objectives of TPR are to teach oral proficiency at a beginning level which is aligned with my lesson plan.

When songs are acted in a language teaching classroom and they will build TPR elements which will help students understand and memory the meaning and pronunciation of the song better. The repetition of songs and movements is essential for young children as familiarity brings confidence and helps them remember songs better.

The lesson plan urges students to be able to listen and speak the vocabulary. TPR activities help children to hear the new vocabulary in a meaningful context and respond non-verbally. TPR is based on the coordination of spoken and physical movement. Students' oral skills and listening comprehension can be developed from this funny activity. Therefore, TPR and sing are effective to help children to learn listening and speaking. In TPR, teacher can use gestures, models, and commands to teach the second language. In this way, students will participate the activity with passion and energy. It is also be emphasised that many TPR related findings have illustrated positive effects on students' learning performance, motivation as well as attitudes.

4. Conclusion

This lesson plan was proposed by considering children's cognitive development and two practical teaching method, songs and TPR. It seems there is no single method or teaching strategy that meet all young learners' needs. Combine songs and TPR these two methods seem has more strength than limitations and also can arouse learner's interests. According to Piaget, young learners have their own concrete thinking towards the reality, teachers can use concrete media help them build motivation and interest. In my personal view, the methods or materials we choose should depends on children's needs from different perspective and context. More importantly, listening from experts or students is another factor to design lesson plan and teach young learners in a more efficient and effective way.

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