



**TEACHING ENGLISH TO DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS IN A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE SETTING VAZIRA ZABIEVA, UZBEKISTAN**

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Abstract

Language acquisition is considered to be very challenging for anybody who decides to learn a foreign language. However, despite complicated grammar structures and difficult pronunciations, English has become a highly demanded language worldwide. So to best enable students, who want to learn or master English, English language classes should be adapted to the age of the students and taught accordingly.

Keywords: ESL, practical activities, target language, instructor's role.

Introduction

English language classes are usually conducted in small groups. This phenomenon is true for preschool children and schoolchildren attending lower and higher grades. Therefore, the teachers must adapt the curriculum to match the students' age and abilities (Brown, 2007). For example, the youngest students will most likely master English through various games, singing and other interactive activities applied in teaching. As a result, older students can use much more sophisticated learning methods.

How to deal with different levels of learners?

It is essential to understand each age group and see possible ways to conduct English language classes to make them both practical and enjoyable.

For elementary-level learners, teachers tend to be more flexible, have good communication skills, be creative, empathetic, observant, patient, energetic and playful (Mohtar, Abdullah, & Mat, 2015). Teachers must guide students using precise instructions through activities, games, quizzes, short stories, and crafts which can draw learners' attention toward the language and involve them. At this level, a teacher must establish an environment where learners can communicate independently by constructing simple, cohesive sentences. It should be acceptable for them to make some mistakes and imperfections. ESL teachers should help them overcome such situations step by step. One of the most effective ways to motivate young learners is by making lessons memorable and fun (Brown, 2007).



Monotonous grammar work is dull for them; therefore, it is better to do some singing at the beginning. Here, a teacher can pick up a song related to the topic. For example, if the theme is "Adjectives", there are plenty of interesting Youtube videos about them, which are always available on the internet. Such warm-up activity will guarantee the young learners' interest in the subject. Music is a powerful tool; fun songs keep students engaged and help them easily acquire new vocabulary (Pavia, Webb, & Faez, 2019).

Additionally, we should not forget that some students are visual learners. So, demonstrating different colourful flashcards while learning new words can significantly help them remember new vocabulary without further effort (Permana, 2020). So, creating a safe and comfortable environment for learners is crucial for their language learning progress. Finally, giving positive feedback is an excellent way of motivating students (Brown, 2007). If they feel they are doing well, learners will try to be even better and demonstrate all their potential in learning English.

Teaching ESL classes for older children, like junior and high school students, is more challenging than teaching younger children for different reasons (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). For example, not every student is eager to learn English; sometimes they have to learn it because their parents make them or it is just given in the school curriculum. They may not have that interest or curiosity they used to have at a younger age.

The critical factor in building a bridge with learners of older age is finding out more about their interests and views toward current events in the society they live (Brown, 2007). Choosing some topic for discussion according to their preference and presenting some phrases related to that topic is a very productive way of drawing learners' attention toward a target language. For instance, to make the learning process more fun, a teacher may ask students to act out the dialogues given in the textbooks rather than just reading and repeating them. Using various songs, watching videos and applying different kinds of visual materials can be beneficial for memorising new words and concepts in their mind (Permana, 2020).

Older children in upper grades have varying levels, needs and difficulties when learning a new language (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Therefore, they are more particular about learning English and realise why they need it. Teaching such learners who deliberately learn a language is a great ease for an instructor. Still, it may be a tremendous challenge for learners because some are already familiar with English and have prior exposure to it, while for others, English may be a new language. In this case, an instructor must be patient and respectful. Since most adults usually join ESL classes purposefully, it is better to introduce colloquial phrases used in professional situations without forgetting about focusing on grammar as well.

Practical activities



Applying some games in teaching English is a very effective way to gain the result in a short time. For example, some adopted didactic games can be played by learners of different ages and groups.

Word Jumble Race

This game encourages teamwork and brings a sense of competition to the classroom. No matter how old the learners, they all love a good competition, and this game works wonders with all age groups. It is perfect for practising tenses, word order, reading and writing skills and grammar.

Skills to improve: grammar, words order, spelling, writing skills

Who it is best for: adaptable to all levels/age

How to play:

Write several sentences using different colours for each sentence.

Each team should write 3-5 sentences.

Break the sentences into a few words by cutting them apart.

Put each line separately in a box or envelope you can find.

Divide your class into groups of three. You are free to have as many teams as you like, but always make sure there are enough sentences.

Teams must now correctly organise their phrases.

The first team to correctly order every sentence is the winner.

Pictionary

Any age group can play this game. Especially children love it because they can get creative in the classroom, and teenagers love it because it does not feel like they are learning. Adults like it because it gives them a break from the monotony of learning a new language. This game can help students practice their vocabulary and test to see if they remember the words from the lessons.

Skills to improve: Vocabulary

It is applicable for all ages but best with young learners.

Process:

Prepare several words in advance and place them in a bag.

Divide the class in two, then mark the centre of the board with a line.

Give one team member a pen and ask them to choose a word from the bag, then they should define it in their drawing. Their team members should guess the word from the drawing. Whoever from the team find the word will score up.

The student who completed the drawing should nominate someone else to draw for their team.

Repeat this until all the words are gone; ensure you have enough words for each student to draw at least once!

One issue almost every language instructor has to face is that there may be students with different levels of English in the same class. While some learners are super fast at learning new information during class, the rest can unintentionally lag.



Thus, students should be asked to help one another by being placed in an effective seating arrangement. For instance, if an advanced student is placed next to a beginner, the first one may help the latter. By forming such pairs, a teacher can include more challenging material in each task or lesson because students can help each other. This strategy will benefit not only weak students but also the advanced ones, who will be able to learn more by trying to explain what they know—having such so-called "assistants" in the class saves time. This method may be implemented not only in pair work but also while dividing students into sub-groups. Finally, a teacher should put at least one advanced student in each team to provide a productive outcome and to gain good collaboration from the activity they will be doing being a team.

Alternative Assessment Tasks

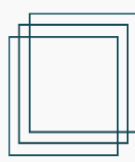
To teach ESL classes and gain an outcome, it is essential to conduct a good assessment of learners to reflect their progression, whatever age group or level they belong to (Brown, 2007). As an English language teacher, I must keep track of my students' progress. So I try to apply some common types of alternative assessments in my class. Tests are familiar to everyone. They can be of various types such as multiple choice, true or false, filling in gaps, matching, etc. For English language learners, tests may be an accurate means of evaluating the extent of their knowledge if they do it with full attention. Also, tests can be applied to all learners irrespective of their level, which is very comfortable for the instructor to make them.

Presentations- are one of the best English language learning assessment tools simply because they allow students to speak, listen, read and write. Here pupils can use slides in PowerPoint and are welcome to make posters and bring pictures or other materials to enrich their presentations. Usually, presentations are made by upper-level learners since they should be able to present the topic in English.

Portfolios are another way of assessing students' progress throughout an academic year. So the teacher will be able to collect and monitor learners' work samples, which demonstrate how much their language skills advance in a short period. Usually, I ask my students to keep paper-based portfolios in a folder, which is easy to access. Nevertheless, electronic documents are also very comfortable if students have personal computers at home. For example, portfolios may include drawings, writing samples, photographs, recordings of oral presentations and other papers made by students.

Moreover, apart from the ways of assessment I have mentioned above, I utilise methods like asking my students to reflect on the lesson, speak about what they have learned, and summarise or recapitulate important moments of the lesson. Sometimes, I also give a short quiz at the end of class to check for comprehension.

In short, assessment types should be adopted according to the age and level of the learners. The most important thing is not to make a mistake in this process. Otherwise, it may cause learners' interest in the language to fade.



Conclusion

In conclusion, following simple rules to teach ESL to different age groups is vital to achieving good results. Everything should be considered: age, level, interests, ability and purpose of learning a foreign language. Considering these factors will ensure the progression of ESL classes for both teacher and learner.

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