

INTERACTIVE TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract:

This article explores innovative and effective methods for teaching foreign languages to primary-level children, emphasizing approaches that are engaging, immersive and culturally enriching.

Key words: Immersive learning technique, age- appropriate pedagogy, cognitive development, linguistic diversity and bilingual education.

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In today's globalized world, teaching foreign languages to primary school children is more important than ever. This article explores innovative methods for engaging young learners in language acquisition. It highlights the significance of play-based learning, storytelling, and cultural immersion in making language lessons both educational and enjoyable. By examining successful strategies, this piece offers valuable insights for educators aiming to foster multilingual skills in young children and the ability to communicate in more than one language is a valuable skill. Early childhood is a critical period for language acquisition, making primary school the ideal time to introduce foreign language education.

Numerous scientific studies of work in primary schools show that younger schoolchildren do not have a conscious internal need to learn a foreign language. But they have a natural interest, curiosity for everything new and unknown. Therefore, the goal of teaching a foreign language in primary school is not only to maintain this interest, but also to further increase the motivation of children to learn foreign languages. School is a special place where classes are conducted that ensure the active participation of each student in the lesson, increase the authority of knowledge and the individual responsibility of schoolchildren for the results of educational work. These tasks can be successfully solved through the technology of game forms of learning. V.P. Bespalko noted that “play is of great importance in a child’s life, it has the same meaning as an adult’s activity, work, service. The game only seems carefree and easy on the surface. But in fact, she imperiously demands that the player give her the maximum of his energy, intelligence, endurance, and independence.” [1]

Games contribute to the implementation of such methodological tasks as:

- creating children’s psychological readiness for verbal communication;
- ensuring the natural need for them to repeat linguistic material many times;
- training students in choosing the right speech option, which is preparation for situational spontaneity of speech in general.

The game serves as a means of teaching language, developing students’ speech skills and abilities. M.N. Skatkin noted that the specificity of the game lies in the fact that “learning tasks are not presented to the child explicitly, but are disguised. While playing, the child does not set a learning task, but as a result of the game he learns something.” [3]

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Students at this level are just starting their academic careers. School may be intimidating for some of the students in your class so, in order to encourage everyone to participate, it is important to make your lessons relaxed and fun. Students will be learning very basic material but teachers can design creative lessons that get students moving around and speaking with one another. Young learners are generally very enthusiastic about songs, especially if they can sing along, and active games. Teachers should create a safe, stress-free environment that everyone can enjoy learning in. [2]

Keeping exercises fun and short can be a helpful tool because these students have short attention spans and are easily distracted. Overacting and projection will help keep the focus on lessons. Teaching students how to behave in a classroom by asking them to be quiet while they are talking and asking to raise their hands if they have questions or want to answer a question. This may not be directly related to ESL but it is important that students learn good behavior early on; it will make their transition to primary school easier. Teachers can teach them to respond to basic classroom English phrases such as “Please sit down.” because these are expressions that they will hear repeatedly throughout their study of English. For students at this age, teachers are responsible not only for starting to teach them English, but also for preparing them for their next level of education. Students will perform better in their classes if they behave well and have a good understanding of basic principles.

Teacher should consider following 10 things if you're serious about teaching kids English:

1. If you want to teach kids English because you think it's easy, then this is not the job for you. Teaching children demands a great deal of creativity and energy. Kids will always keep you on your toes! They will amaze you and surprise you, but don't think that just because you'll be teaching colors and animals, it'll be a breeze. You'll most likely feel exhausted after every class, but so happy!

2. A little preparation goes a long way

Never make the mistake of showing up for class with little or no ideas, and thinking that you'll figure it out as you go along. Preparation is essential, mostly because you'll need to gather lots of teaching materials. Seasoned teachers may be able to improvise an entire lesson with only a whiteboard and some markers, but why risk having a class that turns out to be a hellish nightmare? You can plan an entire week of lessons or a full month, but make sure you have a lesson plan for every class.

3. Try to cater to multiple intelligences

Young ESL students have strengths and weaknesses and the best way to take advantage of their strengths and help them learn effectively is to cater to their learning styles or multiples intelligences, namely Visual – Spatial, Logical – Mathematical, Bodily – Kinesthetic, Musical – Rhythmic, Intra-Personal, Inter-Personal, Naturalist, and Spiritual. How can we accomplish this?

Let's see some examples:

- For musical – rhythmic intelligence learners, teach an ESL element with a song, like Rock Around the Clock for telling time.

- For bodily – kinesthetic intelligence learners, teach body parts with a game of Simon Says, or sing Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes. For visual – spatial intelligence learners, use maps, charts, and all types of visual aids. Teach them the different types of stores and locations they may find around town with a big map-like board game, and have them “visit” the different locations by throwing the dice.

4. Don't let them get bored

If children are bored they won't pay attention, and they won't learn. You don't have to clown around all the time, either; they're in class to learn, not to be entertained by you. Your job is to make learning engaging and fun. Here are some ways to do this:

- Once they've been sitting and focused on a task for a while, get them out of their seats for a more active game. They should never remain seated for the duration of the class, unless they're teens.

- Use realia, or real life objects in class. No matter how colorful or big, students sometimes get tired of learning everything through flashcards.

5. Mix it up

ESL classes may include singing, dancing, and jumping, as well as writing, reading, or listening. The best ESL lessons combine the right mix of teaching strategies. You may begin class with a short song, then move on to a reading exercise. The best rule of thumb is to switch between quiet, independent tasks to those that require action and movement.

6. Be prepared to deal with parents

Unlike teaching adult students, when you teach the little ones you have to interact with their parents as well.

These must be informed about:

- Your goals, i.e., what you hope to accomplish throughout the year
- The children's learning goals, i.e., the syllabus for the school year
- Their children's progress, i.e., if they have achieved their learning goals satisfactorily

It is also recommended to encourage parents' active participation in their children's English learning. Even if they don't speak English themselves, they should be encouraged to ask the kids what they've learned, share songs, etc.

7. Gather an arsenal of materials

When you teach children English it is essential to have a box of materials that can be adaptable to any game or activity.

8. Remember it's not all about the games

Each game or activity you propose should target a specific learning goal or ESL element. It's not about coming to class to play. ESL games are highly effective teaching strategies as long as you know how to fully utilize their potential.

9. Teach in context

Lessons should be planned in accordance with learning goals. And vocabulary, grammar, and language should be taught in context. For example, when teaching children foods in English, it should be within a meal context like breakfast, lunch or dinner, and should never be a list of items they must study or memorize.

10. Keep them motivated

As kids get older and reach their pre-teen years, some ESL games and activities may not interest them as much as they did in the past. Find out what does interest them. What kind of music do they like? What do they enjoy reading? What sports do they play? Which sports stars do they admire? The moments shared with your young learners will far outweigh any of the difficulties or disadvantages commonly associated to teaching children.

It is clear that incorporating diverse teaching methods is crucial for success in teaching foreign languages at the primary level. By focusing on immersive, interactive, and culturally rich experiences, educators can ignite curiosity and foster a lifelong love for languages in young learners. Whether through storytelling, music, or play, the steps taken in the classroom today lay the foundation for multilingual and culturally aware individuals of tomorrow. With these strategies, we can make language learning an exciting adventure for every child.

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