

THE WAYS OF TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO THE YOUNG LEARNERS

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This scientific study is dedicated to assisting readers in enhancing the effectiveness of teaching by focusing on learning and the internal mental world of the learner. The research aims to explore how classroom activities and teacher decisions can either foster or hinder children's learning opportunities. The article delves into the teaching of the English language to young learners and the evolution of the education system in Uzbekistan. It also examines foreign language acquisition and learning among young children in the early stages of schooling. Despite the plethora of disorganized theories, opinions, models, and suggestions regarding teaching modern languages to young children, we will concentrate on the contributions of researchers who have significantly advanced this field of study.

Key words: young learners, motivation, attitude, method, indirect learning, communicative skills, compulsory education

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In order to promote successful English language acquisition, education ministries worldwide often aim to decrease the age at which formal English language instruction begins. The decision to start teaching English at an earlier age is supported by research in psychology, linguistics, and related fields. In line with this perspective, the starting grade for English instruction in Uzbekistan was initially moved from sixth to fourth grade in 1997, and then further lowered to second grade in 2012. The debate on the optimal age for beginning foreign language learning persists. While teaching English to young learners is commonly seen as challenging due to their characteristics, such as difficulty grasping abstract concepts and shorter attention spans, researchers have highlighted the benefits of early language learning. These advantages include young learners having lower affective filters, quicker acquisition of foreign language sounds and rhythms, more time available for language learning, and the potential to develop a stronger awareness of intercultural identity. The primary goal of this change was to enhance young learners' communicative skills in English by introducing them to a foreign language at a younger age. Uzbekistan ranks 47th among 63 countries in terms of English proficiency, categorizing Uzbek English proficiency as 'very low.' Efforts to lower the age at which English instruction begins continued in Uzbekistan, leading to a significant change in the 2012-2013 academic year. This new model, part of a comprehensive educational reform, not only included three four-year segments (primary, elementary, and high school levels) totaling twelve years of compulsory education but also involved reducing the starting age for English language learning from grade four (age 9) to grade two (ages 6-6.5.) Following revisions of multiple drafts, the current curriculum was implemented, incorporating Total Physical Response (TPR), arts and crafts, and drama as primary activities and strategies for the initial four-year segment.

Teaching English to Young learners in Uzbekistan

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The education system in Uzbekistan has been emphasizing the importance of foreign language studies. Previously, students began learning their first foreign language in the sixth grade (around the age of 11). However, the current national curriculum mandates the introduction of the first compulsory foreign language in the first grade (at the age of 7). All English teachers in state schools are required to adhere to the common national program established by the Ministry of Education. They have the freedom to choose from a selection of ministry-approved textbooks that best suit their teaching needs and their students' profiles. At the end of each academic year, students are evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the national program. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001), students should achieve a B2 level proficiency by the end of high school.

Most schools in Uzbekistan opt for English as either the first or second compulsory foreign language. If students commence learning English in primary school, they typically have the same specialized teacher from first grade until they complete fifth grade, marking the end of their first level of secondary school. Foreign language studies during primary and secondary school are allocated 2 to 3 hours per week to enhance and develop linguistic skills.

Classrooms may feature individual desks or desks shared by two or three students, each equipped with a chalkboard and a teacher's desk positioned in front. Classes are scheduled in shared classrooms, with primary school sessions held in the morning and secondary school classes conducted in the afternoon. Teachers are provided with essential resources such as a CD player, a whiteboard, and a laptop. The school's management has designated English as the primary foreign language to be taught. Language instruction is delivered as a standalone subject within a FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary School) program, with 2 to 3 lessons per week. Throughout the academic year, the committee organizes special events like open lessons, presentations of new teaching materials, language contests, and celebrations such as Foreign Languages Day, Halloween, Christmas, and Europe's Day. Regular meetings are held each semester with all English teachers in the region to discuss topics like effective lesson planning, teaching methodologies, and suitable materials.

The learning environment for children is conducive to acquiring English skills. Families actively support their children's language learning endeavors, recognizing the value of proficiency in a global language or inspired by older family members studying English. Children are exposed to contemporary international and English music which piques their curiosity about song lyrics. Furthermore, many students have personal computers and internet access at home, providing them with exposure to various English-language content and games. Thanks to advancements in technology, individuals can now easily connect with people around the world, access information about global events, and immerse themselves in foreign languages through various mediums such as TV, games, and social networks. This has made foreign language education an essential part of our lives. English has undeniably become the lingua franca and a symbol of our era, alongside concepts like globalization, economic integration, networking, and the Internet.

There are numerous reasons why starting English education at an early age is beneficial. The idea of "teaching English to young learners" underscores the significance of age in determining what and how we teach. Teaching English to young learners differs from teaching adults or teenagers in terms of their specific language learning needs, emphasized language competencies, and cognitive skills addressed. Experts believe that starting English education at a younger age can lead to higher levels of proficiency in the language. Research in language acquisition suggests that younger children have an easier time learning a second language due to the greater flexibility of their neural circuits. Early exposure to a second

language is also seen as a way to promote intercultural understanding and facilitate learning additional languages later on.

Studies have shown that learning English at a young age not only helps children better understand their mother tongue but also enables them to achieve significant proficiency in a second language. Introducing English education in kindergarten can also help children develop a deeper understanding of different religions and cultures worldwide.

Young children have unique needs, and teachers must be attuned to these requirements. Teachers play a crucial role as they may be one of the first adults a child interacts with outside their family. The initial separation from parents can be challenging, and teachers need to support children through this transition. Children may form strong attachments to teachers or exhibit varying emotional responses, and great teachers are adaptable and sensitive to their students' needs. In early childhood education, teachers must be creative and flexible. They need to step into their students' shoes, think beyond their own perspective, and engage children through hands-on activities like arts and crafts, storytelling, and educational games. Teachers often act as mediators when children face challenges in sharing or socializing with peers.

Children come to school with innate skills and instincts that they utilize for learning their native language as well as a foreign language like English. They possess a natural curiosity, creativity in communication, and a love for speaking. Children excel in indirect learning, have vivid imaginations, and quickly grasp the essence of messages conveyed to them.

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