



Teaching English to Young Learners through Songs

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Abstract: *Globalization brings a great impact of the use of English in any domains like business, education, IT and the like. English has become lingua franca one chooses to communicate with others having a different language. English has spread worldwide and this phenomenon has resulted in English teaching learning in primary level in many non-English-speaking countries. This brings a consequence to a crucial need in teachers' education. Teacher sat the primary level need to develop both competence in English use and teaching skills to young learners regarding their special characteristics. Theories in children development is needed by teachers to meet die special needs of children. One method suggested to meet those needs through songs. Song helps children to internalize some words and sentences in the new language. Songs also provide a link with their everyday lives and be fun. Songs can be used at any level of ages at any stage in a lesson. In the beginning of a lesson songs can be used to mark the change from one topic to another. Songs can be a break from another, more concentrate activity in the middle of a lesson and used to round a lesson of the end.*

Key words: *teaching, young leaners, songs, Piaget, Vygotsky.*

The world seems to be shrinking very rapidly as international barriers break down and people are able to get contact with other culture and languages easily. This so-called globalization of the world produces one effect that is the growing trend to use English as a world language. Nowadays, English is not a language for the English-speaking countries anymore. English has spread worldwide to the countries in the five continents. Today is the era after Modern English in which English has new status as a global lingua franca and it brings consequences that English is surrounded by new cultural, linguistics, political, and economic issues. The awareness of English importance in the globalization era has made people lean this universal language consciously and it brings issues to English language learning especially in non-English-speaking countries. Students start to lean English younger. It is not taught in secondary school anymore but started to be taught at primary school, even pre-school.

What theories are relevant to children's language learning?

When we are talking about how to teach English to young learners, we cannot separate it from talking about child development in psychology point of view. This article tries to rise the work of some experts in developmental psychology. Let's have a look two of them.

1. Piaget: the child as an active learner Piaget's cancer was with how young children function in world that surrounds them and how this influences their mental development. The child is seen as continually interacting with the world around him or her, solving problem presented by the environment. It is through actions in solving problem that learning occurs. The development of children passes through action or experience in different stage of age. Piaget assumed that children gained knowledge from experiences. Children try to make sense of the world through what they did, hear, saw, tasted, smelled, and they try to work the things out for themselves.¹



Piaget introduces two concepts in which development can take a result of activity. They are assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation occurs when an action takes place without any change to the child. Mean while accommodation involves the child adjusting to features of the environment in some way. For child new information can be either assimilated or accommodated. In assimilation new information is adapted to support old knowledge already established in child's mind. In accommodation, the child modifies or changes the present understanding to fit then even formation. If we apply this theory to children's language learning, then it is true the children learn from doing. We need to give them thinking time to be ready to face problems to solve. Children acquire concrete things faster than abstract ones, since they allow them to use their senses.

2. Vygotsky: the child as social

Vygotsky had a different point of view in seeing children. Whereas Piaget focused on child as an active learner alone in a world of objects, Vygotsky placed the child as an active learner in a world of other people. Although Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction, he still paid attention to individual cognitive development. He gave an idea that a child had a potential to reach his/ her present level within a certain zone. Zone of Proximal Development. To reach this zone we cannot leave the child alone, there must be an interaction with others either other children or adults with more knowledge. Learning to do things and to think are both helped by a social interaction. In language learning especially in non-English-speaking countries, the social interactions meet here is with teachers as children's model in acquiring a new language. Teachers need to get in touch with them using English and help them to express and extend their ability in English. Vygotsky also saw learning in terms of conflict-generating problem solving. Theories of those of two expert shave a great have a great influence in language learning. Understanding body theories help us a lot in dealing with children related to language learning.

Is teaching English to children different from adults?

There is a belief that we can give the same treatment to young learners, say. Children, and adults in teaching a language. Some teachers do not differentiate the teaching learning process of English to different ages. This belief is objected by those who know children's psychology well. Obviously children have different characteristics compared to adults.

1. Children have short attention span.

Children get bored easily especially when children have to deal with the material that to them is boring, useless,-and too difficult. Since lessons can at times be difficult for children, it is teacher's job to make it interesting, lively, and fun. Learning activities can be desired to get their interest and the material must be something familiar around them. A variety of activities can maintain children's interest and attention. Once students have interest in learning the language they will find it easier to understand and acquire it.

2. Children have a lot of natural curiosity.

Children are eager to know everything. It is their nature to be curious to explore the environment in greater detail. Don't let them down by not providing them with answers needed. Obviously it is an advantage in learning a new language if we can minimalize it and setup a situation to support it.

3. Children need to have all five senses simulated.

It will be easier for children to learn something if they use their five senses. Thus, activities should strive to go well beyond the visual and auditory modes that are usually sufficient for a classroom. Sensory aids help children to internalize concepts. The real rulers, the smell off



lowers, the beat of songs, the taste of food are important elements in children's language learning.

4. Children find it difficult to deal with abstract things and concepts.

Children are focused on what the new language can actually be used for here and now. They need to deal with authentic and meaningful language, so language taught needs to be firmly context-embedded. Generally, they have a holistic approach to language which means that they understand meaningful messages, but they cannot analyze it yet.

5. Children are sensitive.

Children egos are still being shaped. They do really care what others think of them and they are more consumed about themselves than others. Therefore the slightest nuances of communication can be negatively interpreted. Teachers need to build such an environment where children will feel confident and secure to overcome potential barriers in learning. It is important to establish a trusting relationship with the children and encourage them to do the same with their peers. Since children have special characteristics, it takes a very special way or method to make children acquire English effectively, especially from the activities. There are many ways we can do with the activities given to children. The activities should be simple enough for the children to understand what is expected of them. The task should be within their abilities: it needs to be achievable but at the same time sufficiently stimulating for them to feel satisfied with their work. The activities should be largely orally based;

To sum up the discussion above shows that song is one the learning resources in English teaching learning that is suitable for children regarding their characteristics. It is not, of course, the best since there is no the best method in English teaching learning. Many factors to consider influence the success of it. Teaching English through songs is one alternative for the children to acquire the foreign language easily and effectively. Songs can break down barriers among those who share the rhythm and meaning. Moreover, the repeated lyrics in songs allow the children to memorize and learn new words quickly. Since teaching is a developing art, which requires innovative and creative ideas to enrich its effectiveness, we must not hesitate to use songs in our classrooms. This resource can assist poor teaching while providing a relaxed atmosphere and motivated students. Such activities are student centered, hence, by using them we give a chance to our students to express themselves, enjoy themselves during learning, and use the reserves of their minds. So there is an undeniable fact that if our cancer is to provide a successful and beneficial teaching; we must consider to use songs as one way to bring the structural, pragmatic, prosodic and communicative aspects of language together, in our language classrooms.

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