

English Courses for Children Build Lifelong Skills

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Abstract: Language as a means of communication plays very important role in social relationship among human beings. The English Language is the first foreign language we teach to children at very early stages of schooling. The primary aim of teaching English in the early years of schooling is to motivate young learners to be ready and have self-confident in learning English at higher levels of education. In this article, I clarified the main specific features, problems and recommendations of teaching young children during language lessons.

Keywords—Snoopy, practicality, routine, TEYL, discipline

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is a way to introduce English as a foreign language to young students. While children may not have an understanding of why it is important to learn a second language, there are many reasons that answer the question, “Why is it important to teach English to young learners?” For instance, creating a fun and positive learning environment can equip kids with a strong foundation for success in more advanced courses later in their academic careers.

The immediate pictures of whom you are dealing with when teaching English to young learners might be small beings with their unique characteristics, such as impish expression on their faces, open smiles, adorable outfit, or probably disruptive behavior. It might then lead you to think of young learners as either easy or difficult 'creatures' to teach. If you think that young learners are just little beings who can only learn something simple you may be fascinated by the idea that they can be taught by everybody without having appropriate training. But if you think that young learners are human beings who can learn complicated topics, then you may think of teachers who have adequate training only who can teach them.

As yet there has been a growing awareness acknowledging that teaching English to young learners is not as simple as we once thought. It is not a matter of teaching a list of simple vocabulary. It is rather an attempt to help young learners learn the language efficiently and effectively with the help of their environment, such as teachers, their peer-groups, parents, and their class situation. As such, teaching English to young learners needs skilled-teachers who are willing to always improve their teaching skills as they are facing complex beings with subtle attitude. The question is, do we have enough skilled-teachers to do that?

It is a pleasant thing to hear that there has been an upsurge of interest in the world of teaching English to young learners in Indonesia in line with the inclusion of English language as one of the local contents in primary school's curriculum. This growing interest can give a positive

contribution to the development of English education to young learners as it might increase the number of English teachers needed for the teaching of the language. However, it can also create serious problems if it is not dealt with appropriately, as teaching English to young learners is often understood by many, as an easy job to do and can be done by anybody without regard to his/her teaching background. If we determine that teaching English to young learners can be done by anybody without considering his/her teaching skills, we would create a loophole, so to speak, which might drag young learners to a risky situation. This is because young learners are easily driven. If teachers are not well prepared and do not know with whom they are dealing, they will only create detriments to learners. It is in light of this context that EYL teachers must know whom they are teaching and how they have to deal with them.

Whom Are We Teaching?

In the history of language teaching there has been a number of important educationists offering their views about young learners or children as the subjects we are teaching, such as Locke with the idea of 'the child as blank slate' Piaget 'the child as active learner' and Vygotsky 'the child as social being'. Locke, with his idea of the child as blank slate, holds that children are born with their great potential for learning. Their minds, he maintains, may be viewed as white paper and are filled (nurtured) by the environment. It means that children are ready to be given knowledge by teachers. Thus, their way of learning tends to be teacher oriented, as the learning process is 'controlled externally by the transmitting authority rather than by the learner' (Locke, 1936 cited in Krogh, 1994: 42). Unlike Locke, Piaget believes that in the learning process children do not passively assimilate knowledge transmitted by the teacher. They actively operate on it, instead. "Children help reconstruct their own intelligence through active exploration of their environment" (Krogh, 1994: 43). This explains the tendency of the learners to become active self-builders. Bearing this in mind, we can assume that the teacher needs to provide a stimulating environment and act as facilitator if s/he wants to give efficient lessons to young learners. Similar to Locke, Vygotsky (cited in Cameron, 2001) says that children are actively exploring themselves. The difference is,

the children's exploration in Vygotsy's theory takes 'place in a social context, i.e. in a world full of other people, who interact with them (2001:6). They play a significant role in mediating the world for children and help them to solve problems.

Taking the Fear Out of Learning.

One of the most important aspects of teaching English to young learners is creating an enjoyable and creative learning atmosphere. To most children, learning

Materials	Teddy bears or puppets
	Red and yellow card
	Music
	Board pens

English is just another activity in their average day. Though it will take time for them to understand the future impact of what they are learning, the basic skills that these kids learn will prepare them for more advanced language courses.

Fun activities: Incorporating new words into songs and games helps children relax and enjoy the learning process. Using music also improves retention of new material.

Add variety: Young learners have very short attention spans, so having a diverse repertoire of activities to draw from will keep students engaged and motivated.

Learning the basics: Much of early curriculum is centered on alphabet, numbers and colors. Focusing activities on these topics allows for plenty of creativity in your lesson plans.

There are many rewards involved in working with children, including the enforcement of good habits. A disciplined learning style should be enforced early on and TEYL courses present a wonderful opportunity to learn how to establish good academic behaviors.

Commands: Children can learn behavioral discipline and a new language by using English commands.

Questions: Requiring children to use their new language knowledge to ask questions reinforces language skills and good behavior to carry on in their education.

Track Progress: Students need positive reinforcement to help them see the fruits of their hard work and stay motivated. Incorporating a system to track individual and class progress will contribute to a productive environment.

Why Teaching English to Young Learners Instead of Adults?

When it comes to teaching opportunities, many may question why to teach children rather than more mature learners. While topics covered by adults may be more relevant to instructors, children are still learning their native language and have the ability to rapidly progress through curriculum. Teaching young learners is a rewarding experience and provides invaluable skills to these young students as they progress through their education and on to their future careers.

Teaching English to Young Learners courses present an opportunity to make a significant impact in the

education of children across the globe. With a little creativity, correct TEYL training, and patience, English teachers can pass down timeless knowledge to youngsters to carry through their academic and professional endeavors later on in their lives.

How to deal with children in learning process?

How do you react when three of them are crying and don't want to be there? What do you do when they start crawling under tables or throwing bits of paper? How do you deal with the children who don't want to say or do anything? And how do you organise trips to the toilet without finding yourself with an empty classroom? Here are a few ideas which will hopefully help you to deal with these situations as easily and efficiently as possible so you can still teach some English!

2. In the beginning

You are a new person in their lives and quite possibly in a new environment with new rules. All of this can be very destabilising for very young children who are used to being around their parents and people they know. You really need to build up their trust before they can learn anything. When they come into the classroom be there to welcome them and use their names as much as possible.

Have three or four teddy bears lined up on your table and ask the tearful looking children to look after 'Snoopy' as he is very shy. They will love the responsibility and this will act as a distraction. You should always have the same teddies, or puppets at every lesson as they can serve to introduce new language or explain rules to games, etc. Have some quiet children's music playing while they come into the classroom to make the environment more welcoming.

3. Practicalities

When one child says he wants to go to the toilet suddenly everyone will want to go. You'll quickly get to know those who ask to go just as an excuse to leave the classroom. You should establish toilet or drinking water rules in the first few lessons. If there is another adult with you in the room then halfway through your lesson, at a convenient time for what you're all doing, you should organise a toilet run with either of you taking a handful of children at a time until everyone has been. If your lesson is shorter than an hour it might be more practical to arrange a toilet run before the class starts. Have some tissue in the classroom for blowing noses!

4. Routines

It's very important to always begin and end your lesson in the same way each time. The more children are familiar with class routines the easier they are to manage. At the beginning of your lesson you may have to take a register. This will provide you with a perfect opportunity to install calm before starting the lesson. Otherwise you can make up your own opening routines. You could have a 'hello song'

which the teddies sing to the children and then the children sing it to the teddies. Ask everyone to get their books and a pen out and to put their bags under the table before you start the lesson. Make sure all your papers are ready before the children come into the classroom so you can properly give them your undivided attention. If they are in the room before you then make your entrance as quickly as possible, lay out your materials without completely turning your back on the class and begin the class always with the same greeting. At the end of the lesson you could have a 'goodbye song' or simply a mini-conversation 'Thank you. See you next week. Have a good week.' Where the children repeat what you say. Get them to be quiet before saying this farewell and they will soon understand what they have to do at the end of each lesson. Don't just run out of a rowdy class at the end!

5. Discipline

You need to see what system works for you and the children you teach but you must have a 'system'! Children need to know what is expected of them rather than be told off and not know why. Draw two faces in the corner of the board at the start of each lesson, one smiley and the other sad. Write their names onto piece of card that you can keep for the year. Stick them onto the board in-between the two columns. If they do something good like participate, help a friend or tidy up after themselves then you can move their name over to the happy face column. This is great incentive for them and shows that you aren't just concentrating on the children who misbehave. If a child does misbehave you can move his name card across but give him the chance to move back to the middle and eventually to the smiley face column if during the rest of the lesson he does two good things. At the end of the class make a point of congratulating those who are in the smiley face column.

Like in football you can distribute yellow cards for minor naughtiness and red cards for mores serious misbehaviour. Two yellow cards can be replaced by red cards. Depending on what set up you're teaching in you can write something in their books or keep a record yourself of how many red cards they get. In any case speak to your school to see if they have a specific system. Seating arrangements are key to a well-managed class. Make sure you have eye contact with everyone. If they have their backs to you children are more likely to be distracted. If they are sitting in round tables then keep mobile yourself. Don't hesitate to change where they are sitting if you find they are easily distracted by sitting next to certain children. Shier children might feel more at ease if they can sit next to someone they get on with. Make sure they only have the bare minimum on their desks. A friend's pencil case can quickly become far more interesting than the lesson itself! Ban the use of pencil sharpeners if possible! If pencils break then sharpen or replace it yourself otherwise 5 year olds often love to spend hours sharpening a pencil down to the tip and then spilling the contents next to the bin not in it! In the first lesson you should establish a handful of memorable class

rules. These could include, no shouting, no going under or over tables, always listen to the teacher and your classmates, no throwing pencils etc. Explain these rules when you have everyone's full attention.

6. Large classes and mixed abilities

The reasons that children can be difficult to manage are often easier to deal with than naughty children themselves. They should always have something to do. They should always be challenged. If they are bored then they will soon play up. Help the children who don't understand. Use the stronger pupils as resources. Children love helping other children even at 5! Have a reserve of extra activities for those who finish very quickly. For large classes try to limit activities that are solely teacher-centred where everyone has to listen to you. By the same token 5-year-olds may find pair work difficult and need lots of guidance. You can't be everywhere at once. So the key is to vary the type of activity and grouping you use. Lots of children can mean lots of noise. The louder you shout, the louder they will become. If you want their attention then stand at the front of the class and put your hands on your head. It will take a few minute for the whole class to copy you but there will always be a few who are watching you and will be in intrigued by what you're doing. Slowly the class will become silent.

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