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DESIGNING COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES ON GRAMMAR TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This article has focused on the importance of communicative tasks for young learners in teaching grammar indirectly through grammar tasks, activities and games as well as on recommendations on how to design these tasks. Teaching grammar and designing communicative tasks or activities play an important role in language teaching process for young learners. Thus this paper also pointed out beneficial results of children's attitudes and motivation toward communicative tasks for teaching grammar in language learning.

KEYWORDS: *Communication, Activity, Design, Young Learners, Grammar, Children's Capacity, Task, Creative*

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is something that should be done naturally. Children learn to use their first language to communicate with people around them. They do not need any stationery to learn the language. But when they learn other or foreign language, they have such a kind of difficulty like: many things needed as learning media. This means that the process of learning a particular language should be as natural as possible to achieve the purpose: to communicate receptively. As well as adults, children even spend more than 45% of communication to listen. This can be a starting consideration for teachers that the beginning activities should make the

children listen and become interested in the English. Naturally, they will try to recognize the meaning and also the pattern. In recognizing the pattern, there will be an automatic process of grammar realization related to form and meaning of some particular expressions stated by the teacher. Children's language learning stages consist the things in which they should experience based on their psychological development. Playful stage is one of the characteristics of their life activities that cannot be ignored, especially in foreign language learning.

The communicative grammar tasks or activities designed for the present research work were created as production tasks. As the designers, we exercised a certain control over the language to be used, in order to make the targeted grammatical structures, if not essential, at least useful. In addition, they were designed as communicative tasks, so that there is place for negotiation and provision of feedback.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Grammar is helpful for effective language learning. It can be taught through different methods of second language teaching. Although the principles are different from one another, there is always a focus on grammar, whether explicit or implicit. [9:p.12-88]

In 1622 a certain Joseph Webbe, schoolmaster and textbook writer, wrote:

'No man can run speedily to the mark of language that is shackled... with grammar precepts.' He maintained that grammar could be picked up through simply communicating: 'by exercise of reading, writing, and speaking ... all things belonging to Grammar, will without labor, and whether we will or no, thrust themselves upon us.'

The important grammar purpose is to make a meaningful communication. When the students communicate meaningfully, it means that they already use correct and appropriate grammar. The performance of forming children's good communication can include the combinations of their social skill, skill of thinking critically, physical activities, and creativity. This valuable combination can make a complete set of learning activities in which the purpose is to make the students "busy" of doing their "games", however they are learning something out of their consciousness.

These activities can be adapted and modified according to the language level, the number and the needs of the students. The suggested activities and procedures can be carried out with different topics or grammar items as well. The presented activities exploit the children's capacity for interaction and talk; they build on their capacity and need for movement and play.

•Animal description

The teacher draws the following chart on the board.

Animal	Size	Colour	Touch
frog	small	green	cool
elephant	long	black	wet
fish	big	brown	hard
snake	short	grey, gold, blue	smooth

Children choose an animal from the given list and they are asked to describe the selected animal by combining the characteristic features in the above chart. The teacher demonstrates the activity by providing an example.

E.g. The frog. It is small. It is green and smooth.

After children have written their definitions, they read it to the rest of the class and the others have to find out which animal they are reading about.

The above list can be extended by several other animals and also by abilities of animals e.g. what the animal can do (e.g. jump, run fast, climb trees, etc.)

•Animal movements

Each student chooses an animal and an activity or movement that the animal can do. E.g. I am a fish and I can swim. I am a monkey and I can climb trees. I am a lion and I can run fast. I am a dog and I can bark. I am a cat and I can catch mice. I am a bear and I can eat a lot of honey. etc. The teacher helps learners choose animals and form correct sentences. As soon as everyone has it correct, learners stand in a circle and the first student says or reads his or her sentence aloud. The student next to him repeats, e.g. You are a fish and you can swim. I am a monkey and I can climb trees. The third student repeats the previous two sentences and adds his or her own. In large classes, students should be divided into two circles. An alternative of the activity can be that instead of saying You are a fish and you can swim, children say: He is a fish and he can swim. In this case children have to pay attention to using the right personal pronoun he/she.

Fruit salad

Children are sitting in a circle with no spare chairs. The teacher stands in the middle of the circle and assigns a fruit to each child going round the circle, e.g. apple, strawberry, banana, peach. Children are asked to remember their fruit. Then the teacher says one fruit, e.g. banana, all the children assigned the name banana have to stand up and change chairs immediately.

When the teacher says Fruit salad!, everyone should change chairs. The teacher plays a few rounds until the children get familiar with the game, and then sits down on one chair while the children are changing chairs so that one child remains in the middle of the circle and takes over as the leader and the game starts again.

This game can be used for practicing specific vocabulary and does not necessarily need to be limited to fruit names only. Any lexical set e.g. animals, food, vehicles, etc. can be used as an alternative. In case the teacher uses another lexical set, an alternative instruction to Fruit salad should be used, e.g. if the game is based on wild animals, the teacher can say Safari, if the game is based on food, the instruction could be Dinner time.

Grab the word and run

Students work in groups of three or four, each group occupying one corner or part of the classroom. In the middle of the class, there are different words placed on a desk or a chair, each written on a piece of paper. Every group gets a particular category of words and must get those words that fit into the category, certain words fit into more categories, so the group that is the most skilful gets them. Each student can go to the desk and grab only one word. Then, another

student takes over. The activity involves word distribution and can be used for both revising and introducing new parts of speech.

The categories can be: adverbs (e.g. cloudy, sunny, windy, foggy, hot, warm, etc.), adjectives (e.g. hot, warm, fat, slim, tall, short, tired, happy, sad, etc.), ing forms s (e.g. swimming, windsurfing, playing football, running, playing golf, etc.) or nouns p(e.g. head, hair, season , weather arm, leg, neck, hand, eyes, etc.).

Listening

Children get the text of the song **Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star!** (prepared and printed in advance)

Learners listen to the song and answer the following questions:

1. What is a Karakalpak for Little Star?
2. What is twinkling referred to?
3. What about the song?
4. Let's sing a song together

Sentence scramble

Children work in pairs or groups of three. Each pair/group receives a numbered envelope containing word cards. Children work with their partners and arrange the cards from the envelope on their desk to make a sentence. Each group receives a different set of words.

Possible sentences:

If it rains tomorrow, I will stay at home.

I went to play football with my friends yesterday afternoon.

Look at those clouds, it is going to rain.

We were having dinner when the taxi arrived.

I usually go to school by bus at 7 o'clock.

Toys

Students work in pairs, where one of them gets worksheet A and the other worksheet B. For this activity, the structure of 'has got' and 'have got' must be pre-taught. Students take turns and ask questions from their partner in order to complete the chart, e.g. Student A: Has Anvar got a ball? Student B: Yes, he has. Student A: Has Barno got a balloon? Student B: No, she hasn't.

In order to gather quantitative data, we developed a questionnaire with a total of 10 questions. The questionnaire consisted of 2 sections. The first section of the questionnaire included five motivation related questions with multichoice format. The main aim was to measure learners likes, dislikes toward communicative grammar tasks, and their reason to learn English. In the third section, the remaining ten attitude-related questions made use of a four point Likert style. The items in this section aimed to measure young learners' views regarding their English class communicative grammar tasks teaching inductively, their English book, their English teacher,

their parents' views about kids' learning English, and learning English in general. This Likert-type range was specifically designed for this age

group including 'yes', 'a little', 'no', and 'I don't know'. The format of the paper was made suitable for the age group as well supported by several different colorful pictures. In order to attract young learners' attention, rather than just marking, they were required to paint the boxes or smiles suitable for them. Students' classroom teachers and their English teachers were consulted during the questionnaire development process as well. All the questions were written in Karakalpak. The questions used in the personal interviews were similar to the items in the questionnaire. However, compared to the questionnaire data, it was possible to elaborate the answers to get deeper understandings of the young participants.

The quantitative data were gathered with the help of two different teachers responsible for teaching English in participants' classes. Kids were instructed to color smiles for their answers.. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics . Three flows of activities were followed for the analysis of the qualitative data: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification¹ .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF YOUNG LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING ENGLISH BY COMMUNICATIVE TASKS

Expressions	Yes		A little		No		I don't know	
	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F
1. I would like to continue learning English.	87.5	35	8.9	3	3.6	2	0	0
2. It is fun to learn English by communicative tasks such as games and singing songs	84.4	33	12.0	4	2.6	2	1.0	1
3. My parents say that learning English is important.	82.4	33	10.9	3	2.6	2	2.6	2
4. I like my English teacher	82.0	32	6.3	2	9.9	3	9.5	3
5. Our English book is fun.	80.2		13.5		3.6		1.0	
6. My parents are happy that I learn English.	79.7		11.5		4.7		4.2	
7. I like English.	79.6		16.2		3.7		5	
8. I'm looking forward to English classes.	73.4		15.1		9.9		1.6	
9. I am good at English.	56.8		35.9		6.3		1	
10. English is easy to learn.	42.9		47.6		9.4		0	0

Firstly, it was obvious that young learners had quite positive attitudes toward learning English by communicative tasks such as games and singing songs. Over 85% of these learners wanted to continue learning it and they found it fun to learn English by communicative tasks in a friendly atmosphere. Concerning the wish to continue learning English, F8 stated that: 'yes, I want to continue learning English, because I want to be an English teacher.' It was also obvious that learners' parents supported them in having positive attitudes because they were both pleased that their kids learned English and they explicitly stated that learning English was important for young learners. Except for 10% of the participants, all young learners liked their English teachers and for most of them their English book was fun. Regarding young learners' perceptions of English language learning and instruction, they had various ideas. To start with, when this research was conducted, learners could sing the song of alphabet, introduce themselves, meet someone, and say colors and numbers with their current English knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Teaching a foreign language to young learners is one of the most demanding, yet at the same time most challenging and rewarding tasks. The teacher needs to be a highly skilled professional who has to combine theoretical assumptions and background with practical experiences and the practical needs and circumstances of the foreign language classroom. The main aim of this work was designing communicative tasks or activities and to introduce and discuss theoretical assumptions and key issues that directly relate to foreign language teaching to young learners and to provide several strategies, techniques and concrete applicable activities for the practice of teaching young learners based on this theoretical background. Wherever possible, we have included concrete practical examples, tips and guidelines to illustrate and support our point.

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