

## Features of young learners in teaching foreign language

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**Annotation:** *This article is devoted to the investigation of main features of young learners in teaching foreign language. Teaching young learners involves much more than teaching the language. For the successful teaching of English in schools, it is essential for the teacher to understand the young learners' characteristics, instincts, and interests in their cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects, because this will play a crucial role in how the teacher builds a lesson. In this respect, these lines, in the first place, get the English teacher not only to understand general characteristics of the young learners, but also to recognize the qualifications as a primary English teacher.*

**Key words:** young learner, experiment, characterize, teaching, involve, development, autonomous, energetic, creative.

**Особенности юных учеников в обучении иностранному языку**

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**Аннотация:** Данная статья посвящена исследованию основных особенностей молодых учащихся при обучении иностранному языку.

Обучение молодых учеников включает в себя гораздо больше, чем обучение языку. Для успешного преподавания английского языка в школах учителю важно понимать особенности, инстинкты и интересы молодых учащихся в их когнитивных, языковых и эмоциональных аспектах, поскольку это будет играть решающую роль в том, как учитель создает урок. В связи с этим, эти строки, в первую очередь, заставляют учителя английского языка не только понимать общие характеристики юных учеников, но и признавать квалификации в качестве основного учителя английского языка.

**Ключевые слова:** молодой ученик, эксперимент, характеристика, обучение, привлечение, развитие, автономность, энергичность, креативность.

There has been a great effort over the last decade to embed the teaching of foreign language in schools. Learning a language at an early age can have a wide

array of benefits for a young learners' education.

As the child starts to get to grips with the language, they experiment with the different sounds and structures, sometimes finding great joy in discovering the double meanings certain words can have across two languages. Not only is language learning fun for the child, it encourages them to reflect on their own language and the way it works. It can also help build their confidence in using language creatively with others.

Young learners will learn best if the people involved in the teaching-learning process facilitate the learning and take into account the way they learn into the teaching practices. Piaget suggested that children developed through specific stages, they are:

1. Sensory-Motor Stage (from 0–2 years) in which children seemed to learn through physical interaction with the world around them.

2. Pre-operational stage (from 2–7 years) when children need concrete situations to process ideas.

3. Concrete Operational Stage (from 7–11 years) in which children begin to conceptualize and do some abstract problem solving, though they still learn best by doing.

4. Formal Operational Stage (from 1–15) in which children are able to use abstract thinking.

Young learners can be included into those aged 7–11 years or within concrete operational stage, where they learn best from concrete things around them. Piaget believed that children went through the stages above and that they could only move onto the next stage when they had completed the stage before and were ready to do so.

Another expert, Cameron, L believed that language was central to the cognitive development of children, that it was instruction provided by an adult that helped children learn and develop.

The distinction between Piaget's and Cameron, L's views was that while Piaget suggested that children work through different stages of learning on their own, Cameron, L maintained that there is a difference between what children could

achieve (and how they could develop) on their own and what children could achieve (and how they could develop) when an adult was able to work with them which was described as the zone of proximal development.

The support given by adults was described as scaffolding by McIlvain, A.. With scaffolding children develop and grow because the adults give support to their thinking and learning process. The term scaffolding is widely used in English language teaching when teachers provide support in the learning process to facilitate the learning either by providing the vocabulary or asking some guiding questions.

McIlvain, A. believed that children were able to cognitively develop by trying to make sense of the experiences that they had, and by asking questions and trying things out, or hypothesizing.

How do children learn language? Children all over the world acquire their native language without formal training and there are some theories regarding the language acquisition process. Chomsky believed that learning was innate, in the

sense that every child has an innate capability to learn a language.

This idea of Chomsky's was followed by the term Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) suggested by Eric Lenneberg who thought that there was a critical period, up to about the age of eleven, in which children were able to learn language. He believed that if language was introduced to children after this age (or this critical period) then it was extremely difficult for them to learn it. This hypothesis has often been cited as one of the main reasons for starting the teaching of foreign languages early in a child's schooling.

On the other hand, McIlvain, A. there is a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) supplied by adults, or more able mentors, that helps children to develop such a language acquisition device and that this input and support is crucial to the success of language acquisition in children. Children also learn about their world in different ways, using their preferred learning styles. They may be characterized as visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. A visual learner learns best if they see what is happening

and links to their understanding. On the other hand, an auditory learner will need to hear the input, while a kinesthetic learner will learn best if the learning involves physical movement.

Considering children's preferred learning styles is important because some research showed that there was a correlation between success in language learning and preferred learning styles.

If teacher has any experience teaching foreign language to young learners or working with children, then teacher will already have an idea of how to tackle this age group. Teaching young learners involves much more than teaching the language. For the successful teaching of English in schools, above all, it is essential for the teacher to understand the young learners' characteristics, instincts, and interests in their cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects, because this will play a crucial role in how the teacher builds a lesson, how he or she can make sure that the young learners are fully involved in the learning process, how he or she achieves the objectives of a lesson, and how they respond. In this respect,

these lines, in the first place, get the English teacher not only to understand general characteristics of the young learners, but also to recognize the qualifications as a primary English teacher.

Rather, teacher will be focusing a lot on managing their behavior and helping their development. Plus, you will need to consider their social, emotional and physical developmental stages as well.

Differences of young language learners from other language learners are following:

- Young Learners have short attention spans, so as the foreign language teacher you need to plan and be prepared for a range of different activities. These activities should be short and involve all the different senses.
- Young Learners cannot be as autonomous as older learners so they will need to be closely monitored and assisted in all the activities.
- Young Learners enjoy songs and playing games. Being a foreign

language teacher of young learners means being very energetic and creative.

- With young learner classes, you don't have the safety of being able to closely follow a textbook. Instead you will need to come up with interesting and engaging ways to expose the learners to the language.
- They respond well to praising. Always encourage them and praise their work.
- They differ in their experience of language. Treat them as a unit, don't favor those who know some English at the expense of those who do not know.
- They are less shy than older learners. Ask them to repeat utterances, resort to mechanical drills.
- They are imaginative. Use realia or pictures to teach new vocabulary related to concrete meanings.
- They enjoy learning through playing. Young learners learn best when they learn through games.

Let games be an essential part of your teaching.

- They enjoy imitating and skillful in listening accurately and mimicking what they have heard.
- They respond well to rewards from the teacher.
- They are imaginative but may have some difficulties distinguishing between imagination and real.

As the child discovers the intricacies of a language, they are also exposed to cultural beliefs and practices which are different from their own. The result is that they gain a greater tolerance of alternative viewpoints, subsequently becoming more aware of their own identity and their place within the wider world. Foreign language teaching therefore serves an important cultural function and works to add balance to the national curriculum. The teacher should not interfere in the learning process as an authority — if possible — or should rather act as a helper or facilitator.

Relating the theories above, come implications on teaching foreign language to young learners can be drawn on.

Firstly, knowing that young learners learn from the world around them, it is necessary that teachers provide a conducive environment for them to learn. Teachers should also make sure that the subject is taught in a very practical, hands-on way that they can interact with actual, physical and here and now or concrete aspects, which is appropriate with their concrete operational stage.

Following McIlvain, A. view, it is equally essential to support learning by providing support or scaffolding. This can be done by simplifying the tasks, providing the vocabulary, giving guiding questions or phrases, etc.

Teachers should provide adequate support to the learners, but not excessive, because a young learner's ability to hypothesize in the new language should not be underestimated. It is also advisable to remember that we are trying to provide opportunities for these learners to find out about and use the new language. The teaching and learning process should be connected with everyday life, and more importantly, should be fun. Young

learners have a short attention span so teachers should be ready with a rich variety of learning activities. Language teachers also have roles as mentors – who must support and scaffold the learning, and as modelers – who must provide good examples of the language in use. As a good model, teachers should make sure that they use the correct forms of language and pronunciation, because young learners imitate their teachers with deadly accuracy. Providing an incorrect model will lead young learners to fossilize the error until they are adults.

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