

Teaching English through songs- a guideline for English preschool teachers

Nguyen Le Thu*, Tran Thi Xuan Hang*

*ThS. Trường Cao đẳng Thái Nguyên

Received: 20/9/2024; Accepted: 25/9/2024; Published:30/9/2024

Abstract: The purpose of the article is about to guide English preschool teachers how to teach English for preschoolers effectively and help children to reduce the fear of communication in English, as well as create a funny and happy environment for kids to familiarize the basic knowledge of English at a very young age..

Keywords: Teaching English, songs, guideline, English preschool teachers

1.Introduction

In the trend of international integration, English is increasingly proving its superiority in helping countries develop economically and integrate globally. Therefore, English has quickly been incorporated into the curricula of many countries from an early stage. In Vietnam, English has been included in the teaching programs at preschools as reflected in Circular No. 50/2020 issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education on December 31, 2020, However, the quality of English teaching and learning in educational institutions has not been high due to various reasons, one of which is that teachers are not updated and equipped with new and modern knowledge and teaching methods. Therefore, this study focuses on how to help English teachers, especially preschool English teachers approach active English teaching methods all over the world and one of these is teaching English for kids through songs, which encourages children to communicate and speak English with joy and fun.

2. Content

2.1. What theory is relevant, to children Language Learning?

Piaget: the child as an active learner

Piaget's concern was with how young children function in world that surrounds them and how this influences their mental development (Cameron: 2001). 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.

2.2. Is teaching English to children different from adults?

2.2.1. 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 the teacher's job to make it interesting, lively and fun. Learning activities can be designed 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.

2.2.2. 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 maximize it and set up a situation to support it.

2.2.3. 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 of flowers, the beat of

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

2.2.4. 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.

2.2.5. Children are sensitive.

Children egos are still being shaped. They do really care what others think of them and they are more concerned 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.

2.3. Why songs?

Second language learners can benefit from songs. Through word/ sound play, many "chunks" of useful language can be incorporated into the individual's linguistic repertoire at almost at any age or level of proficiency. The use of prosodic elements, redundancy, and sometimes thought less repetitions produce lowered anxiety; songs rhythms and sound repetitions carry children into appealing activities to go beyond mere drill. There are other advantages offered by songs in language learning (Brewster, Ellis, and Girard: 2003).

- a. Songs present familiar language in new and exciting forms and in rich, imaginative context.
- b. Songs provide a lot of repetition.
- c. Songs can be used to develop all skills in integrated ways.
- d. Songs help improve all aspects of pronunciation.
- e. Songs are motivating and fun and help develop positive attitude toward the target language.
- f. Songs are non-threatening, and the more inhibited child will feel secure when singing and chanting as a class or in groups.
- g. Songs can encourage a feeling of achievement and build children's self-confidence by allowing

them to learn chunks of language which, they can "show off" or teach to friends or members of the family.

h. Songs help to develop concentration, memory, and coordination.

2.4. Criteria for a good song at preschools

2.4.1. Memorable

For children who can't yet read in English and don't live in English speaking countries, singing English songs to themselves is about the only practice they can get outside class without the help of their parents. Ways of making this happen include using a song with a catchy tune, using a seasonal song that they will hear or be reminded of when they are out and about, using a song that is about other stuff that they come across every day to remind them of it, and having accompanying actions

2.4.2. Easy to sing

Another common weakness of traditional children's songs is that the rhythm and tune make them difficult to sing. Therefore, you should avoid songs with particular high notes or low notes.

2.4.3 Easy to explain

Once you have dealt with the fairly difficult challenge of finding songs that ESL learners will sing, remember and even sing to themselves, you then need to make sure that what they are singing actually means something to them. Ways of explaining the meaning of what they are singing include doing actions as you sing using pictures that explain it, using an English version of a song they already know in their own language, and using a storybook based on the song.

2.4.4. Actions

As well as making the meanings of what they are singing clear, using actions also makes it easy to see if they are paying attention, means students who are too shy to speak out or sing can also take part in some way, and adds to the warmer element of songs. It is also a good way of making sure you can recycle the language from the song in other parts of the lesson. Almost any song can have actions added to it, but until you and the kids get used to the concept it is probably best to start with songs that involve touching things and doing everyday actions.

2.4.5. Repetitive

Repetition makes the song memorable, easy to sing and easy to adapt by changing words etc. It also teaches students what parts of the sentences usually

remain fixed and what parts can be replaced with their own ideas.

2.5. Stages of teaching songs for kids.

Songs can be used in many different ways: as warmness in the beginning of the lesson, as a transition from one activity to the next, to introduce new language, to practice language, to revise language, to change mood, to get everyone's attention, to channel high levels of energy, or to integrate with storytelling, games or topic work (Brewster, Ellis, and Girard: 2003).

There are some stages in using songs.

1. Set the context (build up the environment by explaining the purpose, background information)

2. Pre-teach any necessary vocabulary using visual aids, actions; realia, etc.

3. Play on cassette or sing to allow children to listen, show understanding, familiarize themselves with the rhythm, tune, etc. Teachers should not bother too much if they are not good in singing. It is not a singing lesson; singing is a means to transfer the knowledge only.

4. Do further listening activities, like matching; coloring, filling in gaps; etc.

5. Work on pronunciation awareness since songs provide a good model.

6. Invite children to listen, repeat, and practice by joining in and learning to sing. Encourage children to use actions, mime, drama, gestures, etc. They will help the children memorizing the words and their meanings.

7. Give a written record of text along with activities. It is better to avoid giving the script in the first time introducing the song, since it is easier for the children to listen first than reading especially since English words have differences in spelling and pronunciation.

8. Present or perform as a whole class, in groups, in rounds, in pairs, or individually. Here we set a goal for children, so they have motivation to reach it.

Finally, children can make a book class by compiling the songs given by the teacher. It will likely increase their good study habit. Teachers should be selective in choosing the songs since there are some songs that are not suitable for learning a language. Good songs must have clear topic to deliver the material, do not have too many new words since it will make the students think it's difficult. Right after children feel difficult their interest in learning

the language will fade away constantly. Repetition should be provided by the songs, so children will be able to memorize them easily. Songs that give enhances to children to act out the verbs in them will help making the atmosphere cheerful and alive, and it is good to keep the children's interest.

3. Conclusion

In short, teaching English for preschoolers is so challenging because of many reasons: the ages of the little kids, the short span of their memory, the shortage of facilities and especially slowness of changing approaches to teach English for this kind of learners. Kids at preschools need a funny and happy environment to learn English. Therefore, teaching English through songs is one effective method that supports children to learn English at a very young age. This method also helps children learn English for fun and joy and reduce their boredom in learning English and creates the foundation for them to learn English at another upper levels of Vietnamese educational system.

References

1. Brown, H.D (2001) *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. Second Edition.* San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
2. Cameron, Lynne. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Denis Yuksel (2016) *Using songs in teaching English to very young learner.*
4. Ikhfi Imaniah, M. Pd (2017). *Teaching English for young learners.* Publisher: FKIP UMT PRESS.
5. Magbule Mejzini, (2016), *Teaching English through songs, chants and rhymes.* Volume 1.
6. Yuliana. (2023) *Teaching English to younger learner through song.* A journal. Volume 5, Number 1.
7. Celce-Murcia M. (2001) *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, 3rd Edition.* Heinle ELT
8. Cross K. (2007) *Introducing English as an Additional Language to Young Children: A Practical Handbook.* Paul Chapman Publishing
9. Curtain, H., & Dahlberg, C. A. (2004). *Languages and children: Making the match.* Boston: Pearson Education.
10. Ersöz, A. (2007). *Teaching English to young learners.* Ankara: EDM Publishing Harmer.