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"THE EUROPEAN CHILD: LEARNING BY DOING 3'C – CONNECT, CONSTRUCT, CREATE "



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Defining the group

- YLS (YOUNG LEARNERS): 7-12 years
- VYL (VERY YOUNG LEARNERS): Under 7

How Children Learn

Children are active learners and thinkers (Piaget, 1970).

Children learn through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1962).

Children learn effectively by scaffolding through adults (Bruner, 1982).

Very Young Learners

- 3-6 years old
- Pre-literate stage
- Important skills: Listening and speaking
- Concrete and familiar concepts
- Games and songs

Young Learners

- 7-9 years old
- Literate at the basic level
- Important skills: Reading and speaking
- Activities should be attractive for them.
- Basic writing activities and TPR

- In *Very Young Learners*, “anything the children learn is a gain” (Reilly 7). The simple songs and repetition games can be useful because “they learn slowly and forget easily as they have a short memory” (Er 829). The attention span of this group is quite short. To keep their concentration alive, the teacher should use several activities and these activities should be repetition based.
- Young Learners’ age group is between 7-9 years old. Since they can read and write at the basic level, some basic writing activities can be done. Pictured word cards can be used. Even if they can read and write, the main aim is to develop reading and speaking skills for those learners. Just like Very Young Learners, their attention span is also short. They are usually enthusiastic but they are easily distracted by external causes and they affect each other very easily. The activities should attract all of the learners in order to avoid any distraction. Teachers should make different activities to keep their attention on the subject. Although they do not forget as much as Very Young Learners, they need revisions frequently. The frequent usage of some simple phrases such as good morning and thank you help Young Learners to learn them.”

Characteristics of young learners



FUN
SOCIAL
CURIOUS
ENERGETIC
SPONTANEOUS

Acquire through hearing and experiencing lots of English, in much the same way they acquire L1

Learn things through playing; they are not consciously trying to learn new words or phrases – for them it's incidental

Love playing with language sounds, imitating, and making funny noises

not able to organize their learning

not able to read or write in L1; important to recycle language through talk and play

their grammar will develop gradually on its own when exposed to lots of English in context



Harmer (2001) suggests VYLs tend to learn from what they hear, see, and touch rather than instruction and description.

It is a good idea to start with the topics they are acquainted with such as colors, greetings, fruit, food and drink, everyday sentences and phrases (Juhana, 2014).

Audio and visual aids like video, pictures and music contribute a lot to support learning (Brown, 2001).

They benefit from physical activities to explore the environment by experiencing and manipulating the objects around them (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990).

They eagerly discover the things and concepts from concrete to abstract (Pinter, 2006)



Very young learners

- *limited attention spans and intellectual development
- *easily distracted and bored (Brown, 2001).
- *one theme at a time (Shin, 2007)
- *not as persistent as older learners (Clark, 1990).
- *not have intrinsic motivation
- *make best use of visual and kinesthetic learning styles (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988).
- *willing to sing songs
- *vocabulary related to daily life
- *Interested in topics such as food and family, their immediate environment, experiences that they can see, feel, touch, smell, and taste, and chunks of language attract their attention.
- *their interest wanes so fast that the learning environment is to be organized flexibly

Physical and Motor Development

- *gives excellent clues on how they learn and make sense of the world around them.
- *physically very active.
- *activities including walking, dancing, and jumping let them make connections among themselves, objects, movements, and the environment around them (Morrison, 2003).

Cognitive Development

- *in the preoperational stage of intelligence according to Piaget's theory of cognitive development.
- *egocentric
- *explore and experience concepts and processes to understand.
- *concrete materials such as objects, pictures, stories, and videos.

Age Factor in Language Acquisition and Learning

- *younger learners have superiority over older learners in language proficiency. The advantage of early start in language learning is to reach ultimate proficiency especially in pronunciation.
- *Although older learners are cognitively more mature and perform better initially, younger learners have long term superiority over older learners.
- *age 6 is almost the endpoint to achieve native-like proficiency in phonology and there emerges allied problems in morphology and syntax after age 12 (Long, 1990)
- *social, environmental and individual factors should also be considered in young learners' success.



Pre-school children

are developing as thinkers

understand the difference between
the real and the imaginary

can plan and organize how best to
carry out an activity

can work with others and learn from
others

can be reliable and take
responsibility for class activities and
routines



Why teach children a foreign language?

- The earlier the onset of FLL, the greater the chances for language proficiency.
- Native-like pronunciation.
- Improved overall school performance and superior problem-solving skills.
- Enhancement of knowledge of native language.
- Development of lifelong ability to communicate with more people.
- Better understanding of other cultures.
- Competitive advantage in the work force by opening up additional job opportunities.

Young Learners have characteristics which distinguish them from teenagers and adults

Young Learners:

- have a short attention span.
- are very active (kinesthetic).
- are egocentric.
- love praise and reward.
- are less shy than older learners.
- enjoy imitating and are skilful in listening accurately.
- enjoy learning through playing, acting, making and doing.
- are imaginative.
- understand language as units not separate words.
- interpret meaning without necessarily understanding the individual word.
- learn indirectly rather than directly.
- develop physically, mentally and conceptually.

Motivation is a key factor in second language acquisition success

In the YLs' classroom motivation can be triggered by:

Considering their age and their level of language competence in L1 and L2.

adopting activities that are within their interests.

designing meaningful tasks.

integrating fun, play and imagination in the teaching program.

being prepared to act.

keeping the affective filter low .



Motivating Expressions:

That's good

You're right

Good work

Great

That's it

Excellent

Good remembering

Keep on trying

Keep up the good work

That kind of work makes me happy



Keep the affective filter low through caretaker talk

Teachers who adopt the caretaker's role:

- speak English in class all the time.

- keep children's attention by asking them questions.

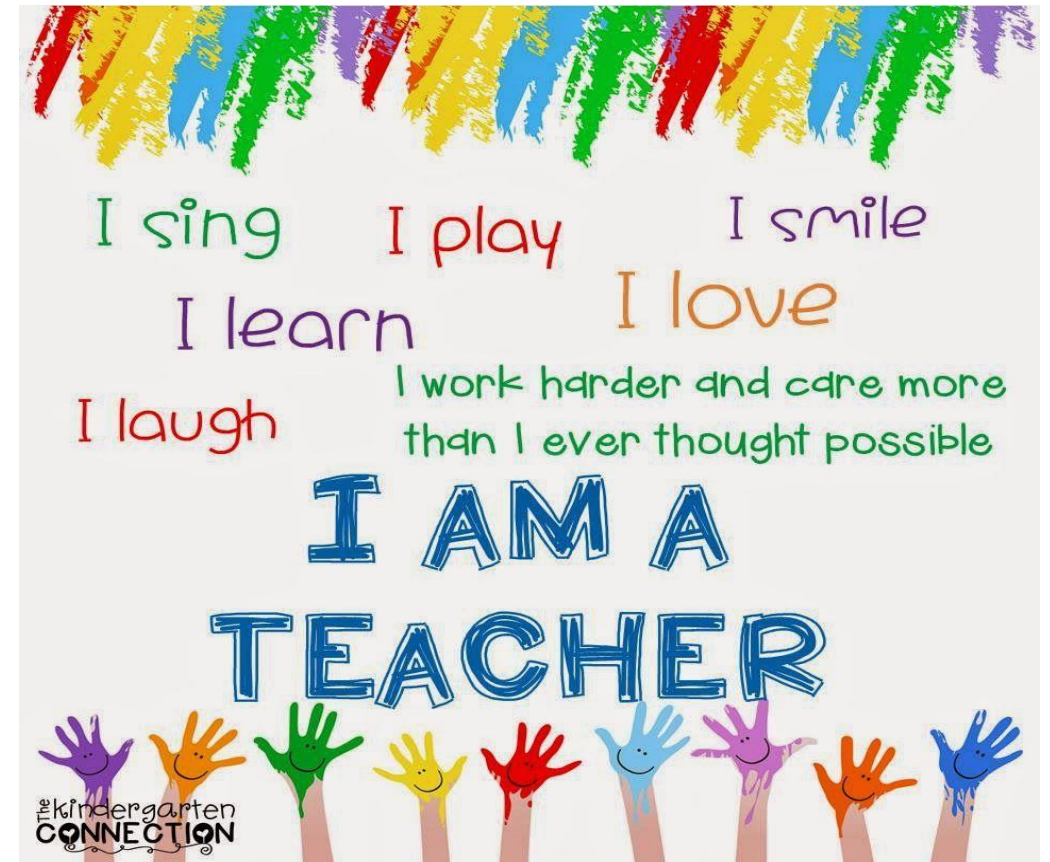
- react positively to what children say even if words are not complete or perfectly pronounced.

- repeat phrases said earlier.

- add to or improve what children say.

- with very young learners facilitate understanding of instructions and tasks through use of L1.

- treat errors quietly.

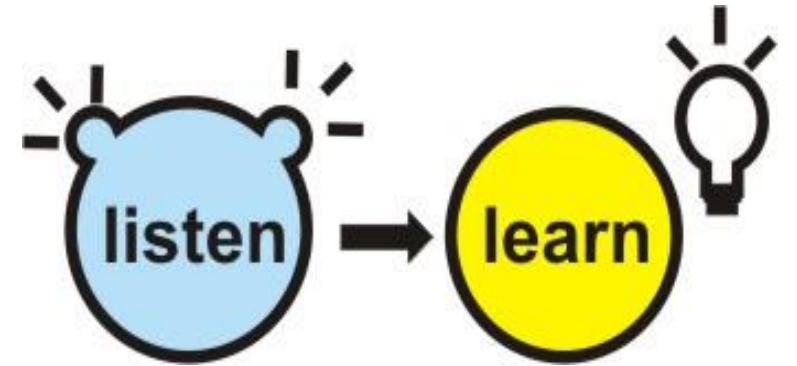


Language learning should begin with listening.

This is the first skill children practice in L1, so it is natural to begin with listening especially with very young learners.

Lower age group: teacher talk, songs, rhymes, stories.

Upper age group: listening comprehension activities to develop strategies.



Why is listening important for children?

Rich source of data to begin to build an idea of how language works.

Safe space for learners who are not ready to speak the language / talk.

Chances to focus on the language used and demonstrate has been understood.

Opportunities for non-verbal support (e.g. Pictures) - essential for learners who cannot read,

Rich source for language forms to repeat or imitate,



L I S T E N

**I remind myself every morning:
Nothing I say this day will teach me
anything. So if I'm going to learn, I
must do it by listening.**

-- Larry King

Teaching Listening

- Children should start with easier “listen and do” activities.
- The teachers often talk a lot in the target language because they provide the language input.
- The teachers use “language modification” to avoid and solve misunderstandings, like repetitions, comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks, TPR, and listening to stories.

TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE



Total Physical Response (TPR)



What is TPR?

TPR is an approach to teaching a second language, based on **listening** linked to **physical activities** which are designed to reinforce comprehension.



BASIC PRINCIPLES OF TPR

- @ Listening ability and vocabulary must be developed first.
- @ There must not be any stress in the class.
- @ Regular repetition.
- @ Action verbs are the core of TPR.
- @ TPR is also technique of teaching vocabulary.
- @ No forcing but exploit the student's errors for exposing others structure points.
- @ expose the natural use of language.
- @ Create an artificial English community in the classroom.
- @ The more often we trace memory and the more intensively we repeat, the stronger the memory associations are and the more likely it will be recalled.



When is TPR used?

TPR can be used to teach and practise many things.

Vocabulary connected with actions (smile, chop, headache, wriggle)

Tenses past/present/future and continuous aspects (Every morning I clean my teeth, I make my bed, I eat breakfast)

Classroom language (Open your books)

Imperatives/Instructions (Stand up, close your eyes)

Storytelling

Why should TPR used it in the classroom?

- It is a lot of fun, students enjoy it and it can be a real stirrer in the class. It lifts the pace and the mood.
- It is memorable.
- It is good for kinaesthetic learners who need to be active in the class.
- It can be used in large or small classes.
- It works well with mixed-ability classes. The physical actions get across the meaning effectively so that all the students are able to understand and use the target language.
- It doesn't require a lot of preparation or materials. As long as you are clear what you want to practise (a rehearsal beforehand can help), it won't take a lot of time to get ready.
- It is very effective with teenagers and young learners.
- It involves both left- and right-brained learning.

Teaching Speaking:

Children do not have to be able to produce complete sentences/questions to initiate an utterance.

After they have been exposed to English through listening, they soon want and are able to participate in interactions with the teacher and each other.

Using “unanalyzed chunks”, children can remember phrases from previously heard input and use them without conscious analysis.

Singing songs also can be used.

Support children’s early efforts in speaking by: - Look at what they have done and talk about it, even if they won’t understand everything you say.

Give your shy pupils more chance to talk to you individually. - waiting for their responses - repeating what they say in English - frequently summarizing what different pupils say.

Give children lots of opportunities to speak, BUT ... - Don’t pressure on children to speak if they are not ready - Remember: silent children are still likely to be listening and learning

The initial stages in teaching speaking

Use Formulaic language:

Simple greetings: Good morning, how are you?/ I'm fine, thank you. And you?

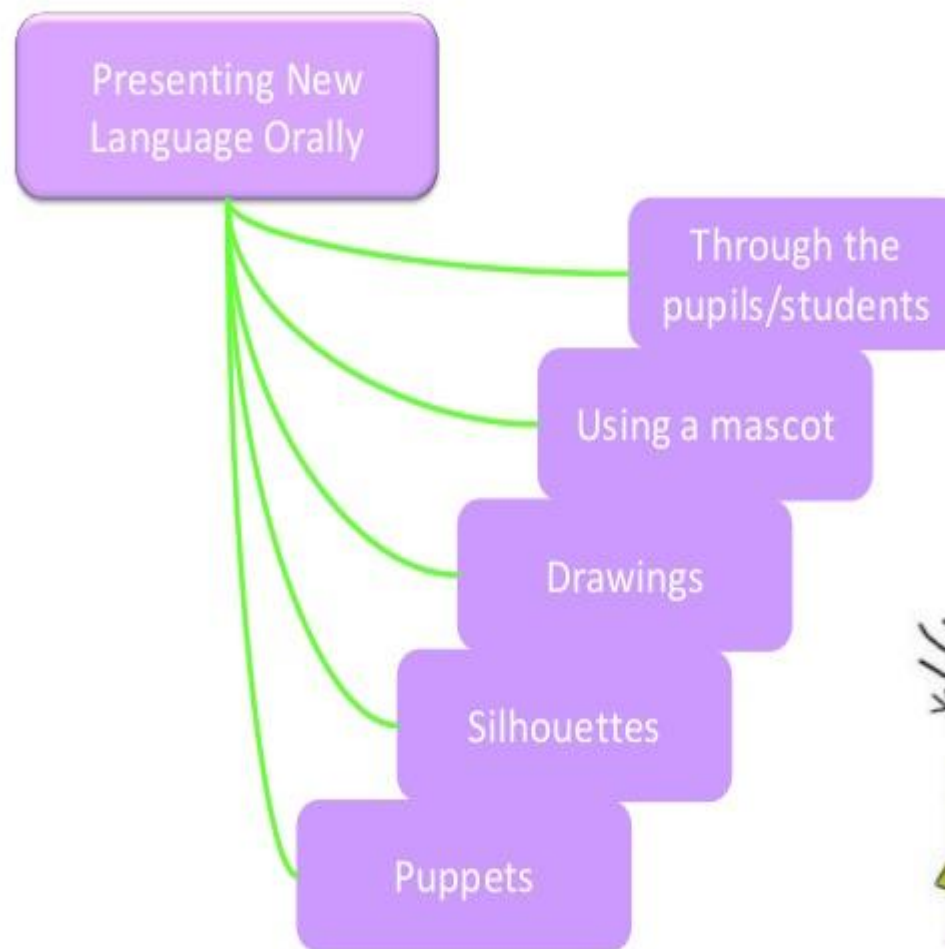
Social English: Did you have a nice weekend?/ Have a nice weekend!

Routines: What date is it today?/ What day is it today?

Classroom language: Listen. Repeat. Sit down. Work in pairs. Good.

Asking permission: May/Can I go to the toilet, please?/ May I wash my hand?/Can I look at the book?

Communication strategies: Can you say that again, please?/How do you say... in English?/I don't know.





Using puppets to introduce dialogues

- Young learners are often aware that children feel more comfortable talking with a puppet than with an adult.
- The use of puppets is very appropriate in the young learners' classroom.
- A child who developmentally is too shy to speak to an adult in front of his peers, may feel very comfortable when the same adult is holding a puppet and speaking to the child as the puppet.
- Puppets also make the language learning activity

Teaching-Learning through Songs

Songs add a whole dimension to children's classes and make it easier for the children to remember words and pattern and natural chunks of language.

Songs can add feeling and rhythm to language practice that might otherwise be flat, help children remember things more easily, and draw children more deeply into a lesson.

Songs should have catchy melody/adapting popular songs. Saying rhymes and singing song can practice pronunciation, stress, and intonation.



Classroom methodologies and activities

- Learning new words
- Vocabulary revision
- Action stories
- Listening activities
- Songs and chants
- Stories
- Extra activities
- Thinking skills development

Smiley or sad: Put a picture of a smiley face on one side of the classroom and a sad face on the other. Say e.g. I like bananas! Children repeat the sentence and go to the smiley face if they like bananas. They say nothing and go to the sad face side if they don't like bananas. Repeat the procedure naming different foods or other familiar vocabulary.

Musical bumps: Play any music and children dance. Every so often pause the music and say a colour e.g.Red! Children with red on their clothes sit on the floor. Repeat the procedure several times naming different colours the children know.

Colour dice: Make two large dice by covering two boxes with paper and colouring a circle of red, yellow or blue on each side. Children take turns to throw the dice and call out the colour. When the colours on both dice are the same, everyone claps.

Circles in the air: Move your index finger in large circles in the air and get the children to do the same. Say e.g. Touch yournose! and move your finger to touch your nose. Repeat the procedure several times alternating instructions for children to touch different parts of their body and to repeat the word each time.

Concluding remarks

Overall, in early stages of language learning, children may not be so enthusiastic about taking part in conversations.

Therefore, fixed collocations encourage them to take over and participate and thus the input they're exposed to increases.

Songs, rhymes, and classroom routines are best to teach ready-made bits of languages (Moon, 2000).

- 1 Listening comprehension has priority
- 2 Learning needs to be fun, so all senses are engaged
- 3 Tasks need to be action-oriented. As young learners have a lot of energy but minimum concentration, it is better to engage them in physical activities within concrete environment.

Recommendations

-No national curriculum and formal education of English language teaching and assessment in preschool education in Turkey.

-policy makers, curriculum and material developers should work on a common core standards in the light of the previous studies and needs of children according to their age.

-not applied by the professionals most of the time which lead to lack of or misapplications of teaching methods and assessment.

-it is suggested that there should be specially designed curriculum for English teachers who will teach English to VYLs.

