

TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH PLAYING A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Abdivaitova Munira Olim qizi

Termez state pedagogical institution.

Student.

Supervisor: Qurbonova Gulnoza Abduholiq qizi

Termez state pedagogical institution.

Teacher

+998907484744

gulnozaqurbonova@mail.ru

Annotation: This article explores the methodological approach of teaching English to preschool-aged children through play. It highlights the significant role early language acquisition plays in a child's cognitive and social development. The article emphasizes how play-based learning provides an engaging and stress-free environment, where young children can absorb English naturally. Through activities such as games, songs, role-playing, and storytelling, children practice and internalize new language skills while having fun. The article also discusses the benefits of contextual learning, the importance of repetition, and the use of visual aids to support language acquisition.

Keywords: preschool children, English language, play-based learning, early language acquisition, games, songs, role-playing, cognitive development, social skills, visual aids.

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of introducing foreign languages at an early age. Among various approaches, teaching English to preschool children through play has gained significant attention. This methodology is not only fun but also effective in helping young learners absorb new language skills naturally.

The early years of a child's life are crucial for language development. At this stage, children are highly receptive to learning new sounds, words, and structures. Introducing English at the preschool level provides a head start, allowing children to develop bilingual skills that can benefit them in later life, both cognitively and socially. Play-based learning offers a safe and engaging environment where children are motivated to interact with the language through enjoyable activities.

Play allows children to learn in a stress-free environment, making them more motivated to participate. Instead of traditional memorization, play-based learning encourages children to use English in real-life situations, increasing their ability to understand and speak the language. Socially, play often involves interaction with peers, which is essential for language development. By communicating with others, children practice listening and speaking, which are foundational skills in learning any language. Group activities, games, and role-playing can also promote teamwork and help children develop social skills.

In play, children are exposed to the language in context, which makes it easier for them to understand how words and phrases are used in real conversations. This approach contrasts with rote learning, where vocabulary is often learned without context and may be forgotten more easily. Interactive games like "Simon Says," "Guess the Word," and "Memory Match" are perfect for encouraging children to use English in a fun and dynamic way. These activities can

focus on various language skills such as vocabulary building, sentence formation, and comprehension.

Songs and rhymes are a wonderful way to introduce new vocabulary and grammar structures. Repetition and melody help children remember words and phrases more easily. Simple songs with actions or gestures can also help reinforce meaning. Role-playing activities, such as pretending to shop or visit the doctor, encourage children to use English in practical situations. These activities allow children to experiment with language and develop conversational skills in a safe, supportive environment.

Storytelling, whether read aloud or acted out with puppets, is an excellent method for expanding vocabulary and teaching new concepts. Children can listen, understand, and later retell the story in their own words, reinforcing language learning. It is essential to create a safe and supportive environment where children feel free to make mistakes and experiment with the language. This fosters confidence and encourages active participation.

Consistency and repetition are key to successful play-based language learning. Regular exposure to the language through games and activities will help reinforce new words and structures. Repetition also aids in retention and understanding. Activities should be age-appropriate and engaging for the child's developmental stage. Adjusting the difficulty of tasks ensures that children remain challenged without feeling overwhelmed.

Visual aids, flashcards, and props can enhance understanding and make learning more interactive. Children learn best when they can connect words with pictures or physical objects. These materials also help children retain new vocabulary more effectively by providing context to the words they are learning. For example, picture cards can be used to introduce new vocabulary and aid in comprehension. Toys and puppets can bring these words to life, making the learning experience even more memorable.

To further enhance language acquisition, it is crucial to involve parents and caregivers in the learning process. When children are exposed to English both in the classroom and at home, they are more likely to retain what they have learned. Parents can use simple English phrases, songs, and games with their children to reinforce what they have learned. Regular communication between parents and teachers is also key to supporting the child's progress in language acquisition.

Another important aspect of play-based learning is fostering a child's curiosity and imagination. When children are encouraged to think creatively through pretend play, they develop problem-solving skills and learn to navigate various social situations. For example, during a role-playing game where children take turns being doctors, patients, or customers, they practice not only language but also empathy, patience, and cooperation.

By incorporating cultural elements into play activities, children also gain a broader understanding of the world around them. For instance, songs, stories, and games from different English-speaking countries can help children become familiar with cultural nuances and traditions, further enriching their language learning experience.

Moreover, the role of the teacher or facilitator is critical in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. A supportive and enthusiastic teacher can inspire children to engage actively in language learning activities. Teachers should encourage children to express themselves in English, praise their efforts, and provide constructive feedback to help them improve. In this way, teachers can foster a love for the language and build a positive attitude toward learning.

In conclusion, teaching English to preschool children through play is an effective and enjoyable way to introduce a new language at an early age. The method promotes natural language

acquisition by focusing on fun, interactive, and context-driven activities. By using play as a tool, educators can help young learners build the foundation for future language proficiency while fostering a love for learning. With the right approach, preschool children can develop strong English skills that will benefit them for years to come, both academically and socially. Play-based language learning not only nurtures linguistic abilities but also supports the overall development of the child, making it a valuable teaching strategy in early childhood education.

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