

VISUAL AIDS AS USEFUL TOOL IN TEACHING VOCABULARY IN EFL CLASSROOMS TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract.

This article aims to demonstrate the use of visual aids in teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom and their impact on Young Learners. The study analyzes the effectiveness of various visual materials such as pictures, posters, postcards, word calendars, realia, charts, graphic organizers, picture books, and videos in helping Young Learners comprehend the concepts and learn effectively.

The use of visual aids in teaching can result in varied responses and expressions from young learners due to their diverse educational and cultural background. These aids aid in the comprehension of topics by illustrating their deeper meanings and pointing out similarities and differences. It is crucial for teachers to recognise that children expect visual aids in their English lessons as their day-to-day use of the language is often associated with images, colours, and sounds. Visual aids have all the essential characteristics of an effective teaching aid, and it is the responsibility of teachers to employ them in the learning process. This is because such aids enable young learners to process information using an additional sensory perception.

Keywords.

visual aids, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), language skills, young learners (YL)

Introduction

English has four aspects and skills that must be known by the learners. The four aspects are spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Depending on the improvement of these aspects, one can develop the four fundamental skills in English: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Expanding one's vocabulary is crucial because limited knowledge of words in English can make it difficult for learners to express themselves effectively. Knowing a wide range of words can enable learners to express their thoughts clearly through the language. Additionally, teaching spelling, pronunciation, and grammar to beginners becomes impossible without first learning the words. Therefore, it is essential to begin

vocabulary development at a young age, with a qualified teacher to guide the process. Children are particularly apt at learning words due to their ability to absorb new information, and thus it is critical to utilize their word-learning capabilities to the fullest.

Methodology

Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. Vocabulary is, according to Hatch & Brown, a list of words that speakers of a language use [1]. Many other scholars state the importance of vocabulary. For instance, McCarthy underlines the importance of vocabulary by saying: “No matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way”.

[2]

Jeremy Harmer states the importance of vocabulary by saying: “If language structure makes up the skeleton of the language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh”. [3] Harmer further states that an ability to manipulate grammatical structure does not have any potential for expressing meaning unless words are used. Visual materials help YL to motivate them to speak, to create a context with which their speech will have meaning. Porter and Margaret assert that using visual materials not only make what you have to say more comprehensive to YL, they can make it more interesting as well. [4] Most of what we learn we get through visual medium, so that is why the use of visual materials is very important in teaching English as they commit information to long-term memory.

Teaching young learners is different from teaching adult. It is absolutely more difficult. It is due to their age that is too young. In teaching them, the teacher should raise their will in joining the learning process. As stated by M. Williams, “children learn better if they have a positive attitude towards what they are doing and if they are motivated or want to do it.” (Williams, 1991:207). Therefore, the teacher is suggested that he make an interesting learning activity to the student in order that they can understand well and the learning process can run well too. Hence, the use of visual aids in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms can be very effective in supporting and enhancing language learning. Here are some ways visual aids can be used:

- 1. Realia:** Real-life objects related to the lesson’s topic can be brought to the classroom to support learning and provide a context for students. According to Gower (1995, p.149), there are several ways that can be used in teaching English

namely realia, mime and gesture, give example, give explanation or definition, translation, and concept question. In this case, the researcher uses realia to overcome the students' problems. For example, if the lesson is about food, bring in actual fruits and vegetables.

2. Pictures and images: Visual representations can help students understand a concept or vocabulary word. Teachers can use posters, flashcards, or even PowerPoint presentations to display illustrations related to the lesson.

3. Videos: Short video clips can be used to help students practice listening skills, increase comprehension, and learn about different cultures and contexts. For example, watching videos about customs, traditions, and celebrations in different countries can be a fun way to expose students to the English language.

4. Infographics: Infographics are visuals that summarize information or data in an engaging and easy-to-understand way. EFL teachers can use infographics for vocabulary-building and to support listening and reading comprehension.

5. Mind maps and graphic organizers: These visual tools help students organize their thoughts and ideas. EFL teachers can use them to help students understand sentence structures, grammar rules, and new vocabulary words.

When teaching EFL students, there are many types of graphic organizers and mind maps to choose from, depending on the learning objectives, content, and level. For example, Venn diagrams are used to compare and contrast two or more concepts, items, or groups. KWL charts help students to record what they know, want to know, and have learned about a topic. Story maps allow students to identify and analyze the elements of a story, such as characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. Concept maps show the hierarchy, categories, and subcategories of a concept or topic. Flow charts illustrate the steps, stages, or processes of an action or event. Finally, mind maps are great for brainstorming and organizing ideas around a central topic or question.

Results and Discussion

In teaching English to young learners, it is crucial teaching the language using appropriate and enough Visual aids in the learning process as they provide a way to enhance comprehension and retention of information. Here are some of the significant benefits of visual aids for elementary level learners:

1. Increase Engagement: Visual aids are a great way to capture the attention of young learners. With the help of images, videos, and other visual media, children can better connect with the topic at hand, and maintain their focus on the lesson.

2. Enhance Memorization: Visual aids can aid students in remembering information by providing a visual representation of mathematical operations, scientific principles, grammar rules, and other topics.

3. Provide Contextualization: Visual aids can assist elementary level learners with making connections between those seemingly different pieces of information.

4. Support Accessibility: Visual aids are an incredibly valuable tool for learners with disabilities such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorders. Utilizing visual aids not only helps them perform better, but it can also boost their self-esteem.

Conclusion

Using visual aids in teaching vocabulary to young learners has several benefits. It helps in the retention of information, stimulates interest, aids in understanding, addresses different learning styles, and enhances language learning. Visual aids make learning a memorable and enjoyable experience and make complex language more accessible to learners.

Therefore, utilizing visual aids in the classroom is essential, particularly in the elementary level, as the young learners' capacity to absorb information is still developing, and visual aids can help children to comprehend and recall information effectively.

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