

A COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

This paper compares the effectiveness of two teaching techniques for young learners of English. The two techniques are the bilingual and visual aids and gestures approaches. These two techniques were selected for this study based on the frequency they are used in the English teacher's classroom and their popularity with the students when they are used by the teacher. First a background explanation is given discussing where, when, and how the research was conducted. This is followed with, an explanation of each approach. A description is given explaining the strategies used and how they were implemented in a classroom setting. Each technique discusses in detail the process that was taken to create lessons including the preparation before class, the roles of the teacher(s), and the expectation of the students, followed by the advantages and disadvantages of each technique. Both the advantages and disadvantages discuss issues outside of the classroom such as cost and time to implement these techniques. By using these approaches, it is argued that it helps students achieve their academic goals. This paper also explains issues that the reader must be aware of when using each approach. The paper concludes with an assessment of both approaches and a recommendation on when to use each specific approach.

Keywords: Bilingual approach, Visual Aids and Gestures, English as a Foreign Language (EFL),

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom management relates to how a teacher will conduct their lessons and how students will learn. Researcher Sukirmiyad (2017) believes that teachers of foreign languages should use specific methods in their teaching so that their students will achieve their educational goals, for example when teaching young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), it is important that the educator not only shows a great deal of enthusiasm but also has a pleasant demeanor and is prepared for their lessons. In this paper, the advantages, and disadvantages of several teaching approaches to teaching EFL students will be examined. This paper will look at the use of a bilingual approach compared to using visual aids and gestures. The goal of this research is to determine whether there are any distinct advantages to using one technique over another when teaching English to kindergarten students in Japan. This paper will compare the bilingual educational approach and visual aids and gestures educational approach to consider the effectiveness of each technique in teaching young learners of English. This paper will first explain these two strategies in detail and give examples of how each technique was incorporated into classes. Then, a discussion will follow on the advantages and disadvantages of each technique. Finally, this paper will conclude with a summary of

which technique was more beneficial to students based on the researchers' opinions.

1.1 Background

This research was conducted at Osaka Shoin Women's University kindergarten school. This school had two classes of five- and six-year-old students. Each class had approximately twenty students. Each class was taught a total of eight times over a fifteen-week period in the first semester and another eight times over a fifteen-week period in the second semester. The lessons were forty minutes in length and taught one after the other. This means that when the first lesson was completed the teachers would move to the next classroom and teach a new set of students the same lesson. The only difference between the first and second half of the year was that the teacher's assistant changed classes so the bilingual technique could be used on different students. The educators consisted of one native English speaker and several native Japanese speakers who are university students studying to get their teaching licenses.

2. BILINGUAL APPROACH

2.1 Explanation

The bilingual technique of teaching kindergarten children English includes several different strategies. These include using the children's native language to teach vocabulary, having a native speaker assist in the teaching process, incorporating songs and rhymes in both the student's native language and English, and using dual-language books so that the children can see the text in both languages.

The bilingual approach involves the use of two languages: the language already known to the learners and English. This technique is mainly used when learners have limited knowledge of the English language. Using the learner's first language helps them to understand the meaning of English words, expressions, and grammar structures. This approach uses a learner's first language as a vital tool to be used to explain the meaning of vocabulary and grammar, creating a direct link between the meaning of an English word and the same word in the learner's first language.

During our lessons, there was one native English-speaking teacher and at least one native Japanese-speaking teacher in the classroom. The lessons followed the same pattern, with the Japanese teacher explaining the activities after the English-speaking teacher had introduced them. The class would begin by teaching a set of words from a pre-selected word family. The family of words would deal with a specific subject, such as "numbers," "colors," or "family." The English-speaking teacher would read out a word to the children, which the students would then repeat to practice their pronunciation. The number of words in each word family depends on the frequency of usage of the words, but in an ideal scenario, between seven and ten new words would be taught each lesson. The Japanese-speaking teacher would then ask the students if they knew the meaning of the word in Japanese and elicit responses. The English-speaking teacher would repeat the word and the Japanese-speaking teacher would ask in Japanese if the students could say the meaning in Japanese. This would continue until all the words in the word family were practiced and understood.

After practicing the new vocabulary, a song and or rhyme in both the student's native language and English would be incorporated into the lesson. Depending on the lesson, information about grammar and structure would also be introduced using the same method, where the English-speaking teacher would explain using words and gestures and then receive confirmation of understanding from students in their native language.

This would be followed by an activity or game. The English-speaking teacher would first explain the activity in English using gestures to help the students understand the meaning. The Japanese-speaking teacher would then ask the students if they understood the explanation, at which time the teacher would ask students to explain in Japanese. If they were able to do so without mistakes, then the lesson would progress. If there were issues with the students' understanding of the instructions, the English-speaking teacher would explain the difficult sections of the instructions once more, and then the Japanese-speaking teacher would give hints or explain them in Japanese. In this example, the students would get into groups of four or five students. One student from each group would go to the front of the class, and the Japanese-speaking teacher would show them a vocabulary word from the word family they had just learned. The teacher would ask if the student knew what the word meant in Japanese and ask them to practice the pronunciation in English. The child would then act out the occupation in front of the class, and the group members would need to decipher which job it was. Firstly, the students would say the job in their native language, and if they were correct, the group would receive one point. The group would then be asked if they knew the word of the occupation in English. The group would discuss amongst themselves and then give their answer. If the group was correct in responding in English, they would receive an extra two points. By doing this, the group was encouraged to

not only use their native language but also to work together to correctly repeat the word in English.

Finally, the class would end with 'Storytime'. The students would sit around the English-speaking and Japanese-speaking teachers, who would take turns reading the same passages from a bilingual book. The English-speaking teacher would first read the passage. Prior to the Japanese-speaking teacher reading, the English-speaking teacher would ask questions to see if the students understood what was being said. If the children had a solid understanding of the meaning of the passage the Japanese teacher would then read the same text in Japanese.

2.2 Advantages

A lot of research has been done on the bilingual method of teaching English. DeNicolo (2016) showed that the bilingual approach was more effective than using an all-English teaching method in helping students achieve their academic goals. Using the bilingual approach in teaching young learners of English has numerous advantages. Firstly, it allows learners to grasp the meaning of the new vocabulary and grammar, thereby making it easier for them to learn English. Learners are able to communicate their thoughts and ideas in their first language, which makes learning English more enjoyable and helps boost their confidence in the classroom. Secondly, the bilingual approach is beneficial in situations where learners have limited knowledge of the English language. Using their first language allows learners to quickly grasp the meanings of words in the new language. Encouraging learners to use their first language can also help prevent them from slipping into silence. In a study done by Krashen (1985), it was argued that learners could acquire language through receptive skills, reading, or listening, but there is a limit to the number and types of comprehension activities available when using an all-English teaching method, as they provide little chance to engage students in the classroom. This means that with the bilingual approach, students may be more eager to participate in and contribute to activities because they are allowed to use their native language as well as English. To add to this point, Tomita (2011) illustrated that using a common language as a resource in a bilingual classroom had a positive impact on student test scores and performance.

2.3 Disadvantages

The use of the bilingual approach has some downsides, especially in the short term. Learners may become overly dependent on their first language and find it challenging to communicate in English alone. A study done by Slavin, Madden, Calderón, Chamberlain, and Hennessy (2011) found that children in bilingual learning classrooms tested lower in English skills than students who took non-bilingual English language courses. This research also found that differences disappeared over time and that after two to five years, test scores did not differ significantly between students in bilingual learning environments and non-bilingual learning environments. Moreover, the use of the bilingual approach may foster the belief among learners that English is difficult, thereby promoting a negative attitude toward language learning.

Another important aspect to consider is cost. Bilingual education is expensive, as the number of teachers required may increase if a location does not have enough trained teachers proficient in both English and the native language of the students. This method may require schools to employ more teachers for the same number of students. Additionally, the increased cost is not only limited to labor but encompasses materials as well. Not all materials will be in English, and more materials will be needed in the student's native language to supplement the English material used in the classroom.

3. VISUAL AIDS AND GESTURES

3.1 Explanation

Teaching English using visual aids and gestures involves the use of objects, pictures, and other visual cues to teach new vocabulary and grammar structures. This technique is based on the idea that young learners of English learn best when they can see and hear the words that are being taught. Teachers use visual aids, like pictures, drawings, and objects, to help learners understand new vocabulary, whereas gestures are used to signal meaning. Visual aids and gestures are also excellent tools for helping learners understand difficult concepts. For example, teaching prepositions can be challenging, but the use of drawings and objects can make it easier for learners to understand how and when to use them. Moreover, gestures can be used to teach the correct pronunciation of words, which can help learners improve their speaking skills. As Langston (2022) explained, educational supplements refer to videos, short movies, or films with the primary purpose of educating students on a particular topic or learning objective. Common types of educational videos are short clips, documentaries, tutorials, cartoons, and other forms of video media used with the intent to teach. These videos are used as supplementary materials to help reinforce ideas taught in the classroom.

3.2 Advantages

The use of visual aids and gestures has many benefits for teaching young learners of English. It makes learning more enjoyable, helps students to remember new vocabulary and grammar structures, and effectively engages young learners. Visual aids and gestures are also helpful tools for assisting learners to understand difficult concepts, such as prepositions, and can be used to teach correct pronunciation. In their research, Thomas and Keinders (2010, pp. 25-26) found that visual aids in the classroom “help the teacher to clarify, establish, correlate and coordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations, and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful, and vivid.” This idea was reinforced by research conducted by Arif and Hashim (2009), who concluded that “...pictures gained better attention than words” and that “pictures became the main clue in interpreting the meaning of the words.” As Kang (2004) argued, the benefits of using visual aids include but are not limited to helping students develop a holistic understanding that may be difficult for only words to convey and helping to teach and clarify complex concepts that may be difficult to comprehend using only words.

3.3 Disadvantages

The use of visual aids such as posters and videos and gestures such as hand gestures in English teaching does pose some challenges, such as in the sourcing or creation of suitable pictures and objects, which can be time-consuming for educators. This approach is similar to the bilingual method in that materials can become costly to the school if visual aids are a big part of lessons. This could include the cost of monitors, computers, or blue ray players. Moreover, some learners may have difficulty connecting the visual aids and gestures to the actual words and grammar structures being taught. In other words, visual aids can become more of a distraction than a learning tool. This occurs when there is an information overload, such as in visual aids like animation. The problem is that the learners must quickly select the relevant information and hold onto it in memory before connecting it with the next sequence of information. This may become difficult for some learners. Another issue that must be considered is that students may simply enjoy watching the visual aids and not learn from them, which may give the teacher the false belief that the student has acquired more knowledge than they have. Facer (2011) stresses this idea and says that teachers need to educate students on how to make sense of the vast amounts of information they are given.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both the bilingual and visual aids and gestures approaches are effective techniques for teaching young learners of English. A decision on which technique to use should depend on the needs and situations of the learners. Teachers must carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of each approach and choose which to use based on the learners’ needs. It is also important to note that both techniques can be used together to reinforce one another and enhance the learning experience of young learners of English.

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