

The Study of Children's English Teaching Methods---Based on the Characteristics of Children's Cognitive Development

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Abstract. Cognitive development theory combines psychology and epistemology, and reveals the intelligence development process, emphasizes the dynamic of the cognitive activities, the initiative of the learner and the importance of the interaction with environment. Childhood, that is, 3-6 years old, is the most critical period for language development in one's life. During this period, children possess a strong ability to imitate, therefore, it is the best time to learn a foreign language. We advocate that children English teaching starts from the development needs of children on the principle of integration. This paper aims to discuss appropriate children English teaching methods based on the characteristics of the children's cognitive development.

Introduction

Children English teaching, as a kind of language training, aims to cultivate the interest of children's English listening and speaking, to promote the coordinated development of children's ability of cognition, memory, imagination. Masaru Ibuka (1908-1997), an expert in children English teaching, thinks that 3-6 years of age is the best period for language development in one's early childhood.

Linguists point out that when children learn a second language, the transformation of the mother tongue and second language is achieved not only through the imitation, it also requires thinking, creativity, the integration of language and thought, as well as the simple analogical reasoning to continuously develop the mother tongue and the second language rules, in order to improve the learning capabilities of children and to promote the two-way development of thinking and language. English teaching methods that based on simple imitation and memory do not meet children's age and psychological characteristics, it's difficult to meet the needs of children's psychological development, and fail to develop a systematic and solid system of language. Therefore, it is of great importance to pay special attention to the integration of English learning and thinking and to deal with the mutual relationship between them properly. In the process of teaching, it is very important to give a full play to those very effective learning elements, such as the ability of thinking, imagination, association and observation, as well as understanding memory, collective memory, image memory, emotional memory, which children have developed or are developing. Along with the full play of the intellectual factors, non-intellectual factors also have been brought into full play. By this way, English learning changes from the lively external imitation to the internal learning in thinking.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory on Children English Teaching

The theory of cognitive development is a very important part of the theoretical system of Piaget. In this theory, the combination of psychology and cognition makes a new interpretation of what is knowledge, intelligence and other issues, and reveals the stage of intellectual development, and emphasizes the dynamic of the cognitive activities, the initiative of the learner and the importance of the interaction with environment, which is of great importance to our educational activities. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory believes that not any stimulus can cause the reaction of the

subject, only the stimulus that can meet the needs of the subject and can be assimilated by the cognitive structure of the subject, that is, the so-called suitable stimulus, can cause the reaction of the subject.

Children's English Teaching Methods

A. The Method of Teaching with Intuitive Image

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, children's cognitive development is roughly at the preoperational stage, their thinking is still bounded by the specific intuitive appearance. Thus children English teaching should make full use of all means of intuitive image: CD, pictures, objects, toys, etc. Through listening English with ears, looking objects with eyes, young children will naturally establish the correspondence between language and things. For example, when teaching students the expressions of time like "What time is it?" Teachers can take a clock to operate to make students learn the expression about clock. The teacher adjust the clock to one o'clock and asked : "What time is it?". Children would immediately answer : "It's the one o'clock". This will help the launching of completing English teaching. When teaching fruits like apple, pear, banana, teachers can bring real fruit to the classroom and can also let the children taste them. In this way, children can look with eyes, memorize with their brain and perceive with heart.

B. The Method of Teaching in Game

Teaching in game should follow the following principles:

(1) Simplicity

Considering the lower comprehension level of children, coupled with less mastery of the English words, if the rules of the game is too complicated, children will not understand the rules of the game, and thus can not properly grasp the game, which lead the failure of the game.

(2) Suitability

The so-called suitability contains two meanings. First, select the appropriate game according to the teaching content, teacher should not pursue the interesting and neglect the fulfillment of the teaching tasks. Second, the degree of the difficulty of the game should meet the children's level of ability.

(3) Fairness

During the game, teachers tend to pay attention to those children who have a better grasp of the English language and have a high level of learning ability. They have more opportunities to participate in the game and to be praised than other children. The introverted young children of poor language skills are often neglected by teachers, resulting in the chance of the game is unfair. In the long run, it will exacerbate the polarization. The children who are ignored by the teacher will be accustomed to be the audience and lose the enthusiasm and confidence in learning English. Therefore, in the process of organizing the game, teachers should pay more attention to those introverted young children of poor language skills, give them more opportunities to participate in the game, as well as timely encouragement and praise, to achieve the common progress of all children.

C. The Scenario Method

Children's language ability is developed in the practical application of language, so teachers should create various meaningful and real scenarios based on the reality to make the students want to say, be able to say and like to say. For example, after school primary school students usually prefer to play the role of waiter and customer, police and thieves, as well as mothers and guests. To grab this interest, teachers can design a range of teaching situations. For example, in the village canteen, teachers can guide students to speak English, like A: what can I do for you? B: I want a stick of candy. How much is it? A: Two yuan. Here you are. In addition, there are other situations like hospitals, libraries, railway stations and so on. Through the role-playing games, the language has been consolidated and practiced in the game.

D. TPR Teaching Method

TPR (Total Physical Response) is a kind of method that improves the teaching effect with the help of the movement of various parts of body. Body language refers to the expression and

exchange through the various parts of the body that can be seen by people, also known as silent language. It mainly includes gestures, eye movements and postures, and it is the important supplement and complement of sound of the language. The integration of the use of body language and the language of sound can achieve a better effect.

The proper use of body language can help children understand the activities and acquire English subconsciously. To play the supporting role of body language to sound language correctly in English activities will have the sound language and the silent language complement each other to achieve the best educational results. In the early period of natural acquisition of everyday language like “stand up”, if the teachers just say the term “Please stand up”, the children certainly do not understand; but if accompanied by a gesture or action in this process, the children will be very clear of its meaning. As the children’s thinking is characterized by concrete image thinking, body language can be used in the learning of many words. For example, when learning the word rabbit, through the performance of erecting ears, jumping and other actions teachers can naturally introduce the pronunciation of rabbit, leaving the most intuitive and deepest impression on children.

Conclusion

In English teaching activities, game is the most popular teaching methods. But there is so much emphasis on the lively scene that the result often runs counter to one’s expectation .The game-centered teaching will cause two kinds of adverse consequences. On the one hand, children will be crazy about the game, and the teaching activities will not be able to go on in the disordered classroom, as a result, the children will pay more attention to the interesting game itself rather than the language. On the other hand, it may contribute to the phenomenon that children would mechanically mimic with non-stop rhythm, as a result, too much excitement will make the children both physically and mentally fatigue, and they will tend to be distracted, disserted and unwilling to participate in the activity. Therefore, English language lesson should be under the guidance of teachers, and teacher and children should complete the language activities through verbal communication together. The game teaching method need to be adjusted and improved continuously in practice to make the children English teaching proceed in a correct direction.

As a worker engaged in children English teaching, you should not strive to teach them the knowledge. Haste makes waste. You should create a relaxed teaching atmosphere and mingle with children. When they like you, it means they like your teaching methods, which must be colorful, suitable for characteristics of the children. The teaching activities must be designed to entertain the children. You should pay attention to each child’s emotion and make sure all of them follow you to move. During the teaching process, you should be sensitive of the way of criticism, not mean always to give students praise and awards.

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