

Utilizing Children's Power of Indirect Learning for Language Acquisition

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Question!

- You are asked to teach children English.
- There are no textbooks, CDs, or any teaching material.
- No board, no chalk, no paper.
- What would you do?



Question

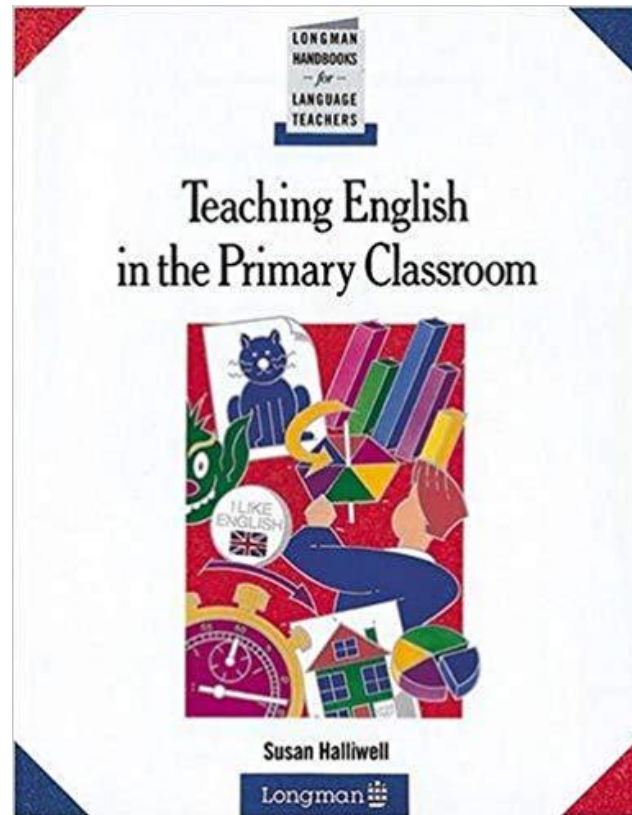
- Songs
- Games
- Stories (picture books)
- CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

- These are good for teaching children English.
- Why?
- What do they have in common?

Today's theme

- Utilizing children's power of **indirect learning**

Susan Halliwell



Longman
1992

Halliwell's claim

- We should exploit the **children's natural abilities for learning** rather than try to impose our own adult approach to learning.

‘Children’s natural abilities for learning’

1. Children’s ability to grasp meaning
2. Children’s creative use of limited language resources
3. Children’s capacity for **indirect learning***
4. Children’s instinct for fun and play
5. The role of imagination

Indirect learning is:

- the **unconscious** learning we achieve by **playing, exploring and making discoveries.**

<https://sites.google.com/site/englishparty101/home/rational-of-this-site/indirect-learning>

- Children unconsciously learn very important linguistic skills, and that happens when language is not an end in itself, but a natural means of reaching a communicative goal.

See:

<https://sites.google.com/site/englishparty101/home/rational-of-this-site/indirect-learning>

A guessing game, for example

What fruit do I like best?

Children are *not* trying to learn words

- They are trying to **guess right**.
- After repeated guessing:
 - They will have **confirmed** words they only half knew at the beginning.
 - They may even have **adjusted their pronunciation**.

More games!

- A grab game
- Bingo

Halliwell's view on “games”

Very **effective opportunity** for **indirect learning**

- More than a fun extra
- An opportunity for **real using and processing the language** while **the mind is focused on the ‘task’** of playing the game

- Not a filler for the end of the lesson or a reward for ‘real work’
- They *are* real work.

p.6

Indirect

The **mind** is engaged with **the task**
and is *not* focusing on **the language**.

- This is close to....?

Very close to the way we develop our mother tongue

“We do not consciously set out to learn it . We acquire it through **continuous exposure** and **use** .”

Teaching English in the Primary School

p. 5



How can we provide effective
opportunities for indirect learning?

For children, and for learners of all ages!

Halliwell suggests:

- Set up **real tasks**.
- Provide the children an occasion of **real language use**.

Real tasks

- Not just a language exercise
- Interesting to do
- Worth doing
- Real language use
- Real communication

Is this *real language use* or *drill*?

A. Please repeat after me. Pizza. Pizza. Pizza.

Very good!

B. 「ピザ、ピザ、ピザって10回言ってみて」
(ひじを指さして) 「これは何？」

Is it natural in L1?

A. What's this? (showing something obvious))

B. What's this? (showing a part of something)

A. Show picture cards. Students say the words.

B. Show picture cards. Students say the words.
After that, the teacher hides one card. Students
have to tell what is missing.

Vale & Feunteum (1996) claims language-based approach does not work well with children

- If 'teaching the language' is the primary purpose of the lesson, children's foreign language acquisition will not go smoothly.

(See Allen-Tamai 2010, pp. 48)

Don't *teach the language* to children!

Teach something *in* that language.

Let students enjoy experiencing something *in* that language.

- Sing songs.
- Enjoy art.
- Develop knowledge.
- Read stories.
- Enjoy games.
- Enjoy quizzes and puzzles.

Allen-Tamai (2010) recommends

- Content-based approach
 - Activity-based approach
 - Story-based approach
-
- (Allen-Tamai, *Shogakko Eigo no Kyoikuho* 小学校英語の教育法, Taishukan Shoten, 2010)

Content-based instruction

- For adult EFL students
Content = a topic or subject matter students are interested in
- For elementary school children
Content = a subject that students learn at school

(Snow, 2001)

What is content-based instruction?

“During the lesson **students are focused on learning about something**. This could be anything that interests them from a serious science subject to their favourite pop star or even a topical news story or film. **They learn about this subject using the language they are trying to learn**, rather than their native language, as a tool for developing knowledge and so they develop their linguistic ability in the target language.”

“This is thought to be a more natural way of developing language ability and one that corresponds more to **the way we originally learn our first language.**”

British Council and BBC

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/content-based-instruction>

More effective than traditional approach

(Grabe and Stroller, 1997)

- Students can be extensively exposed to “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1982, 1985)

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CBI and CLIL

- **CBI: Content-Based Instruction**

mainly in North America since its quintessential model – immersion program – was developed in Canada.

- **CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning**

highly valued and gained recommendation from the European Council as a must-be-adopted educational method.

Examples of CLIL lessons

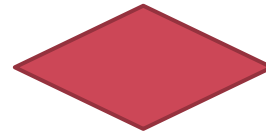
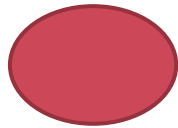
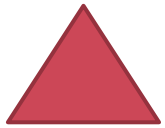
- Butterfly life cycle
- Is this garbage? (Reuse, Repair, Recycle)
- Rice (science, social studies, mathematics, cooking, art, music, stories)

Activity-based approach

- Tasks: games, craft, story telling, event-related activities, etc.
- AB approach can provide children with rich language input that match their interest

(Vale & Feunteum 1996)

- Example in Allen-Tamai, 2010: teaching shapes



Story-based approach

Stories are excellent material

- Students get absorbed
- Students “experience” various incidents and emotions
- Language learned naturally in meaningful context
- Books can go beyond time and space
- Students learn to read

Evaluating students

- Conscious direct learning
 - enhances accuracy
- Subconscious indirect learning (acquisition)
 - enhances fluency

(See Teaching English in the Primary School p. 5)

How do we assess students' communicative ability?

- See Sato & Yago 2018, pp 43-44

Performance test recommended:
interview, essay, speech, etc.

Assess if students have attaining the course goals.

Classroom-based assessment

- Substantially different from norm-referenced assessment (standardized tests)

(Begler, 2012)

Classroom-based assessment:

- should **support** and **promote** student engagement and learning
- should be viewed as fair and fundamentally **nonthreatening**
(i.e., the primary purpose is to support learning)

(Begler, 2012)

Chance to re-think our FL education

- Change from too much dependence on “language-based approach”
- More utilization of “indirect learning” power for all age learners
- Shift in assessment and evaluation methods

We should make a paradigm shift!

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