

HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH TO NON-ENGLISH OLDER LEARNERS

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Abstract. The present article devoted to difficulties in teaching English to older learners, choosing teaching methods, features and distinctions of audience. The role of English in the XXI century, need of learning it, features in daily life and the processes of choosing style in teaching English to older learners are indicated.

Keywords: language, training, traditional, method, feature, need, life, Steel.

21st century, latest technological gadgets and modern outlook-we seem to have everything. There's still something which we crave for when it comes to education for our little ones and that is different teaching methods.

Teaching English as a second or foreign language entails the use of both traditional teaching methods as well as instructional techniques that are unique to the study and learning of language. Traditional teaching methods include teacher-centric approaches such as explicit teaching as well as approaches that encourage active student participation. Based on the teaching experiences of educators around the world, different techniques should be deployed depending on the instructional purpose, the subject matter, and the students' level of competency, cognitive ability and enthusiasm. Concentrating and using just one approach has often been found to be grossly inadequate while a rich combination of approaches results to the most favorable learning outcomes.

Learners are all very different. They differ in obvious ways: age, gender, nationality, language, level and personality. But they also differ in less immediately obvious ways. Their attitudes in the classroom are affected by their motivations, their needs, their educational and cultural backgrounds and their learning styles and personalities.

People may be learning English because of some external reason or extrinsic motivation: for their career or for their studies, in which case they may have an examination to pass. Other learners may be learning English for pleasure, for socializing and conversation, or simply out of interest in an English-speaking country and culture. Learners will have different needs and wants depending on their reasons for learning English. Some may want a focus on grammar and exam practice, while others are more likely to be interested in vocabulary and conversation than exam skills.

Another important learner difference to take into account is learning style. Different people rely on different senses to help them learn. You may have the following styles:

- auditory learning style: learning best when using listening aspects such as spoken language, music or sounds
- visual learning style: learning best when using visual material such as pictures, diagrams, or writing
- kinaesthetic learning style: learning best when using movement.

Traditional education is biased towards a visual learning style, but there are lots of activities you can do to cater for all learning styles.

Learning style is also dependent on personality. Learners can be extrovert or introvert: sociable or shy. The more extrovert learners will enjoy speaking activities, and the more introvert ones will be more comfortable working on their own with a quiet activity like reading. They may be impulsive risk takers, willing to try out new language immediately, or more cautious, reflective types who need time to feel confident with new language before using it.

Everybody wants to learn English at present in our country from the first year of schooling to elderly people. At schools, colleges and universities young learners are improving their English, while old learners are having difficulties to learn English. What should they do? Are there any methods to teach older learners?

According to a research made by Socrates Grudtvig and Culture Center, there is not a specified methodology and pedagogy for 50+. Consequently, there is not a specific approach in language training that can ensure the learning in the most efficient way. On the other hand, there are some particularities of teaching older learners. We discover these particularities step by step while our English teaching program for older learners is going on. One of the difficulties is the encoding of special information.

The matter in question here is that elderly people with or without memory deficits have some problems concerning spatial relations, for example, the route learning performance (Caffo et al., 2012). So, if there is a need to teach our old learners how to explain the route, we, English teachers have to understand that our older learners might show difficulties in spatial orientation and in way-finding. Such difficulties have to be overcome in order to obtain positive results of our learning. And, it is up to us to figure out possible teaching strategies how to do.

So, we are trying the following: teach our older learners to explain the route, first of all, in teams. Divide into two teams. Both teams can see a picture of a part of a city on the wall (a 2D- plan). There are two captains, one for each team. These captains should point the way on the map (with the help of a pointer) while the members of each group in turn are giving directions and telling their captains where to go. They do it orally and also they show plaques with such words as “turn right”, “turn left”, “walk as far as the crossroads”, etc.

Then the group constructs a city on the floor: they put pictures named as “the pharmacy” or “the florist’s”, or others on the floor, name the streets, add road signs. Students explain the route in turn moving around the constructed city.

Next step is to go outdoors and try to do it in a real city. We are going to do it soon. Our hypothesis is that such training in class using a 2D-plan will help our older learners not only perform an orientation task but also to overcome a difficulty of the encoding of special information that is a typical problem for elderly people.

Teaching grammar and sentence construction to seniors in their 60' \ 70' using the “Cube Game”

Another particularity of teaching older learners concerns memory difficulties. Here I would like to make a logical connection between older learners’ anxious to have worse recall (Hubenthal, 2004) and their self-confidence which is one of the pillars of lifelong learning. (Socrates Grundtvig, n.d.).

Involving older learners in cube games that promote memory improvement is a sure way to important step towards their success at language learning. It is easier to build sentences with the help of word cubes. Consequently, it helps older learners to work on their self-esteem and become aware of their strengths that is so important for both their well-being and language progress.

We chose to use a grammar cube game that is played with six-sided cubes, each side having one grammar word (Do, Did, Have, Had, etc.), or a construction (Going to, There is/are, etc.), or grammar symbol (V-verb, V2-simple past, V3-past participle, etc.), or pronoun (I, He, she, we, etc.), or an adverb (usually, often, always, etc.). All cubes are rolled onto the playing surface. Teacher pronounces sentences in older learner’s native language and asks them to make English sentences using the cubes. Participants build sentences changing declarative into interrogative, present tense into past, affirmative into negative, and so on. The game generates discussions of grammatical sentence structure that helps learners to understand English grammar better.

Encoding of spatial information: older learners’ possible difficulties in orientation and way-finding

Language is necessary for spatial orientation. Older learners might have difficulties with gaining the sense of direction. In addition, if the matter in question is teaching English to older learner, the fact that English language is a foreign language for them might add some additional difficulties concerning their syntactic and lexical abilities.

According to a research conducted by Beck (2010), a lack of the syntactic and lexical abilities might lead to a decrease of person’s describing spatial relations that result in poor performance on orientation tasks.

Our hypothesis was that our special training in class using a 2D-plan will help older learners not only to perform an orientation task but also to overcome a difficulty of the encoding of spatial information that is a typical problem for elderly people. So, we went outdoors to do it in a real city and obtained positive results of the learning: our older students who had received special in-class training and experience before did not show difficulties in spatial orientation and way-finding.

Another method of teaching English is working in groups. This method helps to learners to improve their speech and the ability of remembering words.

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