

## Game-based teaching children - a practical approach – Chapter III

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### **ABSTRACT**

In relation to the two previous chapters whose main aim was to provide the range of theoretical issues concerning the field, this chapter is to scrutinize the matter in a more practical way. Therefore, the chapter then begins with the set of introductory issues describing the field of interest, which is presented by young children at the pre-school age in kindergarten context. Later on, some features characterizing the groups of children involved are provided in order to trace any potential obstacles to the subsequent observation. The following section, then, contains a brief description of the lessons which children took part in. Findings gathered on the basis of previous observation as well as conclusions and implications are to constitute the closing part of this chapter.

**Keywords:** teaching English; children; foreign language; game-based

### **1. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA UNDER SCRUTINY**

As far as the scope and area of scrutiny is concerned, it may be stated that children at pre-school level constitute the main interest here. In this way, their behaviour while being exposed to movement games is to be compared with the behaviour of the other group of kids which was not taught the language through games. Of course, since the subjects are characterized by young age, their cognitive abilities are significantly limited, which means that in our quasi-experiment we will focus on rather immeasurable effects of teaching children through movement games.

Therefore, the issue of how students respond to lessons based on games incorporating a lot of movement in comparison with more conventional teaching with the use of songs and pictures. Thus, the observation is to provide answers to the following issues:

- Does learners' behaviour differ when they are exposed to movement games?
- What is the difference in behaviour – positive or negative?

- What is children's approach towards movement games?
- Can the teaching result of movement games be measured in any way?
- Do movement games influence children's attitude towards the language in any way – do they like learning English when they are exposed to movement games?

In order to find answers to the list of aforementioned issues, the experiment is to incorporate the following stages:

- Language lessons based on teaching certain vocabulary items through movement in one group and through regular techniques resorting to songs, pictures etc in the other group.
- The central point is presented by the careful observation of how children in both groups behave and interact.
- A short questionnaire aimed at the children, but filled in by the teacher, containing questions which touch upon their preferences concerning the lesson.
- Formulating findings drawn on the basis of the previous observation

Having stated the list of issues that we are interested here accompanied by the outline of the whole observation process, the attention may now be turned to the range of features characterizing the groups of children taking parting the procedure.

## **2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS INVOLVED**

Generally speaking, the observation process involves two groups of children who present almost identical features, meaning that there are no significant differences between their emotional, cognitive, or any other type of development. The groups are generally referred to as A for the one which is exposed to movement games, and B for the other one. However, in order to have a closer look at the investigated groups, the following features may be described at this point:

### 1) Age and gender

In terms of age, it may be stated that all the children are six-year-olds. Therefore, there is a complete uniformity in this respect. As far as gender is concerned, however, there are 4 boys and 7 girls in the first group and 6 boys and 6 girls in the other group. The number of children in groups reaches 11 and 12 for the groups A and B respectively.

### 2) Personality characteristics

Observing children's behaviour so far it has been noticed that they are rather cheerful and open with no traces of cognitive inhibitions. However, as it is often the case, some of the children (3 in both groups together), although not diagnosed, display behaviour indicating that they suffer from Attention Deficiency Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

### 3) Children's attitude towards the lessons and activities

Considering their attitude, it may be stated that they are generally positive about the lessons as well as the activities. This means that they are rather relaxed during the activities.

However, there are kids who seem to be inhibited and reticent. But this stems from their features of character rather than attitude towards the lessons itself.

4) Overall cognitive abilities

As it has already been mentioned, because of the children's age, their cognitive abilities are limited, which means that no more than just several words may be introduced during one lesson. What may be mentioned here though, is that there are no kids whose behaviour or learning effect would indicate any kind of obstacle hindering their pending development in the language.

5) Children's approach to one another

While working with children, it is important to develop convivial atmosphere in which it will be possible for them to play and learn. In this way, the attitude that they display towards one another may have a significant influence on the overall flow of the lessons. Thus, again, resorting to previous observation, it may be stated that, apart from occasional mischievousness occurring, there are no constant conflicts which could negatively influence the effect of the observation.

Cogitating on the list of aspect characterizing the children presented above, it generally emerges that there are no significant factors which could potentially exert negative influence on the subsequent observation of the children's behaviour. The procedure during observation may then begin.

### **3. PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES INCORPORATED**

It has already been mentioned that the observation is based on exposing one group of children to movement games while the other group has classes without resorting to them. Therefore, in order to present the flow of the lessons in more detail, the following description may be put on the agenda at this point:

#### **Lesson 1**

The main focus in terms of language was to teach children some vocabulary items which could be found in the kindergarten room such as ball, bear, book etc. Having presented the kids those things naming them the actual game commenced. Thus, it required children to run for a thing that a teacher says as quickly as possible.

The teacher prepared six different objects each in the number of three so that there were three sets including six different items. The sets of objects were situated in different places of the room so that the children could not see what others were taking. Then, the kids were assigned maximally in groups of four and when the teacher said "bring me the book" each child in a group was to run to a place where the objects were situated and bring the thing mentioned. A child who brought a different thing was out of the game.

As far as the lesson in the group B is concerned, it was based mainly on presentation and naming of the objects by the teacher, then, the kids were supposed to draw the thing mentioned. A song containing names of the objects was also resorted to during a lesson.

In order to provide comments on children's behaviour during both lessons, it may be stated that although kids in group B were not bored or dissatisfied, children in group A can definitely said to have been more cheerful and involved in the activity. Therefore, apart from

pleasure, children in group A also had a lot of fun in the running around the room itself. Their behaviour then indicated that they liked this kind of lesson in general.

## **Lesson 2**

Another lesson incorporated the game of “Simon says” Thus, in the beginning of the lesson the teacher showed to children various activities while naming them such as “clap your hands” “jump” “look around” the children then were required to emulate the teacher. Later on, the actual game started with the kids standing in front of the teacher and having enough space to move. The teacher started the game by saying “Simon says jump” so the kids’ task was to jump. The range of tasks for the children was obviously varied incorporating six different activities.

The other group of kids was again taught with the use of songs and pictures restraining from movement as much as possible. Thus, the children supposed to guess what the teacher was performing, or singing a song which contained the taught activities.

Again commenting on the lesson, it may be mentioned that this time, children in group B unintentionally resorted to movement while singing the song. It emerges then that movement simply lies in their nature. Therefore, by performing what they were singing, the kids displayed the need for this movement indicating in this way the fact that regular tasks which do not resort to movement are insufficient. Children in group A were again actively and eagerly participating in the game having at the same time a lot of fun. One problem that occurred, however, was connected with one child presenting symptoms of ADHD. Thus, each time the children were supposed to do certain activity e.g. sitting down, jumping etc. this child was constantly walking around the room disrupting others and not paying attention to the game. However, once other kids started to ignore the child, the flow of the activities greatly improved.

## **Lesson 3**

This time, the lesson in both groups were based on movement games. However, the aim of the lesson was not to teach children new words but rather check how many words they have remembered so far. In order to do this, the game called “Spider is coming” was used. In this way, the children were supposed to run around the room as if they were flies. Later on, the teacher shouted “a spider is coming” which was a sign for the kids to stand still. The teacher then walked among the kids to spot a child who moved. Then, such a child was asked a question concerning the meaning of some object or activity previously taught such as jumping, ball, book etc. In the case of not knowing the word in English, a child was out of the game.

In terms of the behaviour that children displayed, it may be stated that group B which was previously taught without resorting to movement games indicated a relative improvement in their behaviour. In this way, children in this group were actually happy to play while learning, As during previous lessons occasional use of mother tongue occurred, which indicated a degree of boredom in this group, during this lesson students did not even have time to resort to Polish. This made them maximally involved in the lesson dynamics.

One important issue discerned during the last lesson in both groups was that kids in group B new fewer vocabulary items presented during previous lessons than the kids in group A. This, however, may have some important consequences for teaching children in general. Therefore, it emerges then that exposing children to language incorporating movement results in greater achievement relating to the amount of material that students are

able to remember and use. Further comments concerning the overall findings concerning the observation are to be provided in the closing section of this chapter.

The last issue to mention at this point is presented by the brief questionnaire for the children. The teacher read the questions which the kids were to answer. The questions then concerned which lesson they liked best, what made that they liked this lesson, and what they like doing during a lesson. The actual answers to this questions as well as further comments concerning children's behaviour during the lessons are to be presented in the following section.

#### **4. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Devoting attention to the answers that the teacher noted in the questionnaire, the following points may be presented:

➤ Question 1 – which lesson did you like best?

Group A - the children in this group said that lesson 1 – with the game incorporating running for objects suited them best.

Group B – kids in this group opted for lesson 3 which was based on movement games contrary to the two previous one that they had.

➤ Question 2 – Why did you like this lesson?

Group A – children in general answered that it was running and competition which caused that the lesson was interesting and amusing.

Group B – the children in this group answered that it was a nice lesson because they could run around the room.

➤ Question 3 – What do you like doing during a lesson?

Among variety of answers provided by kids in both groups, the most common were: walking or running, competing, acting scenes, singing, drawing, guessing something etc.

Considering the range of answers provided by the learners it emerges that the children's attitude towards the lesson incorporating movement games was better on account of the fact that these games involved many of the abovementioned activities that the kids like best.

On account of the scrutiny, it was noticed that children in group B did in fact react better to the lesson concerning movement games in comparison with the previous two lessons. Thus, by being involved in a competitive movement game, kids were actively participating in the lesson which made that they were focused exclusively on that lesson. In such a situation, there is a chance that even occasionally mentioned words would actually be remembered by the children.

Therefore, it seems vital that while preparing the lesson young children the teacher should especially take into consideration their preferences as well as their individual characteristics. This in turn may impinge on the kids' behaviour during those lessons developing positive attitude towards the language. Moreover, as it was observed, resorting to the activities liked by the children may also effect the level to which they actually acquire the presented material, which augurs well for their future development in the area of language.

Referring back to the main points of investigation mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it may be mentioned that children's behaviour greatly differs when movement games

are at hand. The change, therefore, is highly positive with the children's attitude towards movement games optimistic. As far as the issue of measurability of the teaching results through movement games is concerned, it seems that because of the age of the children as well as other characterizing them features, it is relatively difficult or even impossible to measure the level to which they have acquired the material introduced with the use of movement games.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

However, on the basis of the observation it was possible to discern that children who learnt the material through games new more vocabulary items. This proves that incorporating as many senses in the teaching process as possible does in fact bring better results in terms of the attitude as well as the level to which kids acquire presented material. Concentrating them on the lesson to a maximal degree additionally solves problems with lesson organization since young learners are then engrossed by the lesson activities turning their energy to good account. The role of the teacher then is to create favourable conditions in which children's characteristic features can be best used.

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