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FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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DEVELOPING LISTENING MODULES
FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper consists of three parts – Introduction, Presentation of Modules One to Four, including the reactions of the children and teacher to the modules, and Conclusion. The modules have been specially designed and developed for young learners aged between four and five years. They are as follows:

Module One deals with objects the children encounter and use daily especially in the classroom. The exercises include pronouncing the words, identifying the objects by circling, colouring and pointing at pictures.

Module Two deals with the most common colours found around the children. The activities in this part include pronouncing colours, circling coloured objects, matching colours to objects and colouring objects.

Module Three deals with the numbers one to ten. The numbers are taught through the exercises of pronouncing the numbers, identifying the numbers by circling, counting and colouring the objects.

Module Four deals with common prepositions of place, which are *on, in, under,* and *next to*. The activities used include identifying locations of objects by circling the objects and ticking the correct boxes.

Based on the implementation of the modules, I discovered that the learners were attracted to colourful pictures. They enjoyed learning through colouring, singing and playing games. Repetitions and pauses helped to make the learners understand English better. Apart from that, verbal reinforcement motivated them, too. Listening activities should vary and need not be too long as young learners have a short attention span. Teachers of young learners need to have some knowledge of child development and also have the patience to be able to create meaningful learning situations.

ABSTRAK

Kertas Projek ini terdiri daripada tiga bahagian – Pengenalan, Penyampaian Modul Satu hingga Empat, termasuk dengan reaksi pelajar dan guru terhadap modul, dan Kesimpulan. Modul-modul ini, yang direkabentuk khas untuk kanak-kanak yang berumur antara empat hingga lima tahun , adalah seperti berikut:

Modul Satu merupakan pengenalan kepada benda-benda yang biasa dilihat dalam bilik darjah. Aktiviti-aktiviti yang disediakan termasuk latihan sebutan, mengenalpasti objek secara latihan membulatkan, mewarna objek, dan menunjukkan ke arah objek secara langsung.

Modul Dua merupakan pengenalan kepada warna-warna yang terdapat di sekeliling mereka. Aktiviti-aktiviti termasuk latihan sebutan, membulatkan objek berwarna, menyesuaikan warna dengan objek dan mewarna objek dalam lembaran kerja.

Modul Tiga merupakan pengenalan kepada nombor 1 hingga 10. dan diajar melalui aktiviti sebutan, mengenalpasti nombor untuk dibulatkan, mengira dan mewarna objek

Modul Empat merupakan pengenalan kepada kata sendi yang menunjukkan tempat, iaitu *on,in,under* dan *next to*. Aktiviti yang disediakan termasuk mengenalpasti kata nama sendi melalui latihan membulatkan objek dan menanda (√) dalam kotak yang betul.

Bedasarkan implementasi modul-modul ini, didapati bahawa kanak-kanak sangat tertarik kepada gambar-gambar berwarna.dan berasa seronok belajar melalui aktiviti mewarna, menyanyi dan bermain. Teknik ulangan dan sela masa (pauses) dapat membantu meningkatkan pemahaman Bahasa Inggeris kanak-kanak. Peneguhan secara verbal juga memberi motivasi kepada mereka. Aktiviti-aktiviti mendengar perlu dipelbagaikan dan tidak terlalu panjang memandangkan tumpuan kanak-kanak di peringkat umur ini adalah singkat. Guru-guru prasekolah perlu mempunyai kesabaran dan pengetahuan asas perkembangan kanak-kanak agar dapat mewujudkan situasi pembelajaran yang lebih bermakna.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

What counts as 'listening'? What do teachers actually mean when talking about 'listening' as a classroom activity? Many teachers would assume that listening has to involve the use of tapes and electronic equipment. They may complain that they 'cannot do listening' because their school does not have enough resource materials for listening or it does not provide audio recorders and so on.

The modules that will be presented have been specially designed and developed for young learners aged between four and five years, who have not yet gone through any formal learning of English. They were tested on a small group of children, which comprised two boys and two girls. This paper consists of three parts – Introduction, Presentation of Modules One to Four, including the reactions of the children and teacher to modules, and Conclusion.

I have chosen to deal with young children, as I believe that the education a child receives determines her future. It is important for a person to have a strong foundation when learning a second or foreign language. Anderson and Lynch (1988) see language learning as a 'linear process', where learners should start with the spoken medium skills, which comprise listening and speaking before proceeding to the written medium skills, which are reading and writing. Learning to listen well is important as one needs to be able to listen in order to produce language in the spoken form (speech). It is vital for a person to learn how to listen and what to listen for. In addition, listening is the skill that children acquire first; especially if they have not yet learnt to read as stated by Scott and Ytreberg (1990).

There are many aspects to be taken into consideration when developing materials for young children. I started this paper with the following questions: What types of listening tasks appeal to young children? What types of tasks assist young learners in acquiring the listening skill?

Through my readings and observations, I find that most young children have a short attention span. Cheerless routine can quickly result in lack of attention. Meyer and Sugg (1980) suggest that lively and colourful illustrations can be very helpful in creating a lively atmosphere and motivate children to learn. They love colourful pictures and a game-like atmosphere. Pictures are very useful as they can be used to focus and hold the children's attention and make language meaningful. Illustrations are able to provide orientation for listening practice, for speaking practice in oral drills and dialogues, and even for reading and writing practice.

Edwards and Knight (1994) believe that it is important for teachers of young learners to have some knowledge of child development. These teachers need to be sensitive to how children handle information. It is essential to have an understanding of child development in order for the children to learn in a meaningful way.

When young learners start to learn a foreign language, the language goes mainly through their ears. Whatever they hear is the main input of the language. Because of this, young learners have to be given as much visual backup as possible through facial expressions, movements, mimes and pictures. Since once something has been said, it disappears, it is important to say things clearly and to repeat them many times (Scott and Ytreberg 1990). Teachers may have to use 'motherese' when conversing and talking to young children. Snow (1976) lists a number of features of 'motherese' : a lower mean length of utterance than that observed in speech to older

children and adults, the use of sentences with a limited range of grammatical relations, few subordinate and coordinate constructions and the frequent use of imperatives and simple pseudo-questions. In other words, when using 'motherese' teachers speak slowly, in exaggerated tones, using short sentences with clear gaps between words.

It is obvious that one has to concentrate very hard when she is listening, because she cannot re-listen as she can re-read while reading. Since children have a short attention span, it is important not to overload them when working on listening tasks (Scott and Ytreberg 1990).

Children, especially the younger ones love to move about. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) find that the younger the children are, the more physical activities they need. Teachers should include at least one physical activity in every lesson. Children tend to learn better when the lesson is in the form of play. They learn indirectly through playing. Some children might not have understood an activity the first time but they will still be able to follow and do the activity by watching others. Examples of this kind of activity can be found in all the modules.

Listening for information is one of the important skills in listening. This skill can easily be taught through identifying exercises, listening for mistakes exercises, arranging things in order, using questionnaires and 'listening and doing' activities (Scott and Ytreberg – 1990). All the modules presented revolve around the teaching of this skill as we do a lot of 'listening for information' activities in our daily lives. The actions of colouring, circling and pointing at pictures are some of the ways to check the understanding of the learners.

Woolfson, R.C. (1993) believes that a child's learning skill expands and develops naturally, but one can further encourage the process in the following ways: teachers must make sure that every learner has plenty of opportunities to practise her learning skills; the learner has to be given a lot of repetition practices; teachers should demonstrate or show the learner by example; and the learner should not be pushed too hard. Activities should be carried out in a very friendly and conducive environment without any pressure. Thus, teachers should create an atmosphere of emotional warmth, within which each child feels individually valued.

Piaget's cognitive development theory points that children aged between two to six are at the pre-operational stage (Sylva and Lunt 1982). This means that these children are able to focus their attention to only one object or one aspect of a problem or event at one time. With this in mind, I have limited the activities to focus on one skill at a time and more skills are added as the lesson develops.

Rohaty Mohd. Majzub (1998) finds that frequent and immediate feedback helps the young learners in grasping the information that are given to them. Whitebread (1996) believes that teachers should praise and recognise the learners' achievements particularly when they are the result of special effort. Verbal reinforcement, which includes words such as 'good', 'well done', 'that's right', 'great' and 'interesting', helps a great deal in motivating the young learners. It is good to remember that 'teachers can criticise a child's action but never the child' (Whitebread-1996).

One of the roles of a pre-school teacher is to help the young children to become efficient information processors. Thus, one has to select relevant and proper visual and verbal stimuli for the learners. Since these visual stimuli may be registered in either the short term or long term memory, materials presented should be meaningful and relevant to the learners, or related to the previous knowledge or the experience of the learners (Rohaty Mohd. Majzub-1998). The concepts and objects that I have chosen in developing the modules are found and widely used in the learners' daily lives.

This paper consists of four Listening Modules for Young Learners. They are as follows:

Module One deals with objects. The objects chosen are those that the children encounter and use daily especially in the classroom. They are pen, pencil, ruler, book, desk, chair, eraser, sharpener, handkerchief, shoes, socks and bottle. The exercises include pronouncing the words, identifying the objects by circling, colouring and pointing at pictures.

Module Two deals with colours. The colours chosen are the most common colours found around the children. They are red, blue, green, yellow, brown and black. The activities in this part include pronouncing colours, circling coloured objects, matching colours to objects, and colouring objects.

Module Three deals with numbers. The numbers introduced are one to ten. Learners are taught to count using numbers. In this module, numbers are taught through the exercises of pronouncing the numbers, identifying numbers by circling,

counting, and colouring the objects using the objects and colours introduced in Modules One and Two.

Module Four deals with prepositions of place. The prepositions chosen are the most commonly used in our daily lives, which are *on, in under* and *next to*. The activities used include identifying locations of objects by circling and ticking the correct boxes.

In the next part of this paper, I will discuss the modules separately .The samples of Modules One to Four are enclosed in the Appendix.