

DEVELOPMENTAL LEVELS AND LEARNERS CHARACTERISTICS IN TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH LITERATURE

N.Xoshimova

FSU teacher

S.Kodirova

FSU student

Annotation

The given paper illustrates the problems of teaching English through literature. In teaching English through literatures the learners' age and characteristics should be taken into consideration. Only in this case the learners will have the better results in acquiring the language. The theoretical consideration are given on teaching English through literature.

Key words and expressions: literature, teaching, learner-centred approach, developmental stages, psychological factor.

Introduction

The significant factor in teaching foreign languages is a learner-centred approach. Learners differ in way of learning and acquiring the language. Learners may learn best through listening or reading, they may learn more easily alone or within a small group, they may require heavy visual reinforcement or learn better through verbal explanations, or they may respond better to a sequential or to a random organization of materials or experiences. Each learner's experiences differ from those of class peers in a variety of ways.

Literature review

The teaching of children has been profoundly affected by the work of Jean Piaget[3], who identified four stages of cognitive and affective development in childhood and adolescence. The work of the Canadian educator Kieran Egan provides insights about educational development that are especially applicable to the elementary and middle school language program. Egan describes development in terms of the characteristics that determine how the learner makes sense of the world. He thinks of educational development as a process of accumulating and exercising layers of ability to engage with the world. We can identify the layers according to Egan and the efficient teaching according to Egan's definitions of the learners' characteristics.

Results and discussions

As J.Piaget states there are several stages of the child's cognitive, mental and logical abilities development.

1. The stage of sensory-motor intelligence (age 0 to 2 years). During this stage, behavior is primarily motor. The child does not yet internally represent events and “think” conceptually, although “cognitive” development is seen as schemata are constructed.

2. The stage of preoperational thought (age 2 to 7 years). This stage is characterized by the development of language and other forms of representation and rapid conceptual development. Reasoning during this stage is pre-logical or semi-logical, and children tend to be very egocentric. Children often focus on a single feature of a situation at a time—for example, they may be able to sort by size or by color but not by both characteristics at once.

3. *The stage of concrete operations (age 7 to 11 years)*. During these years, the child develops the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems. Hands-on, concrete experiences help children understand new concepts and ideas. Using language to exchange information becomes much more important than in earlier stages, as children become more social and less egocentric.

4. *The stage of formal operations (age 11 to 15 years or older)*. During this stage, the child’s cognitive structures reach their highest level of development. The child becomes able to apply logical reasoning to all classes of problems, including abstract problems either not coming from the child’s direct experience or having no concrete referents. The thinking skills of most children in elementary school are at the concrete operations stage, and experience plays a major role in all learning[2].

The developmental periods, given by Egan, have the following descriptions:

The Mythic Layer: Ages 4 to 5 through 9 to 10 Years

For these early elementary-school learners, emotions have primary importance. The students always want to know how to feel about what they are learning. They make sense of things through emotional and moral categories (e.g., good versus bad, happy versus sad, etc.).

The world of the imagination is vivid and real to these children, so they move easily in and out of a world where animals talk or activities take place on a magical trip to another world. Using story form is the ideal approach for teaching Mythic Layer learners. Like a fairy tale, instruction should have a clear and strong beginning, middle, and end; it should introduce things using strong opposites; it should address absolute meanings; and it should have strong emotional and moral appeal. Although it does not have to be a story, instruction should incorporate these strong story elements.

The Romantic Layer: Ages 8 to 9 through 14 to 15 Years

Upper elementary and middle school learners begin to separate the world around them from their internal world—they no longer assume that the world thinks and feels as they do. They are developing a sense of their own identity within this wider world. These learners are great collectors of everything from baseball cards to amazing facts about a country on another continent. They often enjoy research on topics of their own choosing, and they are good at memorizing. Story form continues to be important for the Romantic Layer learner, with emphasis on realistic detail and real-life heroes and heroines.

The Philosophic Layer: Ages 14 to 15 through 19 to 20 Years

Learners in the Philosophic Layer try to organize the facts and details they collected in the Romantic Layer, creating their own systems for making sense of the world.

The Ironic Layer: Ages 19 to 20 through Adulthood

The learner recognizes that no one system is adequate to organize all knowledge, but that systems are necessary to make sense of information. If one system does not work well, it can be discarded in favor of another one[1].

Thus, considering the developmental periods of learners we can design the lessons, select adequate topics, text for teaching children of different age. It will be effective if the teacher approaches to these psychological factors.

Conclusion

There are many issues of teaching literature. But in teaching literature, especially foreign literature we should pay attention to the development of children, their abilities at different ages. Selecting the stories, tales, anecdotes, fictions according to the developmental periods of children worth special considerations.

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