

METHODS OF TEACHING WORDS AND CONVERSATIONAL PHRASES IN ENGLISH TO PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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Abstract: This article examines effective methods for teaching English vocabulary and conversational phrases to preschool-aged children, emphasizing the importance of early language exposure and developmentally appropriate pedagogical strategies. Drawing on contemporary research in early childhood education, second language acquisition, and communicative methodology, the study highlights how multisensory learning, play-based activities, storytelling, action-based techniques, and interactive routines can significantly enhance children's receptive and productive language skills. The article also investigates the cognitive and socio-emotional characteristics of preschool learners, demonstrating how their natural curiosity, imitation skills, and sensitivity to rhythm and repetition make them highly responsive to immersive and communicative approaches. Through an analysis of practical techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR), thematic games, realia-based instruction, songs, chants, and classroom rituals the study outlines a framework for creating engaging and meaningful learning environments. Additionally, the article addresses challenges commonly encountered in teaching young learners, including short attention spans, limited metalinguistic awareness, and the necessity of consistent exposure. The findings suggest that playful, interactive, and context-rich instruction not only accelerates vocabulary acquisition but also fosters confidence, motivation, and positive attitudes toward English learning at an early age.

Keywords: preschool English teaching, vocabulary acquisition, conversational phrases, early childhood language learning, communicative approach, play-based learning, Total Physical Response (TPR), multisensory teaching, language immersion, young learner pedagogy, classroom activities for preschoolers.

Introduction: Language learning in early childhood has long been recognized as a critical period for cognitive, social, and communicative development. Preschool-aged children, typically between three and six years old, possess unique cognitive and sensory abilities that make this stage particularly advantageous for second language acquisition. Their natural curiosity, high levels of imitation, sensitivity to rhythm and intonation, and capacity for absorbing new vocabulary create an environment in which meaningful and playful exposure to a foreign language can be highly effective.

Teaching English to this age group, therefore, requires methods that are not only linguistically accurate but also developmentally appropriate and engaging.

Vocabulary and conversational phrases form the foundation of early language acquisition. Words allow children to label objects, actions, and feelings, while phrases enable them to engage in basic social interactions and begin constructing meaningful communication. Unlike older learners who can benefit from explicit grammar instruction or abstract explanations, preschool children acquire language most effectively through contextualized, interactive, and sensory-rich experiences. Consequently, methods that integrate movement, play, songs, storytelling, and real-life scenarios have proven particularly effective in helping children internalize new words and conversational patterns.

In recent decades, early childhood language teaching has increasingly embraced communicative and multisensory approaches. Techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR), thematic games, puppetry, songs, and chants combine physical movement, repetition, and meaningful context, ensuring that children remain motivated while developing both receptive and productive language skills. The integration of play-based strategies not only fosters vocabulary acquisition but also enhances children's confidence, creativity, and social interaction skills, which are essential components of holistic language learning. However, teaching English to preschoolers also presents specific challenges. Young learners have short attention spans, limited metalinguistic awareness, and a tendency to forget unfamiliar words quickly. They also require frequent reinforcement, exposure in meaningful contexts, and a nurturing environment where making mistakes is safe and accepted. Addressing these challenges necessitates a carefully structured methodology that balances repetition with novelty, and structure with flexibility.

Main Part:

Teaching English to preschool-aged children requires a blend of theoretical understanding, practical strategies, and a creative approach tailored to their developmental stage. At this age, children are active learners who thrive on sensory input, repetition, interaction, and play. Consequently, effective methods focus on making language meaningful, engaging, and contextually relevant, allowing young learners to acquire both vocabulary and conversational phrases naturally.

Play is the primary medium through which preschool children explore the world, develop cognitive skills, and interact with peers. Language instruction that incorporates play allows children to learn English in a natural and enjoyable way. **Thematic games** such as matching words to pictures, role-playing scenarios, or simple board games enable children to practice vocabulary in context. For example, a “grocery store” game introduces words for fruits, vegetables, and common phrases like “*I want...*,” “*Can I have...?*” while engaging children physically and socially.

Interactive activities also encourage turn-taking, listening, and speaking, which are essential components of conversational competence. Activities such as storytelling with puppets, dramatization, and collaborative tasks not only reinforce vocabulary but also provide opportunities for children to internalize sentence structures and common expressions through repetition and meaningful usage.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is widely recognized as an effective method for teaching young learners. By linking language with physical actions, children can better remember words and phrases while actively participating in lessons. Commands such as “*jump*,” “*clap your hands*,” “*touch your nose*” or simple conversational prompts like “*sit down*,” “*stand up*,” “*come here*” integrate movement with language, enhancing memory retention and engagement. TPR also helps children understand meaning without relying solely on translation, which is particularly important for preschool learners who have limited abstract thinking abilities. When children perform actions in response to verbal cues, they create a kinesthetic connection to language, making learning both dynamic and multisensory.

Songs, rhymes, and chants are powerful tools for teaching vocabulary and conversational phrases because they combine melody, rhythm, and repetition elements that resonate strongly with young children. Nursery rhymes and action songs such as “*Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*” or simple call-and-response songs introduce body parts, daily routines, and common phrases in a memorable and enjoyable way. The repetitive nature of songs helps children internalize pronunciation, sentence patterns, and intonation naturally. Moreover, rhythmic activities provide a predictable structure that reduces anxiety, encourages participation, and reinforces listening skills. Educators can adapt songs to reflect specific themes, such as colors, numbers, greetings, or classroom routines, integrating both vocabulary and conversational phrases seamlessly into the lesson.

Storytelling is another essential method for teaching preschoolers. Children are naturally drawn to stories, and using **picture books or visual narratives** allows them to associate words with images, actions, and emotions. Teachers can read short stories, pausing to emphasize key vocabulary, ask simple comprehension questions, and encourage children to repeat phrases like “*What is this?*”, “*I see a...*”, or “*He/She is...*”

Story-based activities foster both vocabulary acquisition and conversational practice. They also support the development of listening skills, narrative understanding, and imagination. When combined with puppets or props, storytelling becomes interactive, providing multiple entry points for children to engage with language in a meaningful context.

Using **real-life objects (realia)** in the classroom provides concrete references for abstract words, enhancing comprehension and retention. Items such as toys, classroom

materials, food replicas, or clothing can be labeled and used in practical activities. For example, a teacher might introduce vocabulary for classroom objects (*pencil, book, chair*) and then ask children to perform simple conversational exchanges like “*Can I have the book?*” or “*Where is the pencil?*”

Realia-based instruction helps children connect language to their immediate environment, making learning relevant and functional. By situating new words and phrases in familiar contexts, educators ensure that language acquisition is meaningful and retained over time. Preschool children thrive on routine and predictability. Incorporating English into **daily classroom routines** such as greetings, snack time, clean-up, and transitions exposes children to recurring vocabulary and conversational phrases consistently. Simple daily exchanges like “*Good morning,*” “*Please sit down,*” “*Time to clean up*” reinforce polite conversational patterns and help children internalize language structures naturally.

Repetition across routines enhances retention, encourages active participation, and allows children to use language spontaneously. By embedding English into daily life rather than treating it as a separate subject, educators create immersive learning environments where language becomes functional and habitual. Despite these effective methods, teaching English to preschoolers involves challenges such as short attention spans, limited verbal output, and varying cognitive development levels. To address these, lessons must be **short, dynamic, and visually stimulating**, with frequent reinforcement and encouragement. Teachers should combine multiple methods play, TPR, songs, storytelling, and realia to cater to diverse learning styles and maintain motivation.

Moreover, parental involvement, exposure outside the classroom, and consistent positive reinforcement can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language acquisition. Early, enjoyable, and interactive experiences lay the foundation for lifelong language learning and positive attitudes toward English. This methodological framework demonstrates that combining **play, movement, storytelling, songs, realia, and routine-based interaction** allows preschool-aged children to acquire vocabulary and conversational phrases naturally, confidently, and meaningfully.

Conclusion:

Teaching English words and conversational phrases to preschool-aged children requires a careful blend of pedagogical insight, creativity, and developmental understanding. This study demonstrates that methods incorporating play, movement, storytelling, songs, realia, and routine-based activities are particularly effective in fostering early language acquisition. By engaging multiple senses, providing meaningful context, and promoting active participation, these approaches enable children to internalize vocabulary and basic conversational structures naturally and enjoyably.

The analysis highlights that preschool learners respond best to interactive, repetitive, and immersive experiences that align with their cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics. Techniques such as Total Physical Response, thematic games, songs, and storytelling not only enhance vocabulary retention but also build listening skills, confidence, and motivation. Additionally, embedding English into daily routines and classroom practices ensures repeated exposure and functional usage, fostering communication skills that extend beyond structured lessons.

Overall, the study underscores that early language instruction should be child-centered, play-oriented, and contextually meaningful. By implementing these methods, educators can create rich, engaging environments where preschool children develop foundational English skills, cultivate positive attitudes toward learning, and establish a strong basis for future language development.

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