

DEVELOPING SPOKEN FLUENCY OF YOUNG LEARNERS WITH THE HELP OF RHYMES

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of the study was to outline ways of implementing rhymes in developing spoken fluency which can gain young learners interest toward the language learning. Many aspects support the use of rhymes in English language teaching. A few of the characteristics mentioned above already give an impression what the advantages of rhymes. Apart from the brevity and the amount of different topics it is a great medium for the introduction to text analysis and text production.

Furthermore, the young learner gets into contact with new and topic-related vocabulary as well as with literary terms which are necessary for text analysis. So, the work with rhymes proposes a good basis for later work with more complex literature.

Keywords: spoken fluency, teaching young learners, nursery rhyme, elementary school, accuracy;

INTRODUCTION

It is well known fact, that English proficiency of majority of school-leavers has been going downhill for the last ten years. This leads to A1 level learners' difficulties in applying general language skills to mastering professional language.

Learners must be taught fluency and accuracy during classroom activities as it is essential for them to learn how to speak well on professional issues in English. In order to achieve this objective, it is important to find out what difficulties A1 level learners have in developing English speaking skills.

At the beginning of the research we may reply to the question, why is speaking skill important.? So, the goal of the language is communication and the aim of speaking in a language context is to promote communication efficiency. Teachers want A1 level learners to actually be able to use the language as correctly as possible and with a communicative purpose. A1 level learners often value speaking more than the other skills of reading, writing and listening so motivation is not always as big of an issue, but what often happens is A1 level learners feel more anxiety related to their oral production. As speaking is interrelated with the other skills, its development results in the development of the others. One of the primary benefits of increased communicative competency is the resulting job, education and travel opportunities; it is always an asset to be able to communicate with other people.

According the CEFR elementary level learners can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.

Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Simple rhymes are thought to be innate in most cultures. From the time young learner begin to talk, many enjoy playing and experimenting with sounds by themselves – a precursor to later enjoyment of rhymes. Most seem to have skills and a built-in drive that enable them to imitate the sounds and pick up the language and special rhythms of rhymes.

Picking up and repeating the particular language of rhymes is another form of play for young learner. They learn rhymes unconsciously and effortlessly; it is not the laborious task it can be for some adults.

By playing with the short texts of rhymes, learners explore the mechanics of the English language. They find out how language works and become familiar with the relationship between the 44 sounds of English and the 26 alphabet letters – information which helps them when they begin reading to decode the sounds that make up words. The value of this type of language-play with rhymes in early learning is both underestimated and undervalued.

There is a difference between rhymes and simple poems for young learner. Rhymes, in general, are short and depend on the melodic use of the voice to recite the text that includes rhyming words, and the repetition of sounds and words in attractive, easy-to-copy rhythms. The traditional and well-known rhymes are sometimes classified as Mother Goose rhymes or nursery rhymes. Many, like ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’ and ‘Humpty Dumpty’, are considered part of British culture. You can find an animated version of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star on Learn English Kids.

‘First poems’, on the other hand, generally depend less on the playfulness of the language, and more on the meaning, which evokes feelings, imagination and the discovery of ideas beyond the child’s own environment. First poems may be traditional or modern; they are a natural progression from early rhymes. They are usually less well known and less likely to be handed down from generation to generation like nursery rhymes.

WHY RHYMES?

Rhymes are portable playthings. Young learners can say them at any time or in any place to change a mood or fill a bored moment with fun. Rhymes need no toy, equipment or even a book to set a scene; they depend on the sound of the voice reciting the language to stimulate play. Some may be accompanied by physical actions, which help to confirm understanding and act as an aid to memorization.

A rhyme, for young learner, is a complete, short experience, which fits well with their limited attention span. It is like a compact story: it has a beginning and an end, and its own content. Once learners have worked out these sequences, they feel confident, as they know that the language content is fixed, even if the speed of reciting might alter to match a mood. The attractive, playful language – often similar to that used in television commercial jingles – and the short text make it easy and quick to memorize.

Young learners want to communicate immediately in English and are frustrated that they can’t say what they want. Rhymes give them the opportunity to feel that from the first sessions they can ‘say a lot of English and say it quickly just like adults’. Deep satisfaction that motivates

does not come from having fun playing games in English, but from persisting until a defined task, like knowing a rhyme, is successfully completed.

Learning to speak English may seem daunting to some young learners;

knowing rhymes can provide motivating stepping stones that encourage them, especially in the early stages of learning English, when they feel progress is not fast enough for them.

Young learners, who are sometimes shy about speaking English, often begin

to speak by sharing rhymes with an encouraging adult. Through sharing a fixed, fun text, their confidence grows until they find they can say most of a short rhyme by themselves.

SELECTING RHYMES

It is important to build up a collection of rhymes (a rhyme bank). To do this, parents should be prepared to introduce one or two new rhymes each week, depending on their length and young learners' interests and readiness to learn.

Sometimes children are more receptive to new material and it is important to adjust to these moods.

Rhymes can be found in: story rhyme picture books – one rhyme to a complete picture book such as *In the Dark, Dark Wood* by Jessica Souhami, published by Frances Lincoln rhyme anthologies – books with a selection of rhymes and possibly fewer illustrations to support the text such as *Number Rhymes to Say and Play!* by Opal Dunn and Adriano Gon, published by Frances Lincoln/Mother Goose Sterling Publishers traditional rhymes – There are many books of traditional rhymes and nursery rhymes, such as *The Ladybird Book of Nursery Rhymes*, published by Ladybird Family members – it is a good idea to learn rhymes already known to family members as it extends sharing and also motivates children to join in.

When collecting rhymes parents need to select those they themselves enjoy, bearing in mind:

Children's increasing level of English

Children's developing interests and gender needs – many children enjoy the physical action in:

Jeremiah, blow the fire,

Puff, puff, puff.

First you blow it gently...

Then you blow it rough.

the need to transfer useful language to daily conversation

the need to include, if possible, some rhymes known to the extended family

the need to include rhymes with names that can be personalized by changing to family names:

Diddle, diddle dumpling,

My son John,

Went to bed

With his trousers on.

the need to include some rhymes that can be extended into family activities or routines:

I scream,

You scream

We all scream for ice-cream!
 What would you like?
 Chocolate, lemon, vanilla or
 One is for you/And one's for me.
 There is a wide selection of rhymes to meet most needs:
 Hello or goodbye rhymes
 Hi Mary!
 How are you?
 Fine, thanks.
 What about you?
 Action rhymes and finger play rhymes
 10 fingers,
 10 toes,
 2 eyes
 And a round nose.
 Rhyme games
 Acker Backer, Soda Cracker, Acker Backer Boo!
 Acker Backer, Soda Cracker
 Out goes YOU!
 One potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, four,
 Five potatoes, six potatoes, seven potatoes, more?
 One banana, two bananas, three bananas, four...
 Themed rhymes
 Two big apples
 Under a tree.
 One is for you
 And one's for me.
 Rain, rain, go away!
 All the children want to play.
 Rain, rain, go away!
 Come again another day
 Traditional rhymes
 Twinkle, twinkle, little star
 How I wonder what you are
 Up above the world so high
 Like a diamond in the sky
 Twinkle, twinkle, little star
 How I wonder what you are.

HOW TO SAY A RHYME

The way a rhyme comes alive depends on how parents use their voice, eyes, facial expression and body language (for more about this, see the article Speaking English at home).
 To engage a child's attention, the introduction of a new rhyme needs to be a

dramatic experience in which the voice shepherds the child through the rhyme. As children, whose hearing is more acute than adults, become more familiar with a rhyme, they learn how to read the adult's emotions through their voice and no longer need the support of the physical actions. When this happens the child often takes over the physical actions and the parent can stop doing them.

Quite a few traditional rhymes can be both said and sung. Initially it is better to say the rhymes so the child has only one learning task – to pick up the words. If the child has to learn the tune at the same time as the words, they have to learn two things at once, which might be more complicated for some children. Some children, who learn to sing a rhyme first, find that they have difficulty in transferring the sung language to the spoken form; this results in them 'singing language' when they transfer some phrases to a dialogue.

UNDERSTANDING A NEW RHYME

Rhymes are made up of fixed phrases or blocks of language which are put together to make a rhyme. Children pick up these fixed phrases often without noticing the smaller function words like 'the' or 'for', which they hear as part of a block (e.g. 'one's for you') not as individual words. In many rhyme books there is a supporting picture that helps understanding. If there is no picture, parents can draw a quick sketch or show toys or real objects to support the meaning. Any translation of words should be done in a whisper and only once, repeating the English word afterwards.

READING RHYMES

Research has shown that 'reading' simple rhymes young learners already know by heart is an important step in the process of learning to read fluently. Dictating a known rhyme while pointing to the written words in the text is exciting for children, as they find they can read something in English.

Go to bed late,
Stay very small.
Go to bed early,
Grow very tall.

At this stage, young learners can read only language they already know orally in the fixed phrases of rhymes. This 'reading' leads them on to recognize the shapes of recurring words and later to build up their own banks of words they can recognize and 'read'.

At about the same time they begin to analyze the sounds of words they recognize. A favorite game to encourage is collecting rhyming words, like 'four', 'door', 'more', 'floor', 'saw'.

Teachers – are not always aware of this important step in learning to read that occurs naturally with children, who are familiar with, and enjoy, many simple rhymes. Young learners who can read rhymes naturally progress to reading simple poems. Children's ability to pick up rhymes and poems by heart, if nurtured beyond the age of about eight, seems, like acquiring languages, to become a lifelong skill.

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