

Why should children learn foreign language?

Children who learn a language before the onset of adolescence are much more likely to have native-like pronunciation. The more years a child can devote to learning a language, the more competent he or she will become. Regardless, introducing children to alternative ways of expressing themselves and to different cultures generally broadens their outlook and gives them the opportunity to communicate with many more people. (Marcos)

How can children learn foreign language?

The three major types of programs available in elementary schools are language immersion programs, foreign language in elementary schools (FLES) programs, and foreign language exploratory (FLEX) programs.

- Immersion programs allow children to spend part or all of the school day learning in a second language. In full (total) immersion programs, which are available in a limited number of schools, children learn all of their subjects (math, social studies, science, etc.) in the second language. Partial immersion programs operate on the same principle, but only a portion of the curriculum is presented in the second language. Under this type of program, a child may learn social studies and science in Spanish or French in the morning and learn mathematics and language arts in English in the afternoon. In both cases, the second language is the medium for content instruction rather than the subject of instruction. Children enrolled in immersion programs work toward full proficiency in the second language and usually reach a higher level of competence than those participating in other language programs.
- FLES programs are more common than immersion programs. A second language is presented as a distinct subject, much as science or social studies. Typically, the course is taught three to five times per week. Depending on the frequency of the classes and the opportunity for practice, children in these sequential programs may attain substantial proficiency in the language studied.
- FLEX programs introduce students to other cultures and to language as a general concept. Time is spent exploring one or more languages or presenting information about language itself. Although this information may be introduced, the emphasis is not on attaining proficiency. While some proficiency may be attained with a once- or twice-per-week program emphasizing the use of a specific language, parents should not expect children to attain fluency in such programs. These programs, however, can provide a basis for later learning. (Marcos)

Games

Synonym for word games: amusement, entertainment, play

Games are usually used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson.

Games have been shown to have advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways. First, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, this helps them learn and keep new words more easily. Second, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. Third, vocabulary games bring real world context into the classroom and improve student's use of English in a flexible, communicative way.

To achieve the most from vocabulary games, it is essential that suitable games are chosen. Whenever a game is to be performed the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic and the classroom settings are factors that should be taken into account. (anonymous)

I have focused on games played in a group of children that they play in school and not games that we can play on a computer.

Advantages

- Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting,
- They can give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication,
- Games are welcome break from usual routine of the language class,
- They are motivating and challenging,
- Learning a language requires a great deal of effort. Games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning,
- Games provide language practice in the various skills-speaking, writing, listening and reading,

Disadvantages

- You have to motivate children to take part in activities even if they do not feel like it,
- Sometimes they are not appropriate for the age of children and they think they are too easy for them or on the other hand too hard,

Using DVDs CDs

I have divided DVDs and CDs in one group and movies and cartoons in another group. Because we can have movies and cartoons on DVDs and CDs but I have focused on DVDs and CDs that help you learn how to talk, how to pronounce words and have games to play so we expand our vocabulary (for example English DVD for beginners, learning to speak English, hear-say English, the kids way to learn English, Talk to me, etc.) In group DVDs and CDs I have included computer games, that can improve and help us learn our knowledge of foreign language.

Advantages

- Can buy this product and have it at home and watch it and practice it over and over again,
- It is not so expensive,
- It is interesting to children,
- They learn how to use a computer for learning purpose,
- There are many different DVDs and CDs that are available for all ages and capabilities

Disadvantages

- o when it is used in class it can only use it one person, the one it is sitting in front of the computer, the other children are passive,
- o They can get addicted to the computer,
- o Usually DVDs and CDs do not correct children when they make a mistake in spelling or pronunciation,
- o If they memorize the games on DVD or CD, they do not even think what they are doing, for example, which words are connecting in pair,
- o It can get bored in time because it is not a challenge for them anymore.

Internet

Synonyms for word internet: cyberspace

Internet is very interesting and useful thing and if you do not use it only for senseless things, you can learn with it. For example in YouTube you can find a lot of interesting things that can help you learn foreign language fast and in interesting way (for example: alphabet, number, names of animals, etc.) On the internet you can find interesting websites where you can play different games and you can use internet in school to show children different animations, pictures, videos, etc.

Advantages

- Internet refreshes almost every day and you can find new ways to learn foreign language, can find new videos and websites that are meant for children,
- It is interesting for children, it keeps them entertained
- Almost all things are available for free, maybe you just need to register,

Disadvantages

- o Internet contains a lot of inappropriate websites for children, so children must be supervised while being on it,
- o Internet does not contain only verified information,
- o Child can become addicted and loses contact with the real world, start to neglect everything (school, friends, hobbies, etc.)

Listening to the songs, poems and stories

Synonyms for word song: poem, melody, jingle, tune, track

Synonyms for word story: anecdote, article, novel, report, tale

Listening is one of my favorite ways of learning a new language, because you can hear the right pronunciation. Children like music because it relaxes them and if a teacher or a parent translates it for them they soon connect the foreign words with words they talk every day. The same is with poems and stories they listen.

Advantages

- it keeps children's attention, because they are interested in songs and stories, they like to hear it again and again,
- in the class if you read it to the children and if you repeat it several times and translate it, they remember how the words are said and what they mean and then they can repeat it, each pupil can tell one piece of the story or poem or sings a part of a song,

Disadvantages

- o Some children have the ability to memorize text very quickly and do not even try to understand what it is said,
- o Sometimes children get bored or have no motivation,

Reading books and picture books

Synonyms for word books: note, record, daybook

If a child can read, this way is very interesting to learn a foreign language. They start with picture books, where they can usually connect the content with the picture and later on, when they learn a language very well, they can read books, it expands their vocabulary.

Advantages

- It expands their vocabulary,
- It is not stressful, it relaxes them,
- They can read things that are interesting to the children,
- You can borrow books from the library, so it is not expensive,

Disadvantages

- o Many children do not like reading,
- o Parent or a teacher should always be there for them if they do not understand something,
- o When you read, you can understand everything, but you cannot pronounce it right,

Watching foreign movies and cartoons

Synonyms for word movie: film, picture show, video, motion picture

Synonyms for word cartoon: animated cartoon

The easiest way to learn different language in my opinion is to watch cartoons and movies, because when you are able to read you can hear a foreign language and on the bottom you can read translations. Soon you connect the foreign words with words you use every day. Soon you are able to be in another room and do something and just listen to the movie and know what it is going about.

Advantages

- Children love cartoons and movies, because it is interesting to them,
- It keeps their attention for a long time, but only if the content is interesting to them,
- It inspires their imagination.

Disadvantages

- o Sometimes the translations are not correct and children can learn wrong meanings for the word,
- o Children do not spend enough time outside,
- o Can learn inappropriate words.

Language learning camp

Children have opportunity to visit language learning camp in Slovenia or they can go abroad, in different countries it all depends which language they want to learn. This opportunity is for children very useful because they meet new friends and learn language or improve the knowledge they had before. If they go abroad they meet native speakers and children from that country and they can become pen friends. That kind of learning is very interesting to children because they meet new people, can stay in touch with friends they have met and maybe someday use the connection and go to study in that country or just visit them during summer vacation. Only disadvantage for me is that, this is a very expensive way to learn a foreign language.

