

TEACHING ANTONYMS TO CHILDREN THROUGH USING GAMES

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Abstract:

This article analyses how to teach antonyms to children at school. There are innovative and quite interesting methods we have in teaching antonyms. The improvement of a foreign language is not possible without enhancing vocabulary as it is the foundation stone of any language and antonyms are considered the most important part of vocabulary. In the article there are given instructions of some games that can be used in order to teach antonyms.

Keywords: vocabulary, antonyms, children, motivation, physical movement, teaching opposites, to communicate, playing activities and games.

Among numerous sources of children's interest in the language learning process, games seem to be very important. Obviously, there are a lot of other sources, such as pictures and stories. Pictures serve as a visual stimulus, while games use both visual and aural channels and activate language production and, sometimes, physical movement.

Young learners love to play, and they participate in a game with more enthusiasm and willingness than in any other classroom task. Yet, games are sometimes perceived as entertaining activities, playing are not really learning. There are teachers who fail to realize the importance of games, considering them not a wealth of various techniques and an opportunity for real communication but an uncontrolled and noisy waste of time. However, children in general learn better when they are active. Thus, when learning is channeled into an enjoyable game, they are very often willing to invest considerable time and effort in playing it. Moreover, in view of diverse learning styles and preferences the students display, benefits from games seem to cater for everyone as children find playing activities much richer language studying work than doing other kinds of practice. If games are properly designed, they may become an excellent and essential part for children's learning programme. The more variety is introduced into teaching, the more likely the needs of all the different learners are met. What is more, as children need to be motivated, exciting



and relevant classroom exercises appear to be necessary if real understanding and acquisition is to take place. For games are activities with rules, a goal to achieve, and an element of fun; they seem to be challenging and interesting enough to keep the young students occupied and eager to complete the task. The majority of activities, which are found in resourceful materials for teachers, are based on the belief that the games children enjoy and are interested in playing outside the classroom can be adapted and exploited for use in the English language classes. Furthermore, as they use English for real purposes, they make the children play and learn at the same time. Moreover, games help to create a context in which children's attention is focused on the completion of a task without realizing that language items are being practiced. As a result, language learning takes place in a context that children can directly relate to. However, it is always necessary to keep in mind the interests and needs of the learners. Games can provide a valuable learning experience in which the children practice and revise language only if they are carefully chosen according to students' styles of learning.

First of all, it is essential to provide a clear and meaningful purpose for using language which capitalizes on young learners' desire to communicate, for example, activities which involve a game, puzzling something out, or getting missing information from another person. All these make sense and are meaningful to young learners.

Next important criterion is to challenge the learners and make them think so that they are more engaged and so process the language more deeply. There is sometimes a danger that activities are used because they work well or because learners enjoy them. What is important and should matter most is the language-learning value an activity has.

Another very significant point is providing activities which are enjoyable and interesting and which make children want to continue doing them so they get more practice, for example, creating monsters, guessing, and games with the winner or prize. However, it is important that these all have a clear language-learning purpose so that children are practicing and they are not done just to keep pupils amused.

Finally, it is meaningful to provide activities which allow children to be creative with the language and give them opportunity to experiment with it. This will help the young learners to test out their hypotheses about the language and assist the development of their internal language system.



It is necessary to remember that no activity can fulfill all the criteria simultaneously. Therefore, it is always vital to decide what the priorities are before choosing the activity.

'Language learning is hard work. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work.'

'Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information.'

'The need for meaningfulness in language learning has been accepted for some years. A useful interpretation of 'meaningfulness' is that the learners respond to the content in a definite way. If they are amused, angered, intrigued or surprised the content is clearly meaningful to them. Thus, the meaning of the language they listen to, read, speak and write will be more vividly experienced and, therefore, better remembered.

If it is accepted that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language, then they must be regarded as central to a teacher's repertoire. They are thus not for use solely on wet days and at the end of term!'

Teaching opposites is an ideal way to help improve your child's ability to communicate. The addition of descriptive words to their vocabulary will greatly transform the level of detail your child can convey – 'soft bunny', 'big teddy' or 'little boy'.

You can teach opposites to your child through a range of simple activities at home. Preschoolers love games, and using games to teach opposites is a terrific way for your child to learn new vocabulary.

- **Flashcards:** Create or buy index cards with pictures of opposites on them. Have your toddler match sets of opposite flashcards – happy and sad, hot and cold, big and small, up and down and so on. They can pair the flashcards as they find the set of opposites.
- **Acting Opposites:** Have your toddler perform actions, and then you do the opposite. For example, if they sit down, you stand up, if they walk forward, you walk backward. Once your child is familiar with the game, you perform the action first, and have your toddler do the opposite.



- **The Opposites Hat:** Cut out several pieces of paper. On each one writes an action such as:
stomp your feet loudly,
reach up to the sky,
whisper your name,
stand up,
jump up and down fast,
and so on.
Put the pieces of papers into a hat or box and have a child pick one, and read what it says. The child will do that action and then have to do the opposite.

Teaching Opposites with Crafts

Toddler-friendly crafts that teach opposites must be kept quick and simple. Be prepared for a small mess – nothing that can't be tidied later!

- **Collages:** Using magazines, newspapers and catalogs, provide your toddler with many 'opposite' images. For example, happy faces and sad faces, night time and day time images. Paste the sad faces on one side of your collage, and happy faces on the other.
- **Faces:** Using magazines, newspapers and catalogs, provide your toddler with a range of facial features. Your child can then glue the features on paper plates to create happy and sad faces.
- **Books:** Have your toddler glue 'opposite' pictures (using magazines, newspapers and catalogs) within of an exercise book or a stapled set of papers. Write out the opposite words under each picture. Easy concepts for this activity are: hot and cold, sunny and rainy, big and small, and sad and happy.
- OR, on the bottom of each double page spread, write the pair of opposite words first. Then, with your toddler, choose a picture to draw or stick on each page that represents each word (e.g., a big car and a little car, a slow snail and a fast puppy).

Teaching Opposites with Toys

Toys are something you're sure to already have plenty of... so creating opposite games with toys is only limited by your imagination!

- Find a small teddy bear and a big one to teach big and small or baby and adult.



- Using balls of different sizes and weights you can teach big and small, heavy and light, and float or sink.
- Using a ball and a bucket, cup or box, teach your toddler in and out, over and under, as well as up and down.
- Some toys have volume – for example toy dog, trucks, dolls. Use these toys to teach loud and quiet.

Teaching Opposites with Movement

Here are a few simple activities that you can do with your toddler indoors or out. Once familiar with the game, ask your child to do the opposite. For example, if you reach up, your toddler will reach down.

- Reach high to the sky and low to the ground
- Take a big step and a little step
- Clap your hands loudly and quietly
- Run fast, then slow (toddler's pace)
- Happy face, sad face
- Fill a cup with water, empty cup
- Openlid, shutlid
- Sit down, stand up
- Turn to the right and then left
- Jump up and crouch down.

To conclude, antonyms are valuable things for learners to practice and learn. It helps them get a better sense for the meaning of words and the wide range of things they can describe with language. And when taught in the right way, antonyms can also be a lot of fun. If children learn antonyms with attention at their kindergarten and primary school time, they will use more advanced vocabulary of antonyms in their speech, sentences in future.

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