



TEACHING ESL LITERACY TO SCHOOL-AGE LEARNERS

Sadikov Erkin Tursunovich

Bukhara state university

PhD of English Linguistics Department

sadikoverkin87@gmail.com

Naimova Shahrinabonu Feruzjonovna

First year student of Bukhara state university

Foreign languages faculty

shaxrinanaimova@gmail.com

Abstract: *This research explores effective methods for teaching second/foreign language literacy to school-age learners. The study emphasizes the importance of age-appropriate strategies, academic engagement, learner motivation, cultural context, and clear learning objectives. These factors are essential in helping students develop the skills needed to listen, speak, read, and write in a language that is not their native tongue.*


Keywords: *ESL, literacy instruction, school-age learners, learner engagement, cultural context, language skills, non-native language.*

In today's increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is both a valuable skill and a necessity. With the widespread access to the internet and other digital resources, children are exposed to multiple languages from an early age, often acquiring proficiency in three or more languages simultaneously. Early childhood is widely considered the most favorable period for language acquisition, as a child's brain is highly receptive and capable of absorbing new information with ease. This developmental stage is often referred to as the "golden age" of learning.

During this period, children can acquire not only their native language but also one or more additional languages. Multilingual exposure promotes the development of cognitive skills, enhances social interaction, and fosters adaptability to diverse cultural contexts. Numerous studies have demonstrated that young learners can become fluent in two or even three languages at the same time.

At present, researchers and educators are investigating the most effective methods for teaching a second or foreign language to children. Although no single method is universally accepted, many experts advocate for multisensory approaches, including learning through music, games, physical movement, rhymes, and visual aids. These





methods not only capture children's attention but also enhance their motivation and interest in learning a new language. As a result, play-based and emotionally supportive teaching strategies are widely recommended for school-age learners.

Language acquisition in early childhood has been the subject of numerous linguistic and pedagogical studies. According to Maria Montessori (1918), the preschool period represents a “sensitive period” for language learning, during which children are naturally open to absorbing new linguistic information. At this stage, they can master their mother tongue while simultaneously acquiring a second or even a third language, provided they are in an environment conducive to learning.

Several studies emphasize that creating a motivational and emotionally supportive environment is crucial for helping children feel confident and enthusiastic about learning a second language (Chakhchakhova, Tolstykh, & Ansimova, 2016). These researchers suggest that using songs, rhymes, and games can be effective tools for language teaching. Such methods not only reduce anxiety but also enhance memory and engagement.

According to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, children learn a second language more efficiently when exposed to comprehensible input in a relaxed and low-pressure environment. This theory aligns with the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which combines physical movement with language learning, helping children internalize vocabulary and commands more naturally.

Additionally, studies have shown that incorporating musical elements, such as rhymes and songs, accelerates vocabulary retention and pronunciation improvement. Ellis (2005) notes that when children are emotionally engaged, they are more likely to retain and use new words in context.

In conclusion, extensive academic research supports the integration of interactive, playful, and emotionally supportive strategies in preschool language education. These approaches not only enhance children’s willingness to participate but also improve their ability to acquire a second language in a natural, enjoyable manner.





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