

7 WAYS TO TEACH FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO A CHILD UP TO SCHOOL AGE

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Annotation: In a globalized world, being able to speak a second or third language is something that offers people value for the rest of their lives. While there is a lot of evidence that says the younger a child learns, the better, children acquire pronunciation, accent, and grammar rules best before the end of their teenage years.

Key words: Listening skills, talking ability, playing, lesson plans, feedbacks, favorite games, nature vocabulary.

Play is the universal language of kids and plays (pardon the pun) an incredibly important role in helping your child learn new words and phrases. If you missed my article about play-based learning, I recommend checking it out over here.

Play helps develop listening skills, the ability to follow directions, develop vocabulary and social skills - like sharing. Talk through what you and your child are doing during playtime, introducing new vocabulary along the way.

You can build play into everyday activities and create an opportunity to use the target language, making a game out of getting dressed, playing with different utensils when prepping food, or bath time. If you're looking for practical ideas on how to get started, make sure you get your hands on my free guide: *How To Teach Your Kids a Second Language: Even If You're Not Fluent*. In our weekly language lessons, I follow a step by step guide that includes a 30 minute play-based lesson plans in our Cultured Home programs designed specifically to develop language skills.

And P.S - we've received awesome feedback from parents about our lesson plans, so check them out! In a classroom of young language learners, of course! And while some might say the room looks more like a toy box than a classroom, each of these objects is there for a reason. Teaching foreign language to young learners looks much different from teaching it to adults. Here we'll look at seven ways to take advantage of your young learners' unique qualities instead of fighting against them as you teach your foreign language class.

My five-year-old son's favorite board game takes all of five minutes to play. I might feel fleeced if it weren't for how much he absolutely loves it. (It's called *Dinosaur Escape* if you're interested.) But love it he does, and the playing length is just right for him because kids lose interest quickly.

Since the average child's attention span is two to three minutes for every year of age, you probably won't get a five-year-old to work at a project for 20 minutes. While you may be perfectly content to review past, present and future tenses all at the same time, that doesn't mean your young learners can sit through a lesson long enough to cover it all. So what's a language teacher to do? Keep things moving.

I've learned the hard way to always have fillers and backup activities ready to go at a moment's notice. My lessons often took much less time than I'd planned for them. But when you teach young learners, you have to plan to move quickly from one activity to the next. It's not crazy to have a different activity ready for every five minutes you'll be in class with your students. But don't be intimidated. Kids love repetition, so it's perfectly fine to repeat activities each day of the week or even in the morning and then again before going home. Here are some easy ideas to incorporate into your daily lesson planning:

Include target language songs and chants throughout your day. These are great for quick warmups, cool downs and breaks in between larger activities. Tell or read target language stories that engage their imaginations. To up the engagement level even further, try TPRS stories that teach meaning through student responses and interaction. Play games in the target language. This is a tried-and-true technique to get kids building their language skills while having fun! Go outside and teach movement vocabulary or nature vocabulary. Sometimes a change of scene and fresh air is all kids need to stay on track. You won't end up using every activity you've planned on any given day, but if you have them then you'll be sure to keep your kids engaged and you won't find them staring out the window lost in daydreams.

1. Speak with them

If you already speak the language they're studying, it will be easier for your child to feel comfortable trying to speak it. Just as they learned their native language from you, they'll benefit from trying to practice language skills together. You can help them establish a good foundation with the comfort of home, away from exam scores or the classroom.

2. Study with them

One of the best ways to encourage your child to practice something that might be tedious or even difficult at times is to join them. Study with your child and show them that you can overcome any challenges together. It will show them they're not alone, help strengthen their skills, and it's a great way to feel connected to each other.

3. Find entertainment in that language

Think about how your family likes to be entertained together. Is there a TV series you all like to watch? How about movies? There are loads of great films and TV shows out there that offer subtitles or even audio in different languages. Turn those on next

time you're going to have a family movie night and see if you can pick out any of your favorite phrases together.

4. Have them join a language course

Language courses are a great way to learn quickly. And while your child's school may not offer one, there should be plenty of community organizations that offer your child the chance to expand on their language skills. Another great alternative is to find a prep course abroad where your child can be fully immersed in the language and build a stronger foundation with it.

5. Find study groups

Along with a language course, your child could benefit greatly from joining a group. A lot of communities have after-school programs, classes at a local recreation center, or other community groups where your child can find friends and peers who are also trying to improve their skills.

6. Look within your community

Speaking of building upon your community, do you have a friend, family member, or neighbor who speaks the language your child is trying to learn? Let them know about your situation and invite them over to chat in the language your child is studying. Try to host a dinner or activity you try together where everyone only speaks it.

7. Use apps and online tools

Another great way to supplement your child's learning is to use apps and online tools. One of the most famous apps at the moment is Duolingo. It's a great way to practice short phrases, learn new vocabulary, and even try pronunciation. Some other popular tools include Memrise, which helps gamify the experience, Busuu, which helps with pronunciation and accent, and Drops, which offers five-minute quick studies you can take anywhere.