

CHILDREN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY DOING AND PLAYING

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Abstract

Since the last part of XX century there has been a great interest on Foreign Language (FL) acquisition. A lot of research has been done on Second Language Classrooms (Chaudron, 1988) and on how English learning can be improved (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989) big efforts have been made on making lessons more meaningful to students (Long & Doughty, 2009). Special attention was given to learner's uptake (Bailey, 1991) although most of the studies have been carried out studying teacher's performance in class.

This research pretends to investigate the teaching learning context itself. Although taking into account all participants in class, the main focus is on learners. Taking discourse analysis as an essential tool (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992; Tsui, 1994; Poyatos, 1998; Velasco 2012) we study English classes for Spanish young learners aged 10-12.

We are interested in analyzing learners' oral output after using a different methodology. Believing that motivation, affect and students' emotional intelligence play an exceptional role on L2 learning (Arnold, 2006) as well as Cooperative Learning (Kagan, 2009; Slavin, 2014), our methodology has focused on promoting and helping students to create a game to play in and out of class, in big and small groups in order to improve their FL acquisition. We have studied students' participation and interaction level as well as their English acquisition level.

Results show very relevant information that could greatly help teachers and students from all educative levels.

Keywords: *Cooperative Learning, gamification, classroom interaction, foreign language learning, didactics.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, it is extremely important to understand the teaching-learning process in the Foreign Language (FL) class at Primary level in order to improve FL acquisition. In Spain, children start to learn English as a foreign language at three in many schools but it is amazing the quantity of students that do not feel confident enough to speak in English when they leave Secondary school after 13 years studying a Foreign language. In contrast, in many European countries children start to learn a foreign language when they are older (12 years old), have less number of L2 tuition and are able to speak in English better when they leave Secondary schools. Teachers should reflect on the teaching-learning process and use effective methodologies for students in the changing world in which they are living.

2. Objectives

In spite of the great number of teaching aspects that need further research, we have opted for focusing on one of the most difficult grammar points to teach at schools: affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences in present tense with verbs to be, to have got, can and action verbs. After three decades teaching English as a foreign language to Primary school students, we have observed that Spanish students have great difficulties in learning and using properly simple present with usual action verbs and also with *to be*, *to have got* and *can*. It seems to be especially difficult for students to use the third person in singular (he/she/it/) in simple present.

Our main objective in this study is to analyze learners' oral output after using a different methodology when learning *Simple present*. We would like to know if using the new educative tool that we are going to name *30Q mini-book* helps students to learn better L2 and we also would like to know how they use it and what they think about it.