Challenges of foreign language learning in early childhood

Prepared by Zhumabek Akbope 212 group

The early childhood years represent a critical period in learning and development. At this age, children are very receptive to learning a second language. Ideally, for effective language learning to occur, a stimulating and rich linguistic environment is required. Thus, children need to be given many opportunities to be actively engaged and interact with others. This can be quite a challenge in the foreign language classroom, as typically children learning in this context have little exposure to the language outside of the classroom. One way to remedy this is to utilise the new technologies to enhance learning by giving children opportunities to interact and engage with native speakers.

Through learning a second language, children also learn about other cultures and increase their cultural awareness and understanding of different cultural practices and behaviors, and thus, become more appreciative of diversity and different cultures through this experience. This experience of learning a second or foreign language in the important early childhood years sets the seed for growth, future development and engagement in learning a second language.

Ideally, for effective language learning to occur, a stimulating and rich linguistic environment is required. Thus, children need to be given many opportunities to be actively engaged and interact with others, as occurs when learning the first language. This can be quite a challenge in the foreign language classroom, as typically children learning a second language in 2 a foreign language context have little exposure to the language outside of the classroom.

In contrast, when learning a language as a foreign language, there are many significant challenges as children do not experience the same conducive interactive environment as when learning their first language. In the foreign language classroom, children need to be given opportunities to be actively engaged and have rich interactive communicative activities, similar to what occurs when learning the first language. This is a significant challenge to the early childhood teacher.

ONLINE EDUCATION

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

VIDEO TUTORIALS

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

DISTANCE UNIVERSITY

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

ONLINE MENTORSHIP

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

Technology can be utilized in creative ways to increase opportunities to interact and engage with native speakers of the corresponding second language in meaningful and engaging ways. These new technologies enable us to be creative and innovative in the way that we teach second languages. It allows us to build linkages and partnerships between language learners and native speakers of the languages being learned.

It is important in the early childhood years to focus on the 'here and now' and use concrete 'hands on' activities with an emphasis on visual materials and activities that focus on personal and concrete experiences. Teachers can build on topics and activities that children are already familiar with and that are meaningful to them.

We also need to consider individual factors that influence learning of a second language. These include individual differences in attitude, personality, age, learning style and motivation, which all affect language learning. Motivation and interest in learning and communicating in a second language are crucial factors. It is essential that children are motivated and interested in learning and communicating in a second language. By creating joint activities in partner classrooms, meaningful and motivating reasons for communicating can be established.

New technologies can be used to increase student motivation and engagement in the second language learning classroom. Typically, young children use a variety of technologies while involved in everyday activities at home. This is one reason why we need to also include these technologies in the classroom. One technology that has proved popular and an effective
tool in teaching/learning in the second language classroom is the Interactive Whiteboard.

Use of virtual worlds such as Minecraft has become popular in teaching/learning languages, particularly with adults but also with older children. The activities and goals involved in the use of these technologies can be organized so that they involve collaborative learning between peers. For younger children, electronic books and games can be of great benefit. These types of activities can be projected onto the interactive whiteboard so that the whole class or groups of children can be actively engaged and/or they can be used by individual children on portable tablets so that the content can be learned and revised.

Figure 1
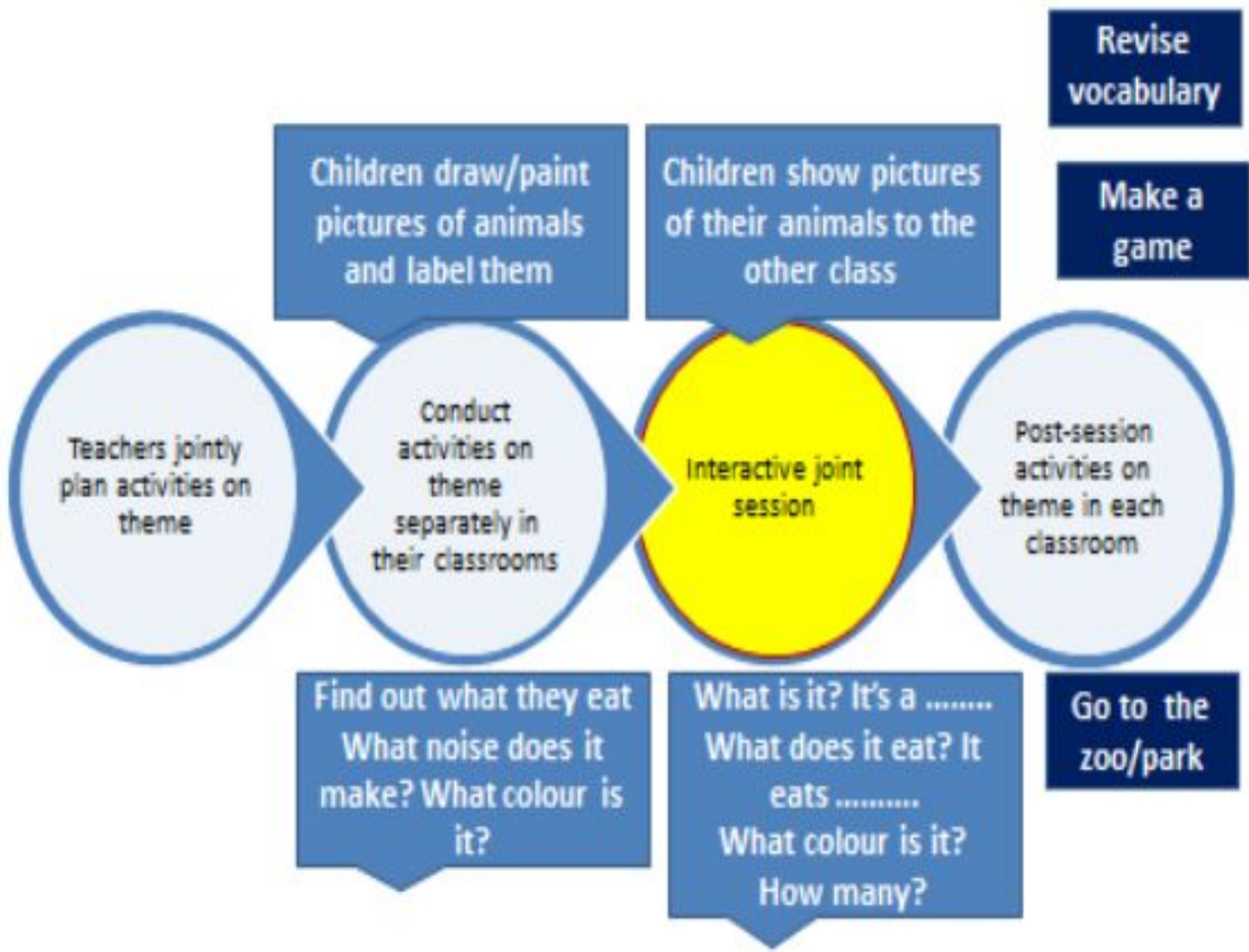
There are many interesting and engaging themes or topics that are suitably engaging for young children that the partner teachers can select. This includes animals, foods and about us and our daily lives. If we take the topic animals, we can see how it can be developed in the partner classrooms as illustrated in Figure 1. Initially, the partner teachers jointly plan the activities around the topic and language to be focused on. Then the partner teachers conduct various preparatory activities on the topic prior to the planned interactive joint session.

A content or theme-based approach is a very suitable method for use with young children and with learners with low proficiency levels in the second language. This approach also provides an engaging and meaningful context for language learning to occur in. The content occurring in both first and second languages can also be streamlined, so it reinforces and integrates learning in both languages. Through this approach, children will also increase their understanding of the different cultures associated with each language. When collaborating across classrooms in different cultural contexts, different styles of teaching and learning are likely to emerge, so teachers need to be adaptable and flexible in their approach.

Education in English is spreading around the world, not only as a foreign language subject, but increasingly as a language of learning as both local and international schools implement English medium teaching across the curriculum .

On the other hand, Language is the most powerful tool in the development of any human being. Every language has its own significance, culture and values in a society regardless of differences. Learning through English as a second language for a child has positive implication in the sense that, the child is connected with and contributes to their world. Therefore the first language has to be maintained for the purpose of preserving and respecting national language and its culture for a child identity.

THE END
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION