



TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Annotation. *This paper explores effective methodologies for teaching English to young learners, specifically focusing on children aged 6-7. The research examines key language acquisition theories, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, and the Storytelling method. These approaches emphasize natural language acquisition, engaging activities, and reducing learner anxiety. The study highlights the advantages of early language exposure and provides practical techniques for educators. The findings suggest that a combination of comprehensible input, physical interaction, and storytelling enhances young learners' English proficiency.*

Keywords: *Young learners, English language acquisition, Input Hypothesis, Total Physical Response (TPR), Storytelling method, vocabulary development, language teaching strategies.*

Introduction. Younger is Better. The hypothesis that younger learners acquire languages more efficiently is widely recognized in second language acquisition research. McLaughlin (1992) suggests that there is a critical period during childhood when language learning occurs more naturally and effectively. After this period, acquiring a new language becomes more challenging due to cognitive and neurological factors.

Younger is Better in the Long Term

Another argument supporting early English instruction is that longer exposure leads to higher proficiency. If children start learning English in primary school, they have more time to develop fluency compared to those who begin later. However, research indicates that this advantage is more evident in second language acquisition (L2) contexts, where children are immersed in the language daily. In foreign language (EFL) settings, where exposure is limited to classroom instruction, the benefits may not be as pronounced.

English as an International Language

English plays a crucial role in global communication. However, this argument alone does not necessarily justify starting English instruction at an early age. The effectiveness of early English education depends on teaching quality, methodology, and consistent exposure.



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Main part. Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Its Application in Teaching Young Learners. Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory (1970s-1980s) provides key insights into second language acquisition. One of its central components is the Input Hypothesis, which states: > "We acquire language by understanding input that contains structures a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$). This is made possible with the help of context or extra-linguistic information" (Krashen, 1987, p. 21). This hypothesis emphasizes comprehensible input—language that is slightly beyond the learner's current level but still understandable through context, gestures, or visual aids.

Key Concepts in Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Comprehensible Input → Language that a learner can mostly understand but includes some new elements to promote growth.

Silent Period → A phase where learners listen and process language before they start speaking.

$i + 1$ → Learning occurs when input is just slightly above the learner's current level.

Applying $i+1$ to Teaching 6-7-Year-Old Children.

For instance, if a 6-year-old knows basic words like "dog" and "run," an $i+1$ approach might introduce:

✓ Current level (i): "This is a dog."

✓ New input ($+1$): "The dog is running fast!" (New words: running, fast)

This approach ensures natural learning without overwhelming the child.

Practical Strategies Based on Krashen's Theory.

1. Use slightly challenging language – Input should neither be too easy nor too difficult.
2. Provide rich listening and reading activities – Stories, songs, and interactive games.
3. Allow a "silent period" – Do not force speaking immediately; let children absorb language naturally.
4. Incorporate visuals and gestures – Helps make new words more comprehensible.
5. Make learning fun – Engaging activities enhance motivation and retention.

Total Physical Response (TPR) Method



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Developed by James Asher (1965), TPR is a kinesthetic approach where children physically respond to language input before speaking. According to Richards & Rodgers (1986, p. 87): > “The Total Physical Response (TPR) Method is built around the coordination of speech and action. It is a language teaching method that attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity.”

Implementation of TPR for Young Learners (6-7 years old)

1. Teacher gives a simple command → Children listen and respond physically.
2. Children repeat the action multiple times → Reinforces word-action associations.
3. Teacher gradually introduces new words → Expands vocabulary naturally.
4. Children eventually begin verbalizing the actions → Encourages speech production.

Example Activity: Teaching Action Verbs

Teacher says: "Jump!" → (Children jump.)

Teacher says: "Sit down!" → (Children sit down.)

Repeated exposure to such activities leads to spontaneous speaking over time.

Storytelling Method

Key Researchers: Jerome Bruner (1986), Andrew Wright (1995)

Core Idea: Children learn better through stories because narratives provide logical structure and are easier to remember.

Key Features of Storytelling:

Natural language acquisition – Stories create meaningful context.

Supports vocabulary development – New words are learned in context.

Engages children through visuals and actions – Makes learning interactive.

Example: "The Hungry Caterpillar"

The teacher reads the story with visual aids (pictures or slides).

Children predict what will happen next.

The teacher asks: "What did the caterpillar eat?"

Children retell the story using their own words or act out scenes.

Conclusion. This study highlights the effectiveness of early English learning through Krashen's Input Hypothesis, TPR, and Storytelling. Krashen's Input Hypothesis ensures natural language development through comprehensible input. TPR makes learning interactive, engaging, and stress-free. Story-telling enhances



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memory, comprehension, and motivation. The findings suggest that a combined approach using these methods can significantly improve young learners' English proficiency. Teachers should adopt age-appropriate strategies that encourage natural language acquisition and make learning enjoyable.

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