

USING PICTURES TO TEACH ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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Abstract: *This article discusses the importance of pictures in teaching English at elementary level. Pictures are simple, clear and attractive visual aids which help learners understand new words, remember language better and take part in classroom activities more confidently. At elementary level, many students cannot yet explain their thoughts freely in English, so pictures become a useful bridge between meaning and speech. The article explains the main benefits of pictures and gives practical ways of using them in vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening and speaking activities. It also gives several teacher-friendly suggestions on how to choose and use pictures naturally in the classroom.*

Keywords: *pictures, elementary English, visual aids, young learners, vocabulary teaching, speaking practice, classroom activities, language learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English at elementary level is not only about explaining grammar or asking students to memorize new words. It is also about helping learners feel that English is understandable and useful. At this stage, students often have a small vocabulary and they may feel shy when they need to speak. For this reason, pictures can play a very helpful role in English lessons.

A picture can explain meaning faster than a long definition. For example, when a teacher shows a picture of a kitchen, students can easily understand words such as table, fridge, cup, plate and cook. They do not need to translate every word one by one, because the meaning is already visible. This makes the lesson clearer and more natural.

Pictures also make the classroom atmosphere more active. Elementary learners usually like colourful and familiar materials. A photo, a flashcard or even a simple drawing on the board can attract their attention and help them concentrate on the lesson. The aim of this article is to show how pictures can be used in a simple but effective way in elementary English teaching.

The Role of Pictures in Elementary English Lessons

Pictures connect language with real meaning. This is especially important for beginners, because they are still building the basic connection between English words and the world around them. If students only hear a new word, they may forget it quickly. But if they hear the word and see the picture at the same time, the word becomes easier to remember.

Pictures are also useful for giving context. Many elementary topics, such as family, food, clothes, rooms, animals, weather and daily routines, can be presented visually. When students see a situation, they understand what they need to talk about. For example, a

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picture of a boy brushing his teeth can help students make the sentence: He brushes his teeth in the morning.

Another important role of pictures is motivation. A lesson with only explanations may become boring for young or elementary learners. Pictures bring variety into the lesson. They can make students curious, help them ask questions and encourage them to answer even when their English is still limited.

Benefits of Using Pictures

The first benefit of pictures is better vocabulary learning. Vocabulary is the foundation of elementary English. Pictures help students understand new words without too much translation. The teacher can show a flashcard, say the word, ask students to repeat it and then use it in a short sentence. In this way, learners see, hear and practise the new word.

The second benefit is stronger memory. Students usually remember words better when they connect them with images, actions or small situations. A list of words may look dry and difficult, but a set of pictures can make the same words more memorable. For example, food words become more interesting when students look at pictures and say what they like or do not like.

The third benefit is easier speaking practice. Pictures give students ideas. When learners are asked to speak without any support, they may not know what to say. But when they look at a picture, they can describe colours, people, objects and actions. Even simple sentences such as The girl is happy or There is a cat under the chair are useful at elementary level.

Pictures also help weaker students participate. In a mixed classroom, some learners answer quickly while others remain silent. A clear picture gives support to everyone. Students can point, name, repeat, match or describe. This makes the lesson more inclusive and less stressful.

Practical Ways to Use Pictures in Class

One of the easiest ways to use pictures is vocabulary presentation. The teacher can prepare pictures on one topic, such as clothes, school objects or animals. First, students listen and repeat the words. Then they match pictures with words, ask and answer simple questions, and finally use the words in short sentences. This order helps students move from recognition to production.

Pictures can also be used for grammar practice. For present continuous, the teacher can show people doing different actions and ask: What is he doing? What are they doing? For prepositions, a room picture can help students practise in, on, under, near and next to. For there is and there are, students can describe what they see in a picture. Grammar becomes easier because learners can see the situation.

Another useful activity is picture description. The teacher may begin with guiding questions: Who is in the picture? Where are they? What are they doing? What colours can you see? After answering these questions, students can make a short description. This activity develops vocabulary, sentence structure and confidence at the same time.

Pictures are also helpful before reading or listening tasks. Before reading a short text, students can look at a related picture and predict the topic. This prepares them for the text

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and activates the words they already know. For example, before a text about a picnic, students can name food, people and actions in the picture.

Games with pictures are especially effective in elementary classes. Matching games, memory games, guessing games and find-the-difference tasks help students practise English in a relaxed way. In a guessing game, one student describes a hidden picture and others try to guess the word. Such activities are simple, but they keep students active.

Choosing Pictures Carefully

The teacher should choose pictures according to the aim of the lesson. A good picture for elementary learners should be clear, simple and connected with the topic. If the picture has too many details, students may become confused. It is better to use fewer pictures and practise them well than to show many pictures very quickly.

Pictures should also be suitable for the age and background of learners. Familiar situations, such as school, family, shops, transport and hobbies, are usually easier for students to discuss. At the same time, pictures can introduce new cultures, but unfamiliar details should be explained in simple language.

Teachers do not always need expensive materials. A printed picture, a textbook illustration, a magazine photo or a quick drawing on the board can be enough. The picture does not have to be perfect. It only needs to be clear and useful for the activity. Sometimes a simple drawing can work better than a beautiful but complicated image.

Common Mistakes and Useful Tips

One common mistake is using pictures only for decoration. A picture should have a task. Students should do something with it: name, match, describe, compare, guess, ask questions or write sentences. If students only look at the picture, the learning effect is limited.

Another mistake is correcting every error while students are trying to describe a picture. Elementary learners need support and confidence. The teacher can listen first, help with important words and correct the main mistakes after the activity. This keeps the speaking practice more natural.

A useful tip is to recycle the same pictures in different ways. One set of animal pictures can be used for vocabulary, spelling, plural forms, colours, likes and dislikes, and simple descriptions. Repetition is not boring when the task changes. It helps students meet the same words several times and remember them better.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pictures are very important in teaching English at elementary level. They make language clearer, more interesting and easier to remember. Pictures help students understand new words, practise grammar, speak with more confidence and take part in classroom activities.

The effective use of pictures depends on the teacher's purpose. A picture should not be used only because it is colourful. It should support a clear learning aim and encourage students to use English. When learners describe, compare, guess or create sentences with pictures, they become more active in the lesson.

For elementary learners, even a small visual aid can make a big difference. A flashcard, a photo or a simple board drawing can help students move from silence to

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communication. Therefore, using pictures is one of the easiest and most practical ways to make elementary English lessons more understandable and enjoyable.

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