

Essay  
(by Irina Burmistrova)

What do schoolchildren like and dislike about learning English?

*Teachers open the door, but  
you must enter by yourself.  
Chinese proverb*

English is global language because about 20% of the world's population speaks it. In more than 100 countries including China, Russia, Germany and Egypt, English is the main foreign language taught in schools.

It should be admitted that knowing diverse languages plays a significant role in modern world. Over the past few decades, there has been a growing interest among people, especially juveniles, to attend foreign language classes. This fact has caused very deep concerns among psychologists in choosing the best age to start learning another language. From my point of view children should begin learning a foreign language as soon early as possible, because they can learn better and easier.

In most cases parents want their children to learn the language. But young child has a weak motivation to learn a language. The main goal at the initial stage of training is to create a positive motivation for learning. Does it always succeed? To achieve a positive result, it is necessary to find out: what do schoolchildren like and dislike about learning English?

A few years ago I asked my students about their preferences in learning English. They named more than ten reasons why do they like to learn English. Here are the most popular ones.

The most interesting for schoolchildren is learning new words as it helps to develop their imagination while using them. The more new English words they learn, the more confident they feel and much easier their communication becomes. Also, students like traveling, socializing and making new friends in new countries. Communication helps show that they are open and tolerant.

A lot of students consider English amusing. They enjoy English music and watch cartoons and movies with pleasure.

And of course, a lot of schoolchildren different ages fond of playing computer games and surfing the Internet. Learning a foreign language gives them an opportunity to become a member of a cyber sport community or group in social networks around the world. That is why they are interested in studying English much as possible to use such a chance. In addition, knowledge of the English language is prestigious and increases the social status.

At the same time students loathe being forced to study English and they are unmotivated. I tried to find out the reasons for the dislike of studying English. If I can find out the reasons, I might interest the children and be more successful as a teacher.

Every language has its own grammar rules and English is not an exception. Most students complain that they have to memorize a lot of rules. And doing grammar drills is very boring. This suggests that language is taught as a subject not as a skill like art, sport or music. Teachers should involve children in the language and not study it. Students must learn language as it is used in a real situation. This will allow students to figure out the rules and acquire language, not just learn it.

Next real problem is providing choice. Many students believe that learning English is mandatory and it is not their choice. Teachers need to allow students more control and allow them to study how, what and even when they want. Personalized learning experiences can help provide students choice.

In addition, most language classrooms have very differing levels of language learners. Those who do not speak fluently are very ashamed and stressed when trying to speak English in a classroom. Teachers need to be much more sensitive about anxiety of students. Also, students need more time before they are ready to productively use the language.

Many people are convinced that education is an important part of life, especially for children. School helps them to become well-educated, to choose a profession and to achieve success. Without a doubt, learning a foreign language means hard work and overcoming difficulties. If students want to achieve something worthy in life and become a well-educated person, they have to be prepared for hard work. We all have much more opportunities to learn, so more of our students will love learning English and run to our classes with pleasure.