

# A Thought on Reviewing Ways in Primary School

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## Abstract

This paper will focus on the effective review of English in the third grade of primary school. In the first part, the author introduces the importance of improving the effective review of English in the third grade of primary school. Analyzing from the aspects of theories, teachers have to get a good knowledge of language theories and analyze it well to achieve the teaching goal. So the author brings some theories about second language acquisition, such as the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the effective filter hypothesis and the natural order hypothesis. After analyzing the weaknesses deeply, the author lists some methodologies for reviewing language and the motivation for primary students' review of English. In the third part, it shows the cause of the present problems in the method of present teaching and reviewing lessons. In the next part, it gives some solutions for these problems.

**Keywords:** effective review method, primary school students, review strategy

## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of globalization, nowadays people all over the world are learning foreign languages in order to be integrated into modern life. Most Chinese treat English as the preferred first foreign language since it is the official language in many countries, consequently, the learning and review of English is also becoming quite important in strengthening language grasp such as helping learners to improve their vocabulary, reading, cultural aspects comprehension.

It is known to all that most of Chinese students have started learning English when they begin their primary school education, specifically speaking, from the point of psychological development process, the third grade of primary school is the most important stage that students begin transforming from childhood to adolescence. An important characteristic of this stage is the students' learning tasks and types of activities have changed a lot compared with the lower graders both in breadth and depth, the feature of game play within the learning activities has reduced greatly. As a consequence, how to help students transit smoothly and successfully becomes a popular issue, and how to choose the effective review methods really makes difference.

What is more, we know that examination is a method to promote the development of students rather than an obstacle that hinders and restrains the development of students. To cope with such situation, the English teachers need to prepare for the review work seriously with the purposes of helping students set up confidence, forming good learning habits as well as developing the potential of students. This study will help primary teachers and students analyze the potential issues and specific solutions to deal with, so as to, discuss possible barriers in reviewing English and provide some useful suggestions accordingly for third graders.

## 2. Literature Review

Robert and Alan (2003) have conducted reviews on experimental researches of reading programs for primary English learners, concentrating on comparisons of bilingual and English-only programs and specifically, reproducible schema that has been assessed by English language learners.

In addition, Barbara (2009) suggests there is a need to establish a group of learners within which both parents and teachers are engaged in continuous learning activities in a cooperative culture with the purpose of improving students' learning skills. The trust between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents is a basic

element in developing a cooperative culture as well as effective learning patterns for students especially the ones in the third grade of primary school.

What is more, James, Pamela and Linda (2013) point out that the effective teaching in English includes four major parts which are assessment for learning, from exclusion to inclusion, school self-evaluation for school improvement and successful leadership separately.

Among all learning motivations, interest is the most realistic and active part. Albert Einstein once said, "Interest is the best teacher", it is especially true for learning English. The teachers can play English songs and show English cartoon movies like 'Kung Fu Panda' for students in order to stimulate their interests, in addition, they should pay attention to the teaching of words pronunciation, and they can appropriately imitate the gesture breakthrough pronunciation, which is full of fun. After conducting such actions, the students may raise interests and then become willing to review consciously.

The review refers to the process of reproducing and reviewing knowledge learned in class, and also rediscovering some missing knowledge, in order to promote the students' ability of applying knowledge, as a result, the review acts as an indispensable part in the learning activities. As far as I am concerned, the teachers can distribute anonymous questionnaire surveys asking students which kind of review patterns they prefer, after collecting finished questionnaires and analyzing the statistics inside, they can choose to adopt the method which is expected by the majority of students as complying with the public opinion. When it comes to effective review, firstly, the students should understand the actual meaning and significance of review. Secondly, the teachers or the students themselves should set up appropriate review strategies, the effects of primary language instruction may be modest, but they are real and reliable. Last but not the least, the students need to exercise according to the established review strategies, in that way, they can achieve the expected goal as soon as possible.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### *3.1 Theories of the Second Language Acquisition*

When it comes to second language acquisition, we have to mention that the American SLA scholar Stephen Krashen makes the distinction between acquisition and learning. Krashen (1982) holds that language acquisition is a subconscious process to acquire a language in natural settings, while language learning is a conscious process to obtain a language. Children obtain their mother tongue not through conscious learning, but the second language, though it can be acquired in appropriate linguistic context, is usually obtained in non-natural environment through formal instruction and conscious learning. Here are four hypotheses about second language acquisition.

##### 1). The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis have these conclusions: a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from stage  $i$  to stage  $i + 1$  is that the acquirer understand input that contains  $i + 1$ , where "understand" means that the learner can learn the knowledge only when they concentrate on the meaning of the information rather than the form of it (McLaughlin, 1987). Namely, we acquire language better when the language we are learning is a litter beyond out present level.

How can we understand language including structures which we have not yet acquired? At first, I will tell you to use your linguistic competence to assists understanding. What is more, our background knowledge, the context and extra-linguistic information may also contribute to our understanding. The input hypothesis runs counter to our usual pedagogical approach in second and foreign language teaching. As Hatch (1978) has pointed out, our assumption has been that we first learn structures, then practice using them in communication, and this is how fluency develops.

##### 2). The Monitor Hypothesis

This hypothesis describe the relationship between learning language and acquiring language. It claims that conscious language learning plays the role of monitor only in using language. This monitor function can be before the language output and after language output. Whether it functions rely on three conditions,

(i) Time. The language user can use this rule effectively only when he has enough time.

(ii) Focus on form. Actually, to guarantee the monitor to functions well, time is not enough. The language user have to focus on the form the target language.

(iii) Know the rule. The language use must have the knowledge of grammar conception the structure rules

### 3). The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The Affective Filter hypothesis states how affective factors relate to the process of acquiring the second language. In the last decade, research has confirmed that a great deal of affective variables contributed to the success in second language acquisition:

- (1) Motivation. Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition.
- (2) Self-confidence. Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition.
- (3) Anxiety. Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety.

Acquirers change with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those who hold optimal attitudes towards second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a higher or stronger Affective Filter - even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain that is responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with more conducive attitudes towards second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input but also be lower or weaker than others in filter. They will be more open to the input.

### 3.2 Methodologies for Reviewing Language

The review is very important in the whole teaching activity. Confucius once said, "The one who learns new knowledge and at the same time review the old lessons can be a teacher". From that we can know that if we could do the review work well, the teaching activities will be more successful. But in normal times, whenever it comes to a review lesson, a lot of exercises and examinations will be given to the students, which students are very fed up with. Finally, students lost the interest to study. The students in the third grade are different from the students in high school. They like to learn interesting things and they like to take part in activities in class, so we need design review plans especially for them and fit for their mental and psychology characteristics. Here the author put forward several effective methodologies for review.

Firstly, using songs and ballads to stimulate students' interest in the review process, teachers may use English songs to review old knowledge to avoid the mechanical practice that make the students have the tired mood and thus let them review the old knowledge in a happy atmosphere. Additionally, teachers may ask students to sing the learned songs in order to active classroom atmosphere and adjust the children brain fatigue. Before entering the class, he may playback learned songs to consolidate the songs already learned, strengthen the English knowledge contained in the subject, in addition, it still keeps their natural motivation of learning English.

Secondly, making full use of the games to motivate the students. Reviewing the lessons through the form of games, students will enjoy reviewing the knowledge in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Here are several useful games for the English teachers.

A: Last letter (the last letter of the former word is the first letter of the next word): This game will allow all the students to take part in. the rules are: one students speak out a random word such as "like", and the next student may say "elephant", and the third student can say a word that start with the letter "t", while he can tell a word that have been said by the others. In activities like this kind, every student has the opportunity to think and study.

B: Word association (the teacher give a word and students are required to tell us the contents about the word): For example if the word "food" are given, students may list the words such as "apple", "orange", "banana", "pear", "peach" or "bread", etc.

C: Classifying all the words. For example, ask students to list all the words that can be performed by body language, such as "cry", "run", "dance" and "sing". Once the teacher speaks out the word, the students begin to perform. By this method, students will not only remember the word but also not easy to forget.

D: Give one students a word and then he draw according to this word, then ask the other students to guess what the picture shows.

There are many methods for reviewing lessons of the third grade students. As a teacher, when you are thinking about these words, you should take a full consideration of the characteristics of the students' psychology and learning. Only by this way, can your teaching activity be successful.

Thirdly, alternating between listening, speaking, reading and writing activities to reduce the fatigue of students. Third graders cannot concentrate on one thing for a long time. So they will be distracted if teacher review the boring language point for a long time. As for this, teacher may design listening, speaking, reading and writing activities in one lesson. One activity accounts for approximately ten minute. By this way, new things and new feeling are taken to the students and they will be very interested in and then they will focus on more efficiently.

Fourthly, comparative of learning Chinese and Western culture, which will help broaden their horizon. In the language review lessons, we always put more attention on language points, ignoring students' need of learning different kinds of knowledge. The teacher should add some knowledge about culture that students are interested in. when reviewing Children's Day, we may review Mother's Day, Teacher's Day, Christmas Day and Mid-Autumn Day at the same time. Also we may tell some stories about culture to help them to review lessons.

Lastly, cultivating the students' team spirit and encouraging cooperative learning. As language points are so many that not every students master all the language points at the same degree. So teachers may gather students together and let them to study together and help each other to review lessons.

#### **4. The Causes of Issues**

##### *4.1 Students' Aspects in Their English Review*

To solve those problems, we need to explore the reasons from the origin-the students themselves. Here the author analyzes from three aspects as follow: lack of language environment, lack of confidence and creativity, together with the impact of psychological obstacles. Now please explore them one by one with the author.

###### **4.1.1 Lack of Language Environment**

As Chinese students often learn English in China. Even they have mastered the skills and strategies well in class, they never practice in daily life, so they will quickly forget what they have learned in class. When he is in the situation of using English, they will find that they even can not open his mouth to speak. So they need the environment to practice English after class and the lack of language environment is the first cause of this situation.

###### **4.1.2 Lack of Confidence and Creativity**

English come to our life and class as a second language, many students are not so easy to accept it and begin to learn it by themselves. While when they are aware that they need to learn it, they will find that it is completely different from Chinese. It seems so strange and that they can not adapt themselves to learning such a language. Thus they begin to lose confidence in it. As the English teaching method of Chinese teacher is traditional, and they ignore that language is for use, so this leads the students to recite sentences ,words and grammar structures in class, which teaching activity restrict students' creativity.

##### *4.2 Teachers' Aspects in the Students' English Review*

Teachers in China often pay their attention to the examination results. If their students get high scores, they will feel successful and satisfied. So their review goal is to improve students' test skills rather than their language ability and skills. They only give students a lot of exercises to do and then they read over and give marks, finally they will tell students the correct answer. This is a process of improving students' ability to pass examination.

###### **4.2.1 The Traditional Teaching Models**

The traditional teaching model of English teaching is to teach words first. Teachers will teach students how to read and use the word that occurs in textbook, and they give students time to recite the words. Secondly, it comes to guide students to read the text. In this process, they will teach the grammar structures and give them time to practice these structures. After teaching one lesson, their follows some exercise from the new lesson. And the exercise mainly focuses on practice the use of words the grammar structures.

###### **4.2.2 Non-proficiency in Review Strategies**

Any kind of review method, no matter how practical and usable it is, the students will be fed up with it if used too many times, so the teachers should think about ways to make the learning full of fun, thus attracting the students' interests and making them become eager to do the review. In addition, since we Chinese generally hold a test-oriented system, teachers usually emphasize heavily on getting high scores rather than truly grasping the learning method, as a result, some of the solutions suggested are inapplicable since they ignore the nature of each student. What is more, collecting useful materials and information for review is another difficulty because of the

teachers' limited time and energy.

#### *4.3 Parents' Aspects in the Students' English Review*

Although students' aspects are the mainly source of the problem, we should not ignore the parents' influence. All parents expect their children to enter a famous school to continue study, so they put too much attention to students' exam scores rather than its practice.

##### *4.3.1 The Current Exam-oriented Education System in China*

Exam-oriented Education System has been discussed hotly by the educators for many years. Though it has the reason to exist in China, and affects English teaching deeply. Language is for use not testing. The aims of English teaching is to improve students' language skills and enable them to communicate with English in daily life. While under the influence of Exam-oriented Education System, parents think that if their children want to be accepted by a better school, they have to get high score in examination as much as possible. English teachers teach students language structure and let them to do much exercises after class to get a high score in examination. English teaching in China has long been criticized for its orientation to examination that consequently brings about negative learning attitude and ineffective learning achievement. Chinese educationists have brought forward several approaches to solve this problem.

##### *4.3.2 Lack of Patience*

As students in primary school are in the beginning stage of learning English, they will always meet with difficulties when learning English. When they are in school, they can ask teachers, while at home, parents are always busy and it is inevitable that parents will be not patient with them.

## **5. Solutions**

### *5.1 The Solutions to Students' Issues*

The aim of studying this topic is to find out the leading cause and find effective solutions. The author lists the solutions from the aspect of the influence of mother tongue, building up confidence and creativity, and creation of practice opportunity. Now let's see them together one by one.

#### *5.1.1 Distraction From Mother Tongue and Psychological Cognitive ness*

The influence of Chinese language on English unavoidably exists in the study environment, of teaching and cognitive processing production. On the basis of an analysis of the target language, Chinese language definitely makes positive effects on English language. As to the negative influence of Chinese language on English, various fields discussed it through a comparison between Chinese language and English from different points, including thought patterns, linguistic structures and communicative culture. When teaching English, the teacher should emphasize intercultural communication, and reduce the negative influence of Chinese language on English by means of culture teaching and learning.

#### *5.1.2 Building up Confidence and Creativity*

It is very difficult to cultivate the students' creative ability in foreign language learning. In the process of basic teaching, students must be trained for the thought of forming creative individual character. Teachers must spurn the traditional teaching methods and establish a new kind of educational system. In class, a peaceful, democratic, creative situation of the study atmosphere is very important. While the teachers should focus on the students' curiosity, and encourage them to make bold attempts and cooperative efforts at different tasks, they must train them to be ready and free to question doubts about their study and enrich their knowledge. As for confidence, Self confidence is very important in learning a language. The students have to have enough confidence to go out the class and try communicating with people, maybe they make some possible mistakes, but having the confidence to learn by making mistakes is a great success for them. Encouragement and praise from the teachers is a kind of precious gift in the students' learning.

### *5.2 The Solutions to Teachers' Issues*

The teachers may influence the students directly in class and they can give them direct help and guide them to learn in a right way. As teachers have authorities before the students, which make it easy for students to follow teachers' guidance. Therefore, this is a relatively important aspect.

### 5.2.1 Professionalism for Teaching English

Nowadays the English teachers in primary school especially in rural areas, there are not enough professional English teachers, they are graduate from a technical school even not an English major. They just teach according to the textbook and assistant books. Some teachers even cannot read English, while they teach words by tape recorders. Students learn to read following tape recorders. They know little about lessons review so they always let students learn by themselves in review lessons. At the same time, they have difficulties in collecting useful materials and information because of the teachers' limited time and energy. That is a big problem, so our country should pay more attention to the quality of English teachers. Effective measures such as improving the quality requirements of English teachers and dismissing the unqualified ones should be taken.

### 5.2.2 Attempts of New Review Strategies

Expect for changing the present situation, teachers may improve their teaching activities in class, such as improving new review strategies. They should reflect their review strategies and communicate with students to find the disadvantages of the present review strategies and change the bad ones.

### 5.3 The Solutions to Parents' Issues

From the aspect of parents, we should know that parents can do a lot of things. For example, they should not pay all the attention to learning language points and get high score in exams. They should encourage students to speak English out of class and give them help and encourage them to speak with others. This will help them build up confidence in learning English. What's more, parents can keep a good contact with teachers to know about students learning situation in school and cooperate with teachers to guide their learning better.

## 6. The Effective Teaching Activities

From what we have discussed above, we have known clearly the situation and the problems of the current English teaching. Here the author will list several effective methods for teaching English in the Third Grade. These methods are from the author's own teaching experience and learning from the other researchers' results:

### (1) Teaching by playing games

Children in the Third Grade are all like to play games. Doing games are one of their favorite forms. So the game can help arouse children's interest in learning English and develop a close relationship between teachers and students, and also help provide ample opportunity for young children to use language. What is more, games can motivate their enthusiasm for learning, and integrate knowledge with games. Thus allow children to practice and master knowledge in funny games. More importantly, this kind of learning method attracts their learning interest. For example, the game < Monkey, monkey, what time is it > is very popular in young children. Several children stand hand in hand, and then one child is asked to play the role of the monkey standing in the middle of the circle. When others ask "Monkey, monkey, what time is it?" After the "monkey" answer this question, he begins to chase others. In this game, children practice listening and speaking ability, and at the same time, they will think that English is very interesting and they will become interested in learning English.

Everyone has the talent to perform, and children's desire of performing is stronger. Teachers may design role play for children. Such as the game < Lovely Fruit >. Teachers design the classroom as a fruit garden. Children will play the roles of apple, pear, peach, banana and orange, etc. First, ask the fruit to introduce themselves using the sentence like "I'm apple(pear, peach, banana, orange)". Then they greet with others like "How are you? I'm fine, thank you".

These games can not only help students to learn English, but also improve their communicate ability. What is more, these interaction help build good relationship between students.

### (2) Using story to motivate students' study enthusiasm

The children are very interested in the story. They will easily master the knowledge that present in the form of story and are difficult to forget. Primary school students have great interest in story because the plot of the story is very lively and funny. If teachers blend English knowledge in story, it will strongly stir up students' enthusiasm of learning, and it is very easy to keep students' concentrate on learning. What is more, new listening materials should be given to the students constantly. Such as English rhymes or stories tapes, CDs, etc. Since in the beginning, the brain of young child is nearly blank. We may give him enough input to help them put out.

### (3) Creating situations to improve language ability

Many people focus only on written English, rather than on speaking English, they are ashamed to speak, because there is no native environment for them to practice speaking. So in the teaching of primary English, it is very important for teachers to cultivate the habit to speak English. Creating a certain situation and making children in a relaxed and authentic atmosphere. For example, when we are learning <GREETING>, the teacher may design a situation that a cat and a parrot meet in the road, making the children greet with the sentences like “Hi” ”Hello”, “Good morning”, “Nice to see you”, ”How are you?” “Fine, thank you!” “Bye—bye”. ”See you again”. In addition, teachers may create scenes like going home, buying something and going to the park. In these activities, children can relate to their own experience to understand this scene and express themselves.

### (4) Remembering vocabularies with the help of visual sign

When teaching the word “car”, teachers may bring a toy car to the classroom, and the attention of the children will be quickly focus on the car. And then teacher can ask the students what this is, and to guide them to answer the question in English. Then teacher show them a pencil, and children may say “pencil”, then show them a box, they may say “box”, finally teacher combine the word “pencil” and “box”, a new word “pencil box” will occur. And by this way, children will naturally remember the new word “pencil box”.

## 7. Conclusion

As we have discussed above, teaching review lessons is a very professional ability. Teachers had better have a good command of the the learning characteristic of primary school students and the relative theories. What is more important is how to apply the theories to teaching. Recently years, the task-based teaching method has been used in many primary schools of China. Compared to the traditional teaching and reviewing method, it has obvious merits. For example, students who are taught by traditional method can only memorize vocabularies and do grammar structures, while through task-based teaching method, students have the opportunity to do the task by using English, which will give students more achievement. There is no doubt that this method superior to traditional method in both teaching new lessons and review lesson in primary schools. However, although this method has been used in China for several decades, its shortage has become known to teachers. For example, the efficiency of learning has decreased and students’ language ability goes down. This area deserves and need to be researched. As English teachers, we should always reflect our teaching activities to improve our teaching activities and review strategies. Review lesson is a very important part of our teaching activities, we should take full advantages of students’ psychological and take scientific measures to improve the efficiency. For parents, they need to know that education is not only the responsibility of the schools’, they should cooperate with teachers and guide them to study and review in a scientific way.

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