To Understand Children

in the Preoperational Stage

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Children have various learning characteristics. That is why teacher should know and understand what children can or cannot do as students’ development level. As the students’ develop level, teacher should choose different teaching methods.

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles is famous for the use of theory of andragogy. He found out the difference of learning method between children and adult. Jean Piaget’s four stages of cognitive development are sensorimotor(birth through 2 years old), preoperational(ages 2 to 7), concrete operational(age 7 to 11), and formal operational(adolescence through adulthood). People all go through every stage. Each stage can be overlapped, or can be delayed.

Focus on the second stage, especially Students in the preoperational are egocentric and they cannot understand exceptions. They are self-centered, so their sentence used to be started with I. Also they give someone a present which they like. Their intelligence is intuitive, not logical. Suppose they have two different type cups. One is tall and narrow and the other is short and wide. Each cup has the same amount water, but children in the preoperational choose the tall and narrow cup because they can’t do complicated work. There is a similar example. Suppose there are three small size cookies and one big size cookie. Let them choose what they want; they choose the three small cookies even though one big cookie is actually big.

One of important things in the preoperational stage is children’s feeling. They are so emotional. When children don’t feel well, they cannot be logical. They are confused and their thinking part is weak. However when children feel well, the part of their feeling and thinking are balanced. It means they are ready for learning. Their feeling drives learning Children in the preoperational can easily understand to look or touch something. For children in the preoperational activities are make them have fun and should be active because children need to be interested and involved

There are many theories of learner approaches; behaviorist approaches, input approaches, constructivist approaches, and so on. Behaviorist approaches is teacher-centered. Teacher picks topics and organizes the class, so the class is very controlled. There are a lot of repetitions. This approach is quiet useful to children in the preoperational because they cannot be still not logical and egocentric. They can hardly do something with others and teacher can easily change their behavior to be right by giving them positive reinforcement. Input Approaches is i + 1 like a mathematical formula. i means children’s current comprehensible level and 1 means a little bit more difficult level. When teacher use this in class, it is easy for children to understand and children feel comfortable and they will get confidence because the topic is familiar with them. However it is also too much teacher-centered. This approach is not so good for children in the preoperational because their feeling can easily be changed. If they feel comfortable about topics, the class will be succeeding, but if not, they will give up instantly and start complaining to teacher about the class.

Constructivist approaches is learner-centered. Though the class takes a long time, children can help each other and improve themselves. This approach is not so good for children in the preoperational as well, because they are egocentric. They don’t have time for others. They are only concerned about something they like. It is good for students in the concrete operational or formal operational to use this method.

To make the class well for children in the preoperational, teacher gives them demonstrations, CCQ and ICQ, because they need concrete examples. Teacher’s instructions are also simple and clear to understand. Ideal TTT ratio is 30 percents, and STT ratio is 70 percents. The more children are involved the more class is succeeding. Children in the preoperational have a little limitation, so teacher’s role is more important. How to understand children in the preoperational is the way to lead them to be effective learner.