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## Trying to activate all senses while teaching lower primary school children

English language teaching methodology for the first stage of education, i.e. lower primary education, promotes holistic teaching (multisensory)<sup>1</sup>. It involves engaging all the senses. According to Jan Iluk<sup>2</sup>, if the child actively uses all senses during his/her English classes, the process of learning a foreign language is more effective. He adds that visual, audio and kinaesthetic stimuli must be used simultaneously.

The Multisensory Teaching Method, also known as the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic-sensory method, is based on the activating all the child's senses in the process of acquiring a foreign language. The senses are engaged through music, rhythm, images, touching, feelings and action, and therefore it brings fast and lasting results. The Multisensory Teaching Method is also known as VAK Modalities. The three modalities of learning style have been summarized by the acronym **VAK** for: **V**isual (sight), **A**uditory (hearing), and **K**inaesthetic (movement).

Using this approach while teaching a foreign language to young learners means helping them to learn through more than one of the senses. Most teaching at schools is done using either sight or hearing (visual or auditory channel). The child's sight is used in reading

<sup>1</sup> This article is a modified fragment of a PhD thesis written at the English Language Department of the Akademia Humanistyczno-Ekonomiczna in Lodz, entitled *The Multisensory teaching method – the most suitable method for teaching English to Polish children (aged 3–7) at risk for dyslexia*, defended by the author on 18 January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> J. Iluk, *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?*, Katowice 2009, p. 43. In the case of teaching English young learners there is a need to take into account linguistic competence such as nasal consonants realization in oral and written communication, see G. Majkowski, *Wpływ samogłosek nosowych na błędy w ich zapisie (z obserwacji polonisty-logopedy)*, „Językoznawstwo”, 5/2004, p. 115–119.

information, looking at diagrams or pictures, or reading what is on the teacher's board. The sense of hearing is used in listening to what the teacher says<sup>3</sup>.

Multisensory teaching is simultaneously visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic to enhance memory and learning. Links are consistently made between the senses in the process of learning a foreign language. Teachers who use this approach teach children to link the sounds of the letters with the written symbols. Children also link the sounds and symbols with the way of forming the letters. As pupils learn a new letter or a pattern, they carefully trace, copy, and write the letters while saying the corresponding sound. The sound may be made by the teacher and the letter names given by the student. Students then read and spell words, phrases, and sentences using these patterns. Teachers and their students rely on all three pathways for learning rather than focusing on a *sight-word* or a *memory method*, a *tracing method*, or a *phonetic method* alone.

Bogdanowicz, M., Adryjanek, A. and Rożyńska, M.<sup>4</sup> emphasize that in the process of teaching children at risk of dyslexia, sensory integration is very important. Specific tasks that involve all the senses allow the assimilation of information received from all routes covered in the sensory process of acquiring new knowledge:

- through the visual channel (eyes) students reach all the visual information,
- through the auditory channel (ears) students reach all the auditory information,
- through the channel of touch (hands) students reach all the tactile information,
- the kinaesthetic channel provides a learner with information through the physical movement of the whole body – organs of speech move while speaking, hands move while writing, eyes move while reading.

How does the child remember? According to Edgar Dale a child remembers: 90% of what he/she says and does, 70% of what he/she says and writes, 50% of what he/she hears and sees, 30% of what he/she sees, 20% of what he/she hears and only 10% of what he/she reads<sup>5</sup>.

## **Multisensory Teaching Method – a sample lesson plan**

Subject: Getting familiar with Four Sisters – introduction of the seasons of the year.

Level: beginners / second grade of primary school / lower primary education

Main goals:

- to introduce new vocabulary items in a sequence – the names of the seasons of the year (*spring, summer, autumn, winter*),
- to check understanding of the meaning of the presented vocabulary,
- to practise the pronunciation of the new vocabulary.

Forms of work: the whole class, individually, in groups of varying degrees of difficulty.

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<sup>3</sup> I. Gryz, *Teaching English to Polish Young Learners at Risk for Dyslexia: Focus on the Multi-sensory Method*, Radom 2015, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> M. Bogdanowicz and others, *Uczeń z dysleksją w domu. Poradnik nie tylko dla rodziców*, Gdynia 2007.

<sup>5</sup> E. Dale and others, *Techniques for teaching vocabulary*, Palo Alto, CA 1971.

Teaching aids: the words of the songs and games, a CD-player, colourful objects in the classroom, the class chart of attendance, realia – the symbols of the seasons (a fresh fragrant hyacinth in the pot, a yellow turned-on lamp, a dried rusting leaf, a frozen lump of ice in a plastic bag), a policeman’s helmet and badge, four big posters of the seasons of the year, a worksheet *Two Storks*, small paper balls, colourful blocks.

### **The lesson plan:**

#### **I. Warm up**

Goals:

- to create an atmosphere conducive to learning (calm students down after the break),
- to make children interested in the lesson,
- to gain children’s attention,
- to prepare children for the next stage of the lesson.

##### 1. The welcome song: *Hello! It’s time for English now!*

The children sing the song while walking in a circle and waving their hands:

*Hello! Hello! Hello! It’s time for English now!*

At the end they bow together to each other and imitate the trumpet fanfare.

##### 2. The imitating game.

*Get up and run, run to school*

*Knock! Knock! Come in! School is cool!*

The children pretend to sleep on the carpet, the teacher plays the song: *Get up and run* – they get up and run in one direction, *Run to school* – run in the opposite direction, *Knock! Knock! Come in!* – they imitate knocking on the door, open it and invite everybody inside with the gesture of the hand. *School is cool!* – jumping up and down with hands up.

##### 3. Touching colours game: „*Please, touch something yellow*”.

The teacher says different colours in turn. The children look for the proper colour around the classroom and touch it. The teacher counts to three and says “stop” – at the same time the children are supposed to stand still. When the teacher says “ok”, the children come back to the game.

##### 4. The teacher specifies the topic of the lesson and explains its main purpose.

She introduces the context of the lesson to children while telling a short story about *Four Sisters* who quarrel about which of them is the most important in the world; policeman Bob helps them solve the problem by explaining the value of each of them.

#### **II. Presentation**

Goals:

- to introduce the vocabulary items – the seasons of the year in the grammatical structure: „*It’s (spring / summer / autumn / winter) now.*”,
- to practise the names of colours,
- to put new vocabulary items into short-term memory,

- to provide young learners with the possibility of repeating new vocabulary as many times as it is necessary,
- to prepare children for the next stage of the lesson.

### 1. The presentation of new vocabulary items.

The teacher presents four big posters of the seasons of the year. The children are supposed to spot the differences in the illustrations and explain them in Polish. The teacher names each season of the year in English.

### 2. The teacher uses realia – the symbols of each season of the year:

- a fresh fragrant hyacinth in the pot (*spring*),
- a yellow lamp turned on (*summer*),
- a dried rusting leaf (*autumn*),
- a frozen lump of ice in a plastic bag (*winter*).

First, each child has an opportunity to get familiar with the realia (touch, smell). Next, the learners` sit in a circle and the teacher conducts the repetition drill while pointing at the realia. After that, the teacher divides children into four groups and conducts the substitution drill with touching of the realia by the particular group of the children.

## **III. Practice**

Goals:

- to practise the names of the seasons in the grammatical structure „*It's (spring / summer / autumn / winter) now.*”,
- to put new vocabulary items into long-term memory,
- to work on the correct pronunciation of new words and whole sentences,
- to monitor students` work and notice if all of them understand and use the new vocabulary items properly.

### 1. The teacher presents the gestures connected with each season of the year and the children imitate them several times:

- spring* – picking and smelling flowers with loud sneezing,
- summer* – wiping the sweat from foreheads and drinking cold drinks,
- autumn* – imitating trees being moved by a strong wind and leaves falling,
- winter* – imitating snowflakes falling on the ground and showing how cold it is in winter.

### 2. Matching pictures to the words heard

The teacher shows four pictures (singing birds, a swimsuit, wellingtons, a sledge) and says the names of seasons in turn. The learners are supposed to point to the right picture connected with the particular season and repeat the name of it after the teacher.

### 3. Matching colours to the seasons

The teacher says the colours in turn rhythmically. At the same time the learners are supposed to give the proper name of the season that matches the colour heard.

*white* – winter, *yellow* – summer, *green* – spring, *brown* – autumn

At the same time they say the sentence: „*It's (spring / summer / autumn / winter) now.*”

#### 4. The movement game

The teacher says the names of the seasons loudly or quietly / slowly and quickly and the children do the actions.

*sleeping* – winter, *swimming* – summer, *jumping* – spring, *walking* – autumn

At the same time they say the sentence: „*It's (spring / summer / autumn / winter) now.*”

### **IV. Production**

Goals:

- to assess whether students understand, pronounce correctly and are able to use the new vocabulary items,
- to assess whether further work with children will require more training with regard to the material exercised.

1. The children are divided into two teams and are given a large picture of: *an autumn tree* or *a snowman*. They have to decide which season it is and colour the picture with the proper colours. Each person has to add one more thing to the illustration which should be connected with the season of the group.

2. Listening activity: discovering the sounds of the seasons. The teacher provides the children with a sheet of paper with four symbols of the seasons and crayons. Then, she plays a CD with the following sounds: *squeaky snow*, *singing birds*, *the murmur of a river*, *a buzzing bee*, *splashing water in the swimming pool*, *rustling leaves*, *cracking ice*, *the wind moving the trees*. The learners are supposed to draw pictures of the information heard on their work sheets.

- For the stronger group: children are provided with worksheet 1. They are supposed to find two similar flowers in the picture of the spring meadow and colour them with their favourite spring colours.
- For the weaker group: children are provided with worksheet 2. Firstly, they are supposed to match pictures in pairs. Secondly, the children are to draw the missing parts of the small illustrations. Finally, they are supposed to colour pictures colours provided by the teacher.

3. The teacher provides each learner with worksheet 3: an illustration of two storks. The children are supposed to find six differences in the pictures and mark them with a coloured pencil in the illustrations.

### **V. Closing remarks**

Goals:

- to finish the lesson in an interesting way,
- to combine the new knowledge with material already learnt and put it into practice,

– to provide students with the possibility of practising the new words and grammatical structure at home one more time.

1. The *Mind the traffic lights!* Game.

The teacher pretends to be a policeman (she wears a policeman's helmet and badge) and shows three big blocks in turn: red, green and yellow. The red block means: *stop*, the yellow one means: *get ready*, the green one means: *go*. The children must obey the road rules explained to them by the policeman.

2. Checking the register.

The learners draw lots – they each choose a little paper ball from of balls of different colours (connected with the particular season of the year). The teacher checks the register while calling the seasons: „*It's (spring / summer / autumn / winter) now.*” The children who have green balls are the first – they are *spring*, next yellow / *summer*, brown / *autumn* and white / *winter*. If a child was polite, she / he draws a happy face on the class chart next to her / his name, if not, the child draws a sad face there.

3. Singing the song:

*One! Two! Three! Hop! Hop! Hop!*

*Four! Five! Six! Now, let's stop!*

The children build a train and jump together while singing the song (slowly / quickly, quietly / loudly).

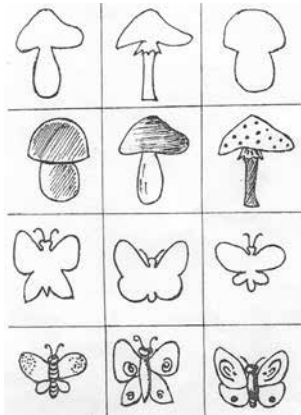
At the end everybody falls down.

4. The goodbye song: *Goodbye! Goodbye and see you soon!*

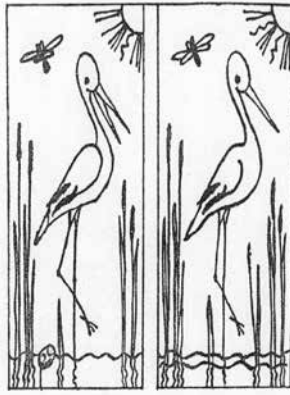
## Appendices



Appendix 1. Worksheet 1



Appendix 2. Worksheet 2



Appendix 3. Worksheet 3

The lesson observation sheet

5 = excellent, 4 = good, 3 = average, 2 = weak, 1 = very poor, 0 = not applicable

LESSON CHARACTERISTICS	THE OBSERVED ASPECTS OF THE LESSON	THE STANDARD LESSON METHOD						THE MULTISENSORY TEACHING METHOD						
		5	4	3	2	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	0	
<b>GOALS &amp; CONTEXT SETTING</b>	teacher has high expectations – learning objectives are made clear at the start to learners and referred to during the lesson /at the end			x				x						
					x			x						
				x				x						
	well chosen meaningful and motivating context that is helpful in maintaining the goals of the lesson		x					x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	teacher provides effective classroom routines and rules		x					x						
				x				x						
			x					x						
	teacher supports the lesson with useful classroom discussions, exercises and visual aids			x				x						
					x			x						
				x				x		x				
teacher sets high but achievable challenges for pupils				x				x						
			x					x						
			x					x						
<b>ORGANIZATION – SAFE &amp; POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</b>	well organised classroom management		x					x						
			x					x						
				x				x						
	the atmosphere in the classroom is participative		x					x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	teacher’s speech is neither too formal nor too casual				x				x					
						x			x					
					x				x					
	pupils are interested and enthusiastic about participating in the lesson			x					x					
				x					x					
			x						x					
teacher uses humour in an appropriate way			x					x						
			x					x						
			x					x						



LESSON CHARACTERISTICS	THE OBSERVED ASPECTS OF THE LESSON	THE STANDARD LESSON METHOD						THE MULTISENSORY TEACHING METHOD							
		5	4	3	2	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	0		
	the atmosphere in the classroom is conducive to learning and student-friendly (appropriate feedback)	x						x							
		x						x							
		x						x							
	visual aids can be easily read			x				x							
					x			x							
				x				x							
	teaching materials have a clear and meaningful purpose	x						x							
				x				x							
		x						x							
	teacher introduces sufficient wait time for pupils' work				x			x							
					x			x							
					x				x						
	attractive display of children's works and well organized walls – large and legible			x				x							
				x					x						
				x				x							
	teacher can maintain discipline in the classroom – never deprecate student ignorance or misunderstanding	x						x							
		x						x							
				x				x							
	<b>STAGES OF THE LESSON STAGES OF THE LESSON</b>	well structured lesson – all the stages are well organized	x						x						
			x						x						
					x				x						
		teacher selects teaching methods and techniques appropriate for the content	x						x						
			x						x						
			x						x						
teacher makes links with previous lessons		x						x							
		x						x							
				x				x							
warm up gains the learners' attention and starts the lesson clearly		x						x							
		x						x							
		x						x							
teacher introduces topic, states goals, presents material or activity effectively				x				x							
				x				x							
				x				x							

LESSON CHARACTERISTICS	THE OBSERVED ASPECTS OF THE LESSON	THE STANDARD LESSON METHOD						THE MULTISENSORY TEACHING METHOD					
		5	4	3	2	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	0
	teacher calls upon pupils to demonstrate and explain their work			x				x					
				x				x					
					x			x					
	teacher summarizes every stage of the lesson and gives assignment				x				x				
					x				x				
					x				x				
	teacher assesses pupils' engagement in the lesson			x					x				
				x					x				
				x					x				
	teacher's explanations are clear to students (checking understanding)		x						x				
			x						x				
			x						x				
	teacher ensures that children know what they are supposed to learn			x					x				
				x					x				
				x					x				
	teacher introduces new vocabulary while activating all senses				x				x				
					x				x				
				x					x				
	teacher uses specific instructional outcomes				x				x				
					x				x				
					x				x				
teaching materials have a clear purpose		x						x					
		x						x					
		x						x					
teacher has readily available materials and equipment necessary to complete each activity		x						x					
		x						x					
			x					x					
teacher makes flexible use of classroom space, time, materials			x					x					
			x					x					
				x				x					
timing of the lesson activities consider children's attention span			x					x					
			x					x					
				x				x					
<b>INDIVIDUALISATION</b>	teacher knows and uses children's names	x						x					
		x						x					
		x						x					

LESSON CHARACTERISTICS	THE OBSERVED ASPECTS OF THE LESSON	THE STANDARD LESSON METHOD						THE MULTISENSORY TEACHING METHOD						
		5	4	3	2	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	0	
	each pupil has an opportunity to participate in the lesson			x				x						
				x				x						
					x			x						
	teacher helps quieter students interact with others			x				x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	all learners are able to see visual aids	x						x						
		x						x						
		x						x						
	pace of the lesson is appropriate			x				x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	teacher allows opportunity for individual expression				x			x						
						x			x					
						x			x					
	teacher listens and responds to learners' questions and comments constructively			x				x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	teacher gives students enough time to respond to questions			x				x						
				x				x						
					x			x						
	teacher respects diverse points of view of children			x				x						
				x				x						
						x		x						
	teacher encourages all pupils to participate in every stage of the lesson			x				x						
				x				x						
				x				x						
	teacher treats all class members equitably				x			x						
					x			x						
						x		x						
<b>INTERACTIONS IN THE CLASS-ROOM</b>	teacher pays attention to cues of boredom and confusion				x		x							
					x		x							
					x		x							
	teacher encourages critical thinking and analysis in pupils				x			x						
					x			x						
				x				x						

LESSON CHARACTERISTICS	THE OBSERVED ASPECTS OF THE LESSON	THE STANDARD LESSON METHOD						THE MULTI-SENSORY TEACHING METHOD					
		5	4	3	2	1	0	5	4	3	2	1	0
	the lesson is stimulating and thought provoking				X			X					
					X			X					
					X			X					
	the lesson offers "real world" application			X				X					
				X				X					
				X				X					
	teacher presents examples to clarify points made in the lesson				X			X					
					X			X					
					X			X					
	teacher praises children for contributions and active participation in the lesson			X				X					
				X				X					
				X				X					
	absence of verbalized pauses (er, ah, etc.) in teacher's speech			X				X					
				X				X					
				X				X					
	teacher has good contact with all learners (effective eye-contact, body language, voice intonation, gestures)			X				X					
				X				X					
				X				X					

 = group I, 
  = group II, 
  = group III

According to the observation conducted in the classroom during the English lesson with the standard class procedure and comparing it to the lesson with *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Methods*, difficulties in learning English as a foreign language are clearly visible. What is more, due to Marta Bogdanowicz's opinion the considerable numbers of symptoms of dyslexia left without help of specialists can lead to the developmental dyslexia in the future (Bogdanowicz, 2011). Teaching English to Polish young learners at risk for dyslexia enhances the pupils' ability to learn foreign languages while using *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method*. The findings of the introduced lesson study supported the assumption considerably. The result was expected in the light of the lesson plan composed by the author of the study on the key factors of *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method*. It is strongly believed by the teachers that the most important of them is the direct impact on all the senses of each learner, therefore the plenty of exercises of this type were included to the lesson plan. The comparison of the standard teaching methods

to *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method* conducted by the author presents quite interesting results. To start with, well chosen meaningful and motivating context that is helpful in maintaining the goals of the lesson appears during the lessons with *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method*, whereas it is not very frequent during the standard classes. Moreover, the teacher systematically provides children with effective classroom routines and rules, supports the lesson with useful classroom discussions, exercises and visual aids, as well as sets high but achievable challenges for pupils, which seems to be important while working with very young learners. In addition to this, the permanent features of the lesson with *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method* are: well organised classroom management, pupils' enthusiasm to participate in the classes, the sense of humour used in an appropriate way, the atmosphere conducive to learning, attractive display of children's works and well organized walls – large and legible, as well as the clever manners of maintaining the discipline in the classroom which never deprecate student ignorance or misunderstanding. On the other hand, the well-structured lesson with all well-organized stages was expected on the basis of the methodology of the subject. One of the most important element of the lessons for young learners is the way of assessing pupils' engagement in the lesson – their active participation, as well as regularity of this activity. It appeared in the lesson with *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method* and made children really engaged in the exercises introduced by the teacher. According to the observations conducted during the lesson planned by the author, only the lesson with *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method* included the presentation of new vocabulary items while activating all pupils' senses. What is more, the constant movement (*The Total Physical response Method*), e. g. while singing or repeating the chants, guaranteed children a lot of fun, as well as the faster assimilation of the new material. Finally, during both types of the lesson it was easy to notice that the teacher has a good contact with all learners (effective eye-contact, body language, voice intonation, gestures).

As far as the evaluation of conducted lessons and exercises included in them are concerned, the learners suggest an increased use of *The Multi-Sensory Teaching Method* chosen by the teacher.

The teacher's role in getting children interested and motivated to learn a foreign language is critical<sup>6</sup>. The teacher is the main person responsible for creating an atmosphere conducive to learning and for conducting the lesson in an effective and interesting way. The teacher should do her / his best to use all possible senses during the lesson with lower primary school children. The Multisensory Teaching Method seems to be of great importance and help while working with the youngest children<sup>7</sup>. This can be observed in the table presented above.

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<sup>6</sup> M. Szpotowicz, M. Szulc-Kurpaska, *Teaching English to young learners*, Warszawa 2012, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kotarba, *Przedszkolak, język obcy i... ty. Metodyka nauczania języków obcych w przedszkolach*, Pułtusk 2007, p. 39.

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## Abstract

### Trying to activate all senses while teaching lower primary school children

This article deals with the practical application of the multisensory method in teaching English language to lower primary school children. At the beginning the author briefly explains the essence of the multisensory method, and stresses the importance of the method in working with new vocabulary during foreign language classes. Next, the author presents a sample lesson for pupils of the second class of primary school in connection with using the multisensory method. In addition, the author introduces the detailed observation sheet where it is clearly visible that activating all the senses while working with the youngest children during foreign language lessons brings great results.

**Keywords:** Multisensory Teaching Method (i.e. the visual-auditory-kinaesthetic-sensory method) is based on activating all the child's senses in the process of acquiring or teaching a foreign language; VAK Modalities – the acronym for three modalities of learning styles: Visual (sight), Auditory (hearing) and Kinaesthetic (movement); Lower primary school education – the first stage of education in primary school (classes 1 – 3).