

THE GLOBAL DEMAND FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING TO YOUNG LEARNERS

**Shokirova Dilorom, a teacher at the
Department of Interfaculty Foreign Languages,
Andijan State University**

Abstract: The growth in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners as a distinctive area within the English Language Teaching industry during the last twenty years raises some questions over who, in an industry that has traditionally focused on adults, is going to teach these learners, aged, in this thesis, between five and sixteen years. Emerging from existing literature and the occupational experience of this researcher is a sense that teaching young learners presents different challenges and requires different skills from teaching adults. This research explored the experiences and needs of those who trained to teach adults but also teach children. Adopting a phenomenological, constructivist approach, a mixed-methods survey of multiple-item self-report questionnaires and semi-structured, face-to-face interviews was conducted to investigate the experiences and attitudes of two criteria-based samples totaling a lot of mixed-nationality EFL teachers giving out-of-school lessons in private language centers in some forty different countries.

Key words: mixed-methods, constructivist approach, self-report questionnaires, the experiences and attitudes.

The expansion of English Language Teaching to Young Learners during the last two decades has fuelled a need for increasing numbers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to teach increasing numbers of children (or ‘young learners’) in addition to adults as countries, schools and private language centers develop their Young Learner provision and employers seemingly expect English Language teachers to be able to teach anyone of any age. However, the pre-service training courses available at the time of writing appear to retain their traditional focus on adults and thus may not fully reflect these expectations. Consequently some English Language teachers appear to be teaching children

without the training they might need because they are obliged to do so under the terms of their contracts. In 1997, in order to become an English Language teacher, I (the researcher) did the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), a four-week full-time intensive course with a certificate awarded by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and the most widespread pre-service training course in the industry. The CELTA contained little theory. It concentrated on practical classroom teaching and was concerned exclusively with teaching English to adults. The focus and content of this course is described and evaluated more fully in the next chapter (see 2.5 below). However, my first post-qualification teaching position was not with adults at all, but on a summer school in a city in northern England with teenagers aged 14 to 17. My first international post, in a private language center in Russia that was owned by a company based in the United Kingdom, involved classes containing both adults and young teenagers (13 and 14 years old), and, in one class of adults, an 11 year old. Nothing in either my training or my previous teaching experience indicated how to approach such mixed-age classes. In addition, the materials, curriculum and assessment system were designed for the adults so the younger learners were essentially taught as though they were adults. However, when I was given a class consisting exclusively of Young Learners, I was unable to teach them like I did adults. Their attention span was shorter, their behavior needed more overt management, the tasks had to be different and the teaching resources, including the course-books, were unfamiliar to me, aimed as they were at children. The group ranged in age from 5 to 11 years old and the levels of ability in English from beginner to intermediate. With no training in either teaching or managing groups of non-English-speaking children, I approached the Director of Studies for advice. He asked if I played the guitar or made puppets. I said I could not. He told me not to worry, that I would soon pick it up, and sent me to class. I had no idea what to do, how to speak to these students, how to organize their learning, what kind of activities to select or how long they should last, or how to use the course-book in three 90 minute classes per week. I had neither understanding nor knowledge of 5

to 11 year olds, of their worlds, their developmental stages, their interests, and no desire to gain any. I was a teacher of English as a foreign language to adults. That was what I had trained for, that was what I wanted to do and that was why I had left the United Kingdom. Singing songs and drawing pictures was not. The experience of feeling unprepared as a teacher through lacking practical strategies to organize learning was both traumatic and stressful. At Christmas the class was reallocated and I decided I would never teach Young Learners again. In 2002, I moved to a language center in Sri Lanka which had a large Young Learner cohort ranging from 3 to 16 years old and so many classes that every teacher was contracted to teach a mixed timetable of adults and Young Learners. This centre, however, provided regular in-service training, a structured occupational development programme, including the opportunity to do the Young Learner extension to CELTA, which I did in Thailand in 2004, and opportunities to become involved in curriculum development, materials writing, training, event management and mentoring. The content and focus of the YL extension is considered in the next chapter and it developed my confidence as a Young Learner teacher by providing a theoretical framework and foundation for my work. Two years later I became Young Learner manager for a large 13 globally significant UK-based language center in Egypt. They did not know what resources might be used or how to use them and they lacked strategies for managing behaviour and motivation. Some became resentful as well as reluctant when allocated classes of Young Learners. When I did an MA in Teaching English to Young Learners (2007-9), it became clear that the challenges and demands presented by teaching Young Learners are different from those presented by adults and that meeting those challenges can be difficult without some knowledge of how Young Learners grow and develop and of the different developmental stages they pass through. My own development, from uninformed and reluctant novice in 1997 to confident consultant contributing to the creation of a new English Language Teaching to Young Learners policy for a whole country in 2010 came about partly through actual experience of Young Learner teaching, partly through the ideas and input of

colleagues in staff rooms and teacher development workshops and partly from formal courses such as the Young Learner extension and the MA. These revealed how Young Learners develop, thereby enabling me to select age- and stage appropriate materials, activities and tasks and base those selections on some understanding of learning theory. Training and development may therefore lie in the luck of the posting. This research investigated those training and development priorities in addition to teachers' expressed needs and requirements.

This article had two main objectives: a) to identify particular challenges for teachers of English as a foreign language to young learners and explore how far pre - and in-service training and development programmes support teachers in meeting those challenges; b) to develop the existing literature on Teaching English to Young Learners by generating and interpreting new knowledge of private sector practices, in particular on training and occupational development, and teachers' attitudes towards TEYL, including motivation and individual aspirations. Five assumptions underlie these objectives: The English Language Teaching industry has seen and continues to see a strong global expansion in demand for English tuition for Young Learners (aged 5 to 16) and Very Young Learners under the age of 5 (VYLs); This expansion has significant implications for the English Language Teaching industry. These include teacher training, recruitment and employment; Teaching children poses different challenges from teaching adults and may, therefore, require different skills and knowledge. Teaching Very Young Learners poses different challenges from teaching teenagers and may also require a different skill-set; Formal pre-service training does not seem to have evolved to meet the needs of a reoriented industry and continues to focus almost exclusively on preparing people to teach adult learners; Many newly qualified teachers therefore lack the knowledge they need to meet the challenges presented by Young Learner classes.

The article considered in this suggest that within the global English Language Teaching industry is a vast, unregulated, commercially driven private sector with an insatiable demand for teachers of English as a Foreign Language

whose primary qualification for teaching is that they speak English fluently. Getting a job in a foreign country as an English language teacher seems easy and straightforward for globally mobile native speakers who are willing and able to relocate, especially at short notice. The qualifying period may be as little as four weeks for the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, the cost around £1000, and this appears to be optional anyway. The teacher can fly to their chosen destination, do a week's training in-house or just start teaching. In an unregulated, globalized and financially lucrative industry, the quality of the teachers may matter less than the quantity. Further, the quality of the preparation and training may be influenced by the commercial demands of privatized, 48 market-led business. The next chapter explores some of the challenges these teachers may face and examines some of the possibilities for teacher preparation and development through a review of the principal literature on these subjects.

References:

1. Aitchison, J. (1994). A real live talking machine. *JET*, 4(2), 6-7.
2. Bailey, K. (1990). The use of diary studies in teacher education programs.
3. In J. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second Language Teacher Education* (pp. 215-226). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Cambridge University Press. Bailey, K. (1997).
5. Beder, H., & Darkenwald, G. (1982). Differences between Teaching adults and preadults: Some propositions and findings. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 32(3), 142-155. Retrieved from <http://aeq.sagepub.com> on October 4, 2012. DOI: 10.1177/074171368203200303.
6. Block, D., & Cameron, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Globalization and Language Teaching*. London: Routledge. Block, D., Gray J., & Holborow, M. (2012). *Neoliberalism and Applied Linguistics*. London: Routledge.