



THE ROLE OF TEACHER IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO  
DIFFERENT AGE LEARNERS. ADAPTATION TO THE CLASSROOM.

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**Abstract.** *This study explores the role of the teacher in teaching foreign languages to learners of different age groups, with a particular focus on classroom adaptation and the use of lesson starters such as warm-up and ice-breaking activities. The research is based on a mixed-method approach, including classroom observations, learner questionnaires, and teacher interviews conducted across three age groups: young learners, adolescents, and adults. The findings reveal that learners' age significantly influences their preferences, motivation, and engagement in the learning process. Young learners respond more positively to game-based activities, adolescents prefer discussion-based interaction, while adult learners show a strong inclination toward real-life tasks. The study also highlights the importance of the teacher's ability to adapt teaching strategies, roles, and classroom management techniques according to learners' developmental and emotional needs. Effective lesson starters are shown to play a crucial role in creating a positive learning environment and increasing student participation. Overall, the research emphasizes that successful foreign language teaching depends on the teacher's flexibility, awareness, and responsiveness to diverse classroom contexts.*

**Keywords:** *foreign language teaching, teacher role, classroom adaptation, warm-up activities, ice-breaking, age differences, learner engagement*

**Аннотация .** *Данное исследование рассматривает роль преподавателя в обучении иностранным языкам учащихся разных возрастных групп с особым вниманием к адаптации в классе и использованию начальных этапов урока, таких как разминка и айсбрейкинг. Исследование основано на смешанном методе, включающем наблюдение за занятиями, анкетирование учащихся и интервью с преподавателями в трех возрастных группах: дети, подростки и взрослые. Результаты показывают, что возраст учащихся существенно влияет на их предпочтения, мотивацию и вовлеченность в учебный процесс. Дети предпочитают игровые формы обучения, подростки — дискуссии, а взрослые — задания, связанные с реальными жизненными ситуациями. Также подчеркивается важность способности преподавателя адаптировать методы обучения и управление классом в зависимости от особенностей учащихся. Начальный этап урока играет ключевую роль в создании благоприятной атмосферы и повышении активности студентов. В целом*





*исследование подтверждает, что успешное обучение иностранным языкам зависит от гибкости и профессионализма преподавателя.*

**Ключевые слова:** *обучение иностранным языкам, роль преподавателя, адаптация в классе, разминка, айсбрейкинг, возрастные различия, вовлеченность учащихся*

**Annotatsiya.** *Ushbu tadqiqot turli yoshdagi o'quvchilarga chet tilini o'qitishda o'qituvchining rolini, ayniqsa sinfga moslashish va darsni boshlash bosqichlari — warm-up va ice-breaking faoliyatlarini o'rganishga bag'ishlangan. Tadqiqot aralash metod asosida olib borilib, uch yosh toifasidagi (bolalar, o'smirlar va kattalar) o'quvchilar bilan dars kuzatuvlari, so'rovnomalar va o'qituvchilar bilan suhbatlar o'tkazildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, o'quvchilarning yoshi ularning qiziqishi, motivatsiyasi va darsdagi faolligiga sezilarli ta'sir ko'rsatadi. Yosh o'quvchilar o'yinlarga asoslangan faoliyatlarni afzal ko'rishsa, o'smirlar muhokama va muloqotga moyil bo'ladi, kattalar esa real hayotga bog'liq vazifalarni yuqori baholaydi. Tadqiqot shuningdek o'qituvchining metod va yondashuvlarni moslashtira olish qobiliyati muhim ekanligini ko'rsatadi. Darsning boshlanish bosqichi ijobiy muhit yaratishda va o'quvchilar faolligini oshirishda katta ahamiyatga ega. Umuman olganda, samarali chet tilini o'qitish o'qituvchining moslashuvchanligi va professional yondashuviga bog'liq.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *chet tilini o'qitish, o'qituvchi roli, sinfga moslashish, warm-up, ice-breaking, yosh farqlari, o'quvchi faolligi*

### **Introduction**

Teaching a foreign language today requires much more than simply explaining grammar or vocabulary. It is a dynamic and interactive process in which the teacher plays a central role in shaping the learning experience. One of the main challenges teachers face is working with learners of different age groups, each bringing unique cognitive abilities, emotional needs, and motivations to the classroom. Young learners, adolescents, and adults approach language learning in different ways, and this diversity requires teachers to be flexible and responsive in their teaching practices.

In this context, the role of the teacher goes beyond being a source of knowledge. Teachers act as facilitators who guide communication, motivators who encourage participation, and managers who create a supportive and engaging classroom environment. Their ability to adapt teaching strategies to suit the specific characteristics of learners is essential for effective language acquisition. Classroom adaptation involves not only selecting appropriate methods and materials but also responding to learners' reactions and adjusting instruction in real time.

Therefore, understanding the role of the teacher in relation to different age groups and classroom conditions is crucial. It helps ensure that language learning becomes meaningful, interactive, and accessible for all learners.

### **Literature Review**

Research on foreign language teaching has consistently emphasized the importance of the teacher's role and the need for adaptation to learners' age and context. Jeremy Harmer (2007)





highlights that effective teachers shift between roles such as controller, facilitator, and prompter depending on classroom needs. This flexibility becomes especially important when working with diverse age groups. Similarly, H. Douglas Brown (2001) argues that successful language teaching depends on understanding learners' developmental differences and adjusting methods accordingly.

Studies on young learners by Lynne Cameron (2001) show that children benefit from interactive, activity-based learning supported by teacher guidance. In contrast, Malcolm Knowles (1984) emphasizes that adult learners require autonomy, relevance, and practical application, which shifts the teacher's role toward facilitation rather than direct instruction. For adolescent learners, Penny Ur (1996) notes the importance of motivation and a supportive classroom atmosphere to encourage participation.

In addition, Leo van Lier (2004) stresses the concept of classroom interaction and the teacher's role in creating meaningful communication opportunities. Overall, the literature suggests that effective foreign language teaching relies on the teacher's ability to adapt methods, roles, and interaction patterns to suit different learners and classroom environments.

### **Learner's Profile**

The present study focuses on a mixed group of foreign language learners divided into three age categories: young learners (ages 8–10), adolescents (ages 14–16), and adult learners (ages 20–30). The participants were selected from language courses with similar proficiency levels (A2–B1 according to the CEFR), ensuring that differences in performance are more closely related to age and learning characteristics rather than language level alone.

Young learners in this group demonstrate high levels of curiosity and enthusiasm but have limited attention spans. They respond positively to visual materials, games, and movement-based activities. Their motivation is largely intrinsic and influenced by the teacher's energy and classroom atmosphere. In contrast, adolescent learners show more developed cognitive abilities but often display fluctuating motivation. Social factors, such as peer influence and fear of making mistakes, affect their participation. They tend to engage more actively in pair and group work where pressure is reduced.

Adult learners, on the other hand, exhibit strong goal-oriented behavior and higher levels of self-discipline. Their motivation is mainly extrinsic, often related to academic or professional needs. They prefer structured lessons with clear objectives and practical application. Unlike younger learners, they are more comfortable with independent learning and analytical tasks. The group reflects diverse learning preferences and expectations, highlighting the importance of teacher adaptation in addressing the specific needs of each age category within the classroom context.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected over a period of four weeks from three groups of foreign language learners representing different age categories: young learners (8–10 years old), adolescents (14–16 years old), and adults (20–30 years old). In order to ensure a comprehensive and reliable analysis, a mixed-method research design was employed,





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combining classroom observations, learner questionnaires, and informal teacher interviews. This triangulation of data sources allowed for a deeper understanding of how teachers adapt their roles and teaching strategies to different classroom contexts.

To begin with, systematic classroom observations were conducted in each group. Each class was observed multiple times, focusing specifically on the initial phase of the lesson, including warm-up and ice-breaking activities. An observation checklist was used to record key aspects such as student engagement, participation patterns, interaction between teacher and learners, and the types of activities implemented. Particular attention was given to how teachers adjusted their behavior, instructions, and activity choices depending on the learners' age and response. For example, in classes with young learners, teachers frequently used gestures, visual aids, and games, while in adolescent groups, more emphasis was placed on peer interaction and communication. In adult classes, teachers tended to adopt a more facilitative role, encouraging discussion and independent thinking.

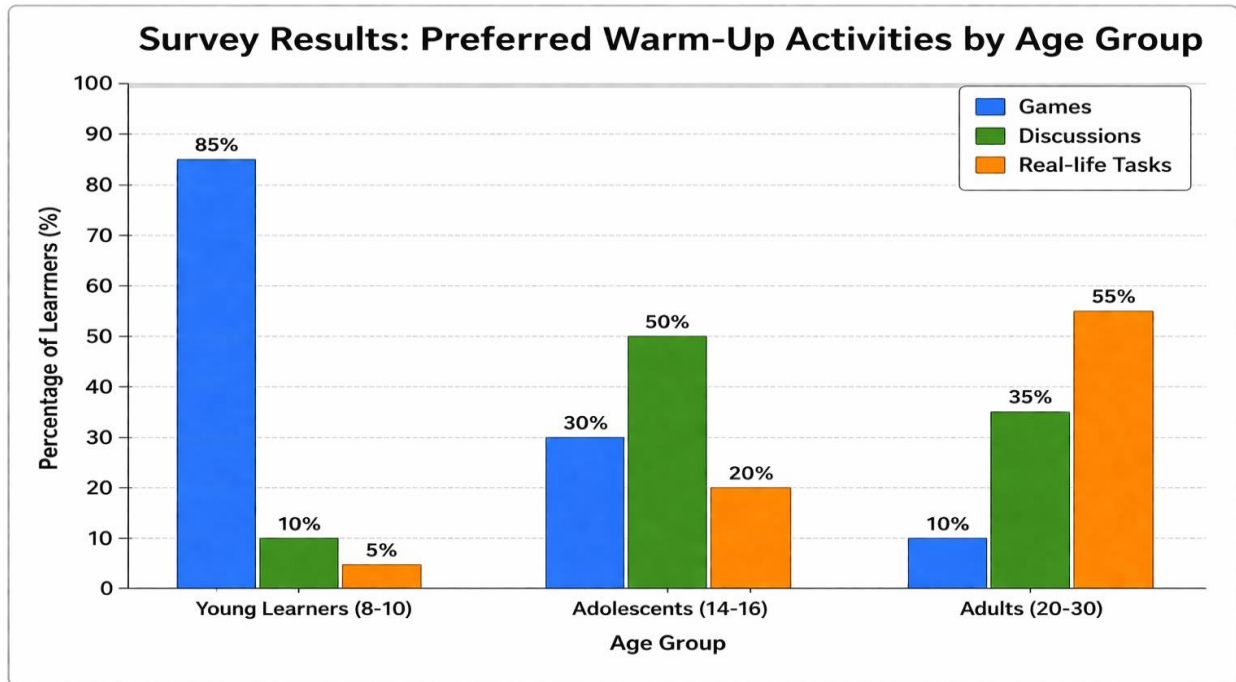
Secondly, questionnaires were administered to all participants in order to gather data on their preferences, motivation, and attitudes toward different lesson starters. The questionnaires were carefully adapted to suit each age group. For young learners, simple language and visual prompts were used to make the questions more accessible. Adolescents and adults were given more detailed questionnaires that included both closed and open-ended questions. These questionnaires aimed to identify which types of activities learners found most engaging, useful, and motivating at the beginning of a lesson.

In addition, informal semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers involved in the study. These interviews explored teachers' perspectives on classroom adaptation, challenges they face when working with different age groups, and the strategies they use to maintain student engagement. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of flexibility, noting that even within the same age group, individual differences require constant adjustment of teaching methods.

The results of the collected data revealed clear patterns in learners' preferences. Young learners showed a strong preference for game-based activities (85%), which helped maintain their attention and interest. Adolescents preferred discussion-based activities (50%), as these allowed them to express opinions and interact socially. Adult learners demonstrated a clear preference for real-life tasks (55%), reflecting their goal-oriented approach to learning.

The data clearly indicate that learners' age significantly influences their engagement with different types of lesson starters. The findings highlight the importance of teacher adaptability in selecting appropriate activities, which ultimately contributes to more effective and meaningful foreign language learning.





### Discussion

The results of this study emphasize the crucial role of the teacher in adapting teaching strategies to suit learners of different age groups. The data clearly show that the effectiveness of lesson starters depends largely on how well they align with learners' developmental characteristics and learning preferences. Young learners demonstrated a strong preference for game-based activities, which is consistent with their need for movement, enjoyment, and immediate engagement. This finding suggests that teachers working with children must adopt an active, energetic, and supportive role to maintain attention and create a positive learning atmosphere.

Adolescent learners, on the other hand, showed greater interest in discussion-based activities. This reflects their increasing cognitive abilities and desire for self-expression. However, their participation can be influenced by emotional factors such as anxiety and peer pressure. Therefore, the teacher's role is not only to provide opportunities for communication but also to create a safe and non-judgmental environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas.

In the case of adult learners, the preference for real-life tasks highlights their goal-oriented and practical approach to language learning. Adults tend to value relevance and applicability, which means that teachers should focus on meaningful communication rather than purely theoretical knowledge. Here, the teacher acts more as a facilitator, guiding learners and supporting their autonomy. The findings confirm that successful foreign language teaching requires flexibility, awareness, and the ability to adapt to diverse classroom needs.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of the teacher's role in adapting foreign language instruction to learners of different age groups. The findings demonstrate that young





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learners, adolescents, and adults have distinct preferences, motivations, and learning behaviors, all of which influence their engagement in the classroom. As a result, a single teaching approach cannot effectively meet the needs of all learners.

The research shows that lesson starters, such as warm-up and ice-breaking activities, play a key role in shaping the overall learning experience. When these activities are carefully selected and adapted to the age group, they can significantly increase student participation and motivation. For example, games are highly effective for young learners, discussions encourage adolescents to express themselves, and real-life tasks provide meaningful learning for adults.

Furthermore, the study confirms that the teacher must take on multiple roles, including facilitator, motivator, and classroom manager. The ability to adapt teaching methods, materials, and interaction styles is essential for creating an inclusive and productive learning environment. Teachers who are flexible and responsive to their students' needs are more likely to achieve successful learning outcomes. Effective foreign language teaching depends on understanding learner diversity and applying appropriate strategies that support both engagement and meaningful communication.

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