ANALYSIS OF METHODS USED IN THE "GUESS WHAT!" TEXTBOOK FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS (GRADES 2–4) AND TYPES OF MATCHING EXERCISES

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Annotation: *The article discusses the importance of using adapted Matching exercises to develop creative thinking in teaching English to 2nd–3rd grade students in Uzbekistan. The study analyzes modern teaching approaches such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as well as traditional methods widely used in the country's general secondary schools. Based on theoretical foundations and classroom observations, the paper introduces different types of Matching exercises—Word-to-Picture, Sentence Half, and Sentence-to-Sentence—and demonstrates their effectiveness in improving learners' creativity, logical reasoning, and language competence.*

Keywords: *creative thinking, adapted exercises, matching activities, CLIL, TBLT, PBL, primary school, English teaching, Uzbekistan.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Uzbekistan's modern educational reforms, teaching English at the primary level is aimed not only at developing communicative competence but also at fostering learners' creative and critical thinking abilities. As part of this effort, innovative approaches such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) have been actively introduced into the teaching process. Along with these, methods such as Audio-Lingual, Audio-Visual, Total Physical Response (TPR), Competence-Based, and Cooperative Language Teaching are also widely applied in general secondary education schools [Ruzmetova, 2021].

Despite the diversity of these methods, classroom observations show that some younger learners still encounter difficulties with listening comprehension, pronunciation, and reading-based tasks. Therefore, it becomes necessary to create and apply adapted (Matching) exercises designed to align with the developmental and psychological characteristics of 2nd–3rd grade students. This article explores the role and effectiveness of such adapted exercises in fostering creative thinking during English language instruction.

Theoretical Background

An exercise in language pedagogy refers to a repeated practice activity that enables learners to acquire, consolidate, and apply linguistic knowledge in communicative contexts. According to Prof. I.V. Rakhmanov, all exercises can be divided into language and speech types. V.A. Bukhbinder, in turn, categorized exercises into informational, operational, and motivational, which correspond to knowledge-, skill-, and competence- forming stages. His approach, grounded in psycholinguistic principles, reflects the functional mechanisms of language learning in school settings.

Uzbek researchers, including J. Jalolov, T. Sattorov, and A. Soynazarov, adapted this system into three pedagogical categories: formative, developing, and improving exercises. Formative exercises introduce new material; developing exercises consolidate it in communicative use; and improving exercises enhance learners' independent thinking and creative expression [Jalolov, 2015]. Within this framework, Matching exercises can be designed at each stage to promote not only linguistic mastery but also higher-order thinking skills.

Types and Functions of Matching Exercises

Matching exercises are considered highly effective tools for stimulating learners' analytical and associative thinking. They require students to identify relationships between words, meanings, grammatical structures, or contextual clues. The following main types are recommended for developing creative thinking in young learners:

Definition Matching – Learners match linguistic units with their definitions.

Example:

1. An apple — (b) a fruit that grows on trees.

2. A car — (a) a vehicle with four wheels used for transporting people.

Answer: 1–b, 2–a.

Word-to-Picture Matching – Students connect vocabulary items with corresponding pictures, reinforcing visual memory and vocabulary retention.

Sentence Half Matching – Students join sentence fragments logically and grammatically.

Example:

1. If it rains, … — (b) we will stay home.

2. I like … — (a) apples and bananas.

Answer: 1–b, 2–a.

Multiple-Option Matching – Students select the correct choice from three to five alternatives.

Example:

1. My father ___ a doctor.   (a) are (b) is (c) am

2. I ___ eight years old.   (a) is (b) am (c) are

Answer: 1–b, 2–b.

Sentence-to-Sentence Matching – Learners associate questions with appropriate answers, promoting logical reasoning and comprehension.

Example:

1. A: Where is the bus? — 1. B: It is a truck.

2. A: What type of transport flies in the air? — 2. B: It is near us.

Answer: 1–2, 2–1,

These activities serve as both linguistic and cognitive exercises, developing language accuracy, fluency, and creative association skills.

Experimental Implementation

The experimental part of the study was carried out with 2nd-grade students using the "Guess What! 2" (Cambridge University Press, 2021 Edition) textbook, which integrates

11

CLIL, TBLT, and PBL methodologies. The "Transportation" unit (Unit 1, pp. 14–23) was selected for detailed analysis, as it includes multiple lexical and listening-based activities where students frequently encounter comprehension and pronunciation challenges.

To address these difficulties, three adapted Matching exercises—Word-to-Picture Matching, Sentence Half Matching, and Sentence-to-Sentence Matching—were designed. The exercises "Funny Bags" and "Land, Water, or Air?" were implemented to enhance students' phonetic discrimination, logical reasoning, and creative response generation.

For instance, in the Sentence Matching task, learners matched questions and answers that contained phonetic or semantic clues. This task encouraged them to identify keywords, establish logical connections, and apply grammatical knowledge creatively. Through these exercises, students improved their use of Wh- questions, recognized pronouns, and strengthened their vocabulary related to transport.

Results and Discussion

The experimental findings demonstrated that adapted Matching exercises significantly improved learners' engagement, motivation, and creativity in English language learning. Students not only mastered vocabulary and sentence patterns more effectively but also demonstrated better logical reasoning and imaginative problem-solving abilities. The exercises served as a bridge between linguistic accuracy and creative expression, supporting the development of integrated language skills.

Furthermore, the use of Matching exercises contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere by fostering collaboration, curiosity, and active participation. These outcomes confirm that adapted and contextually appropriate tasks play a crucial role in nurturing creative thinking among young learners.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Matching exercises, when adapted to learners' cognitive levels and integrated with communicative and project-based approaches, are powerful tools for developing creative thinking in English language teaching at the primary level. Such exercises promote active learning, enhance memory retention, and stimulate students' ability to analyze, imagine, and create. Future research may explore digital or gamified versions of these exercises to further increase learner engagement and creativity.

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