

ФЕДЕРАЛЬНЫЕ УЧЕБНО-МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ КОМПЛЕКТЫ

“Millie” – action stories in young learner classes

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Children love stories, because they are associated with pleasure. They are used to listening to their mothers and fathers telling them interesting, exciting stories with unexpected endings.

Using stories in the classroom also can be very motivating. In addition, we can use stories for developing and practicing different skills and language for different topics. There's one more reason why we should use stories. It's educational. Every story contains a message we'd like to transfer to the listener. There are a lot of opportunities for personalisation: expressing attitudes, comparing with children's own experience, etc.

Action stories, besides being motivating, versatile and educational, meet children's demand to be physically active. Children have an insatiable desire to move around. In the classroom we suppress this desire and ask them to sit still, stop fidgeting, fold their arms and not move them. We wrongly assume that unless children are sitting still, looking at the teacher, they are not learning.

The Total Physical Response (TPR) theory suggests that

we learn language items most successfully if we associate them with physical movements. The theory contains a series of powerful techniques developed by Dr James Asher linking language to physical movements. The ideas behind TPR are connected with our natural 'body language' and the idea of kinaesthetic memory.

With the help of the action stories, on the one hand, we can respond to children's desire to move around and, on the other hand, involve kinaesthetic memory. Besides this, we can have some more benefits: body awareness, coordination, flexibility, and spatial awareness. They are some of the physical skills a child gains through movement.

There are various activities involved in telling action stories. Before starting your work with the action story you may want to reduce some difficulties connected with unknown language, especially with words which cannot be easily explained through mime, or where you are not sure all your pupils know the sport (e.g. bungee jumping, “Millie-3”, Teacher's Book, Unit 2, Resource bank), etc.

UNIT 2

Resource bank
Action story Bungee jumping is cool!

Did your Pp know that...?
Bungee jumping is the sport of jumping from a very high place while attached to a long piece of rubber that is just short enough to prevent you from hitting the ground.

- Mime the words a bridge, a cockroach, a pocket, birds, floor, brave and scared.
- Ask Pp to join in miming the words.
- Draw the sketches of the words a bridge, a cockroach, a pocket, birds, and write numbers near the sketches.
- Say the words and ask Pp to say the number of the corresponding sketch.
- Introduce the story with mime and gesture.
You're standing on the bridge.
Your cockroach is in your pocket.
You're scared.
The cockroach is brave.
Ready! Steady! Jump!
You're flying!
The birds are flying!
Your cockroach is flying!
You're flying too fast! Oh, no!
Open your eyes! Wake up!
You're sitting on the floor!
- Ask Pp to join in telling and miming the story. Insert the sentences about your Pp after sentences
You're standing on the bridge and You're flying!
Sample language:
T: Sasha's flying. / Sasha and Nikita are flying.

Action story Yoyo

(“Milie-3”, Teacher’s Book, Unit 9, Resource bank, p. 174)

Resource bank

Action story Yoyo

You got a parcel from your friend in New Zealand.
 Open the parcel.
 What’s this?
 It’s a ball on a piece of string.
 Toss the ball.
 Oh, the string twisted around your hand.
 Let’s cut the string off.
 Stop! There are some instructions inside the parcel.
 Read the instructions!
 The toy is called a yoyo.
 Play with it like this. (*Pretend you are holding onto the string between your index and middle finger and dropping the toy, then catching it when it comes back up.*)





You may want to introduce the content of the story and elicit the pupils’ opinion on some issues in it. You could tell Pp that the story’s about a boy, who’s got a parcel from his pen pal. Ask Pp if they have got any pen pals and where their pen pals live. Then you could add some background cultural information. For example you can tell pupils that the toy called a yoyo originates from the Philippines. It was used as a weapon, which was called, in the local language, the come-come. People threw it at someone and then pulled it back and used it again. An American called Donald F. Duncan saw some Philippine sailors playing with a come-come and decided to manufacture it as a toy under its original name *yoyo*.



This will make the story more motivating, interesting and meaningful. You can also suggest that Pp make the toy from an old spool. This activity may precede or follow the telling of the story. For this you can hand out the written instructions and let your pupils follow them. As a follow up you can also suggest that your Pp write instructions on how to use the toy.



To introduce the story use a combination of mime and voice. Tell the story and mime as you tell it. Do it once again and get the pupils to join in miming. Once they can do it reasonably well, you can stop miming and let the pupils mime alone as you tell the story. Then you have to check pupils’ comprehension by asking them to mime the sentences given in jumbled order. So you can see if they really understand the meaning of each sentence or have just memorised the sequence of gestures.

At the next stage you can use pictures. The activities can vary: pupils can listen to the story / jumbled story and point to / say the number of the corresponding picture; pictures can be cut out and pupils can order the pictures while the teacher is reading the story. This

stage is very important, because children have different imaginations and levels of social experience, so pictures help pupils to visualise the events more vividly.

We don't ask pupils to reproduce the story verbally at this stage. The number of times the story is repeated by the teacher will vary depending on the individual characteristics of each group. Some pupils need a longer silent period; others are ready to reproduce the story at this stage. But it's very important to let pupils move their lips and whisper the story from the first presentation of it. And then, try to vary the steps of work on the action story not to make it boring.

One of the most important steps towards the production of the story is the work with the written text of the story. The written text in this case is both the aim (we have to teach our pupils to read new words and phrases) and the means (we use it as a support for the pupils' reproduction of the story). Here's a list of possible activities for the introduction of the written text:

- 1 – Listen to the story and follow the text.
- 2 – Listen to the story and find the corresponding sentence.
- 3 – Listen to the text and order the strips with the sentences written on them.

Then we can use different types of exercise to drill pupils in reading: matching, completing sentences, filling in the gaps, multiple choice, reconstruction of the story by letters, words or phrases, scrambled sentences, ordering, etc.

In the lesson we show pupils some techniques for memorising short stories. Pupils learn to learn. That's why it is very important to reflect on the steps of the lesson, procedures, for pupils to then use them at home. A fun way of memorisation is backward chaining. Read the sentence on the board, then erase the first word from the sentence and get pupils to read out the whole sentence again. Repeat the procedure as many times as words in the sentence. Erase the second, then the third word and so on.

Pelmanism is also a game aimed at improving pupils' memory. The game was named after the Pelman Institute, founded in London in 1898. Pelmanism is a memory card game in which a pack of cards is spread out face down and players try to turn up pairs with the same symbol. We can photocopy a picture story, cut out the individual pictures, then shuffle them and ask Pp to find the matching pairs. As a variation of the game we can suggest that Pp match the pictures with corresponding phrases.

After a variety of exercises our pupils are ready to reproduce the story alone, without the teacher's help. At this stage it's very important to motivate pupils, because they have heard the story too many times. This can be achieved by means of dramatisation. Suggest that pupils make finger puppets, or just make a copy of the pictures and cut out the characters. Then arrange the setting for the story; for example, take a piece of paper and draw the room where the events of the story take place. The listeners of the story then have to move and locate the characters according to the text of the story. Another way is to distribute the roles among the listeners and ask them to act out the story.

But reproduction of the story is not the main aim. Children can also be encouraged to create their own stories. Make up a skeleton of the future story and brainstorm what can substitute for what. Give pupils a time limit to make up their own story and then let them read out their stories in small groups.

To summarise, action stories are motivating, fun and can be exploited to develop different skills and language areas. Action stories prepare pupils gradually for productive speech.