

# Designing an Effective Animal-Themed Review Lesson for Young Learners in EFL Classroom

Yan Shen

University of Manchester, Manchester, M139PL, UK

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**Abstract:** This paper provides a detailed rationale for an animal-themed review lesson plan designed for preschoolers aged 3-5 years in a central Chinese city. The lesson integrates vocabulary related to animals and colors, employing Total Physical Response (TPR) and interactive multimedia resources to meet the developmental needs of young learners. The rationale emphasizes the significance of engaging multisensory activities in enhancing language retention and encouraging active participation in early childhood education. By incorporating digital courseware, the lesson plan aims to create a dynamic and immersive learning environment that supports vocabulary acquisition and motor skill development. This study highlights the importance of tailoring educational strategies to align with the cognitive and emotional stages of preschool-aged children, ensuring an effective and structured approach to language learning.

**Keywords:** Lesson Plan Rationale; Preschool EFL; Total Physical Response; Interactive Learning; Early Childhood Education; Digital Courseware; Vocabulary Retention.

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## 1. Introduction

This project develops a comprehensive review lesson plan specifically for preschoolers aged 3-5 years. It revisits vocabulary related to animals, including terms such as "hamster," "turtle," and "goldfish," and incorporates color terms from earlier lessons. The lesson engages children through active and interactive techniques, using Total Physical Response (TPR) and musical activities to support the acquisition and retention of language. This lesson is delivered online using digital tools and electronic courseware. While these teaching approaches are widely suitable for young learners, every aspect of the activities, methods, and content is carefully tailored to meet the specific developmental and learning needs of this particular age group. The lesson is designed to last 45 minutes, which aligns well with the attention spans of these young children, a key factor in maintaining their concentration and enhancing the effectiveness of learning outcomes (Christakis, 2011)[6].

## 2. Context

The lesson is designed for young learners aged 3-5 attending an English language training institution in a central Chinese city. This institution follows an English-only policy and serves as an essential foundation for children beginning their journey in English language learning. The class includes five students who have previously been exposed to several English learning themes such as alphabets, numbers, and colors, with the current theme being animals. At this developmental stage, children benefit from highly engaging and interactive activities, as they possess limited attention spans and require frequent activity changes to maintain focus (Piaget, 1952)[23]. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory[33], young learners acquire language through social interactions, making interactive and participatory activities crucial. The institution's English-only policy is in line with Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis[20], suggesting that language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above

their current proficiency level. These immersive methods motivate children to think and communicate in English, which improves their language retention and practical communication skills (Cummins, 2000)[7]. The lesson plan is tailored to the developmental and cognitive needs of young learners, utilizing interactive and multimedia tools to foster an engaging and effective educational environment.

## 3. Benefits and Principles of Using a Lesson Plan

A well-structured lesson plan is crucial for efficient teaching and effective learning. It serves as a roadmap for educators, helping them to systematically present educational content and ensure coverage of all essential learning components (Richards and Lockhart, 1994)[26]. Moreover, lesson plans help in structuring and ordering teaching activities, fostering a logical and coherent educational experience. They also assist teachers in predicting potential obstacles and developing strategies to overcome them, thereby facilitating more efficient classroom management (Scrivener, 2005)[29].

## 4. Rationale and Methodology

The foundation of this lesson plan is the recognition that young learners excel in environments that are both engaging and interactive. The designed activities aim to capture children's attention and foster active participation. Total Physical Response (TPR) is especially beneficial for young learners, as it merges language learning with physical activities, improving both comprehension and memory (Asher, 1969; Frost, 2023)[1, 14]. When crafting lessons for children aged 3-5, their cognitive and developmental stages must be considered. At this stage, children are in the preoperational phase of cognitive development (Piaget, 1952)[23]. Although their language skills are quickly advancing, their thinking is predominantly concrete. Thus, combining physical movement with language instruction can greatly enhance their understanding and retention. This method is suited to their developmental needs and takes

advantage of their natural inclination to learn through play and active engagement. By adapting the lesson plan to these cognitive traits, educators can create a more effective and engaging learning environment for young children.

Therefore, incorporating tangible items, visual supports, and active engagements greatly facilitates their educational process (Goswami, 2008)[16]. Furthermore, due to their short attention spans, which typically last between 5 to 15 minutes per activity (Raver, 2012), it is necessary to include a variety of brief, compelling activities in the lesson plan to maintain their focus and participation[25].

## 5. Lesson Plan Activities

The lesson begins with a "Bird Attendance" activity, where children 'fly' their bird icons to the tree on the digital whiteboard. This serves multiple purposes: it is a fun way to take attendance, engages children from the start, and sets a positive tone for the lesson. This activity also helps children practice following simple instructions in English, enhancing their listening skills (Bridge, 2023)[2]. The image of birds moving to a tree provides a playful and engaging beginning to the lesson, quickly capturing the children's attention. This approach incorporates both visual and kinesthetic learning styles, which are crucial for young learners (Gardner, 1983)[15].

The warm-up segment includes a song and dance activity using an animal-themed children's song. The song has simple lyrics featuring animal names and corresponding actions, allowing children to sing and dance along. This activity considers children's natural affinity for music and movement, making learning enjoyable and effective (Paquette and Rieg, 2008)[22]. The incorporation of a music video offers both visual and auditory stimuli that reinforce the vocabulary being reviewed. Additionally, activities involving music and movement aid in developing gross motor skills, which are essential at this stage of development.

The next segment includes sharing daily information such as the date and weather, followed by classroom rules (CRs): sit well, use English only, and listen carefully. This segment helps children understand the structure and expectations of the lesson. It reinforces discipline and provides a routine that makes them feel secure (British Council, 2023)[5]. Routine activities like these are crucial for young learners as they provide a sense of predictability and security, which is essential for their cognitive and emotional development (Goswami, 2008)[16]. Creating classroom rules is essential, especially for children in an English-only learning environment, as it clarifies behavioral expectations and fosters a supportive learning climate (Bruner, 1996)[4]. Such rules also teach children the importance of adhering to instructions and develop their awareness of self-regulation, which are vital for their academic progress (Zimmerman, 2002)[34].

The core activities include interactive review sessions in which children identify and articulate animal names along with their colors. Employing visual aids and digital courseware, these sessions prompt children to retrieve and use specific vocabulary. This technique utilizes Total Physical Response (TPR) by leading children imitate animal actions, aiding memorization and making the learning process enjoyable (EF Teacher Zone, 2023). For example, children may be asked to "swim" like a goldfish or "crawl" like a turtle, such actions help to consolidate vocabulary effectively (Goswami, 2008)[16]. By blending color vocabulary with

animal names, such as "yellow goldfish" or "green turtle," the review becomes more comprehensive, reinforcing prior learning as well. This multisensory method is advantageous as it activates various sensory channels, promoting deeper learning and better retention (Paquette and Rieg, 2008)[22]. The digital courseware visually depicts these animals in their habitats, adding context to the vocabulary and its interactive features is crucial for sustaining engagement and meeting individual learning requirements (Vygotsky, 1978)[33].

Moreover, circle games like "Simon Says" are used to maintain active participation and high energy levels in the classroom. These games not only reinforce vocabulary but also serve as a motivational tool, with rewards like virtual badges awarded to recognize students' efforts and encourage participation (TeachingEnglish, 2023)[31]. The use of rewards is particularly effective for young learners as it encourages positive behavior and participation, which are critical for maintaining a productive learning environment (Smith, 2018)[30]. The gamified elements and reward system also cater to the intrinsic motivation of young learners, in this way, learning process can be a joyful experience (Deci and Ryan, 2000)[8]. As a result, children gain confidence by recognizing and celebrating minor achievements and will be more inclined to engage actively in subsequent activities (Dweck, 2006)[9].

The lesson ends up with a recap of the day's activities and a session to reward achievements. This segment underscores the vocabulary that has been mastered and concludes the lesson on an uplifting note since such a segment is vital for fostering a sense of achievement among the learners. Reflecting on the learned material solidify the learning outcomes and acknowledging their efforts highlight the significance of effort in the learning process (Hattie and Timperley, 2007)[17], thus enhancing self-esteem (Dweck, 2006)[9]. The visual display of rewards and accomplishments, as depicted in the courseware images, contributes to students' progress and keeps them more engaged into English learning.

## 6. Utilization of Electronic Courseware

The electronic courseware shown in the provided images is integral to achieving the teaching outcomes of this lesson. The "Bird Attendance" slide, as shown in figure 1, allows each child to move their bird icon to the tree, fostering a sense of participation and ownership. This interactive method keeps the children engaged from the start and reinforces their ability to follow instructions in English. The visual and interactive nature of this task makes it suitable for young learners who are naturally drawn to colorful and playful activities (Bridge, 2023)[2].



Figure 1. Bird Attendance

As shown in Figure 2, the daily information slide includes visuals for weather, date, and classroom rules. Using icons and simple text helps children understand the structure and expectations for the day. The visual aids support language comprehension and retention, making abstract concepts like weather conditions more concrete and relatable (Goswami, 2008)[16]. Since children aged 3-5 are emotionally unstable, this slide serves as a daily routine to contribute to children's feelings of security and stability, which are vital for both their emotional and cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978)[33].



Figure 2. The daily information

Figure 3, 4, and 5 show the slides of vocabulary depicting animal habitats, such as hamster cages or fish tanks, offer visual cues that enable children to link animals with their respective environments. This visual representation supports vocabulary retention and assists children in forming associations between words and their meanings (Paquette and Rieg, 2008)[22]. What's more, establishing a vivid and engaging context for these words solidifies the vocabulary within the children's pre-existing knowledge framework, enhancing the likelihood of long-term memory retention (Schmitt, 2000)[28]. The interactive aspects of these slides provide children with an opportunity to interact directly with the content, an approach especially effective for young learners who benefit greatly from engaging in tactile activities (Piaget, 1952)[23].



Figure 3. Vocabulary of hamster

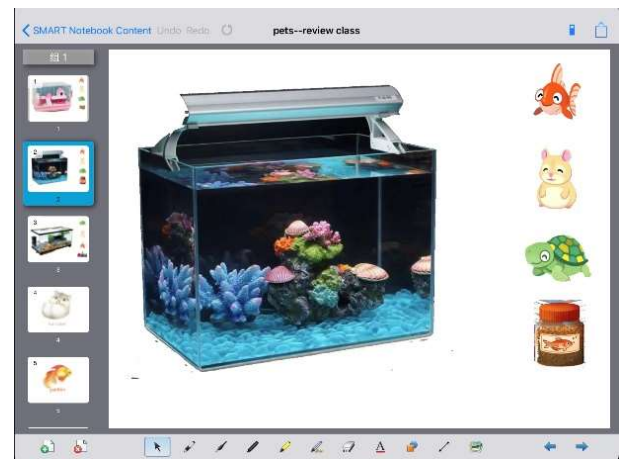


Figure 4. Vocabulary of goldfish



Figure 5. Vocabulary of turtle

As shown in Figure 6, the reward slide featuring houses and animals offers a gamified experience where children can see their progress and accomplishments. The visual representation that implements a system of virtual badges provides immediate positive feedback, which has proven beneficial for sustaining the interest and active participation of young learners (Smith, 2018)[30] and fostering a conducive learning atmosphere (Deci and Ryan, 2000)[8]. In addition, Dweck (2006) finds that if children are able to visually monitor their achievements, the concrete evidence of their progress would bolster their efforts and motivate ongoing engagement, which is likely to benefit subsequent course instruction[10].



Figure 6. Rewards

## 7. Rationale for Using Electronic Courseware

The reasons for adopting electronic courseware are diverse and firmly anchored in both educational strategies and practical applications. It cannot be denied that digital interactive tools are more effective than traditional approaches in capturing the attention of children, offering a more dynamic and engaging educational experience by applying bright colors, moving objects, and interactive elements (Paquette and Rieg, 2008)[22]. This engagement is crucial for young children, who have limited attention spans and require frequent changes in activity to stay focused (Raver, 2012)[25].

Plus, digital resources often integrate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects, fostering a multisensory learning method. This approach is highly beneficial for young students as it engages multiple senses, thereby improving understanding and enhancing memory retention (Frost, 2023)[14]. Most importantly, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences addresses that this method allows different learning styles—including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—making the lesson accessible to all students (Gardner, 1983)[15]. The combined impact of these sensory inputs creates an engaging and absorbing educational environment, particularly effective for young learners (Goswami, 2008)[16]. Digital courseware's interactive features offer instant feedback, which is vital for young learners. Prompt feedback allows for the quick correction of mistakes and strengthens learning as it happens [3]. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which posits that students learn most effectively when they perform tasks slightly beyond their current capabilities but with guidance from someone more knowledgeable. Digital tools fulfill the role of this knowledgeable guide by providing structured support throughout the learning journey. Such support allows children to advance from their existing level of knowledge to greater cognitive and linguistic proficiency[33].

Moreover, using electronic courseware aligns with current educational technology trends[3], emphasizing the integration of technology to create dynamic and interactive learning environments (Bridge, 2023)[2]. In virtual environments, the importance of electronic courseware is heightened as it compensates for the absence of physical interaction and enhances the immersive quality of the learning experience (Christakis, 2011)[6]. Multimedia resources such as videos and interactive games not only enhance the engagement of lessons but also cater to diverse learning styles, ensuring active participation from all students in the educational process (Frost, 2023)[14]. Additionally, these tools promote collaboration and communication among students within an online classroom setting, cultivating a community atmosphere and shared learning experiences (Vygotsky, 1978)[33]. Electronic courseware enables differentiated instruction, providing educators with the ability to customize activities to meet the specific needs of each student and thus keeping engagement high and meets diverse learning needs (EF Teacher Zone, 2023). This adaptability is crucial in classrooms with students of varied skill levels and learning preferences (Tomlinson, 2001)[32]. Digital platforms provide the capability to adjust content, offering appropriate challenges that can significantly improve learning outcomes. This instructional approach has been proven to be critical for their intellectual growth (Piaget, 1952)[23] and

markedly enhance student performance (Santangelo and Tomlinson, 2009)[27]. For instance, more proficient students can engage with more complex assignments, whereas those needing additional support have access to the necessary resources, all within the same educational session.

Besides, introducing electronic courseware early in education helps cultivate digital literacy, a skill of growing importance in our increasingly digital society. By integrating young learners with digital tools within a structured educational setting, not only are these skills developed, but their overall learning experiences are also enhanced (Hollett, 2016)[18]. Early exposure to technology in educational settings can also help demystify these tools, making children more comfortable and adept with technology as they mature (Plowman and McPake, 2013)[24]. This familiarity with technology will aid them in their future educational pursuits and in navigating a progressively digital society.

Therefore, electronic courseware provides a platform for interactive, engaging, and personalized learning experiences that are essential for young learners' development. The ability to integrate multimedia elements, provide immediate feedback, and adapt to individual needs makes electronic courseware a valuable tool in modern education. Meanwhile, fostering digital literacy prepares children for future academic and personal success in an increasingly digital world.

## 8. Additional Activities and Rationale

To further enhance the lesson, additional activities such as storytime and craft projects can be incorporated as optional extensions or homework assignments, given the constraints of an online classroom setting.

### 8.1. Storytime

Incorporating story sessions featuring animal-themed books directly aligned with the lesson's vocabulary can significantly aid in contextualizing words for improved listening comprehension. Utilizing a tailored story, such as "The Adventures of Hammy the Hamster, Timmy the Turtle, and Goldie the Goldfish," helps embed the targeted vocabulary within an engaging narrative. This strategy allows children to contextualize words effectively, facilitating better retention and comprehension. By weaving storytelling into the curriculum, children's linguistic abilities and their enjoyment of reading are enhanced (Neuman et al., 2000)[21]. In an online format, the educator can narrate the story using screen sharing, complementing the tale with visuals that correspond with the vocabulary being taught. This method enriches the learning experience by providing auditory and visual reinforcement of the material.

### 8.2. Craft Projects

Engaging in craft activities, such as creating animal masks, offers a platform for children to creatively express themselves while reinforcing learned vocabulary. These tactile activities are particularly advantageous for kinesthetic learners, who benefit from active participation. Crafting also supports the development of fine motor skills, essential during early childhood (Duffy, 2006)[9]. Furthermore, these projects provide an opportunity to review vocabulary as children describe their creations in English. The integration of arts in language education not only bolsters linguistic abilities but also stimulates cognitive growth and creativity (Eisner, 2002)[11]. In virtual settings, teachers can lead craft sessions step-by-step, allowing children to showcase their artwork

through the camera.

### 8.3. Parental Involvement

Engaging parents in the educational process can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Encouraging parents to review vocabulary at home, engage in related activities, or implement a similar rewards system reinforces the concepts taught in class (Epstein, 2001)[12]. Supplying parents with resources and ideas for home activities promotes a supportive educational environment that extends beyond the classroom setting. Studies indicate that active parental involvement markedly increases a child's academic achievement and motivation (Fan and Chen, 2001)[13]. Digital tools and resources can be shared with parents to help them support their children's learning effectively.

## 9. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Lesson Plan

To enhance the evaluation of my lesson plan for young learners, focusing specifically on those aged 3-5, it's crucial to embed the assessment methods within the framework of their cognitive and linguistic capabilities. For instance, I will observe the students' interactions and their physical responses to Total Physical Response (TPR) activities to assess engagement—a vital indicator of young learners' active participation and comfort with the material (Asher, 1969)[1]. In terms of assessing vocabulary retention, I plan to utilize contextual games that encourage children to identify and use new words through colors and animal names, making the evaluation both educational and enjoyable. This method not only adheres to Piaget's (1952) observations about the learning styles of preoperational children but also ensures that the assessment is developmentally appropriate[23], providing insights into both immediate retention and the ability to apply vocabulary in context (Goswami, 2008)[16]. Lastly, the incorporation of digital tools for recording and analyzing these interactions allows for a detailed review of teaching effectiveness and student reactions[19], providing a dual benefit: immediate adjustment of teaching methods and long-term improvements in instructional strategies (Brookfield, 2017)[3]. These analyses will help refine my approach to meet the specific needs of young learners, ensuring that my educational practices are both effective and responsive to their developmental stages.

## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, designing an effective animal-themed review lesson for young EFL learners aged 3-5 years requires a diverse approach that combines interactive and engaging activities tailored to their developmental and cognitive needs. By using techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR), musical activities, and digital courseware, this lesson plan successfully captures and holds the attention of young children, creating a productive learning environment. Including multimedia elements, interactive digital tools, and gamification not only enhances vocabulary retention but also builds a sense of achievement and motivation among learners. Moreover, additional activities like storytime and craft projects, along with active parental involvement, extend the learning experience beyond the classroom, reinforcing the concepts taught and supporting the overall development of young learners. By carefully considering the developmental stages and learning preferences of preschoolers, this lesson

plan ensures an effective, enjoyable, and immersive educational experience, laying a strong foundation for future English language acquisition.

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