

DEVELOPING CREATIVE THINKING IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO 2ND GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH MATCHING EXERCISES.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1947455>

Khakimova Marjona Azamat qizi

Doctoral student of Namangan State University

e-mail: marjona01020304@gmail.com

Annotation

This study explores the application of adaptive matching exercises to enhance creative thinking in teaching English to 2nd-grade students in Uzbekistan's general secondary schools, utilizing the "Guess What! 2" textbook. Modern methodologies such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Project-Based Learning (PBL), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) are integrated with traditional methods to address observed interference issues in listening comprehension, pronunciation, and grammar application. Through a mixed-methods approach, including observational analysis and experimental implementation, three types of matching exercises, word-to-picture, sentence half, and sentence-to-sentence, were developed and tested. Results indicate that these exercises effectively mitigate interference, improve receptive and productive language skills, and foster creative, logical, and critical thinking. The findings advocate for the inclusion of adaptive matching exercises in primary English curricula to support holistic language acquisition and creative development.

Keywords

Creative Thinking, Matching Exercises, English Language Teaching, Primary Education, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Project-Based Learning (PBL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Interference, 2nd Grade, Uzbekistan, "Guess What! 2", Vocabulary Acquisition, Grammar, Phonetic Similarity, Creative Development

Abstract

In today's primary school education, methodologies and approaches such as Task-based teaching (TBLT), Project-based learning (PBL), and Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) are widely applied to students. Along with these methodologies and approaches, various methods are also being used in teaching English in general secondary education schools in Uzbekistan. For example, methods such as Audio-lingual, Audio-visual, Total Physical Response

(TPR), Competence-Based Teaching, and Cooperative Language Teaching are becoming increasingly popular [M. Sh. Ruzmetova. Tashkent – 2021. P. 65. P. 231.].

Introduction

In the process of teaching English to primary school students, the Task-based teaching (TBLT) - task-based teaching approach is becoming widely popular. In this approach, language is learned not through ready-made grammatical rules, but through the process of performing specific tasks. For example, writing a letter, staging a shopping situation, conducting a conversation, making a plan, solving a problem, etc., through performing real-life communicative tasks, students naturally acquire the language. Therefore, Task-Based Teaching can also be described as "an approach to teaching language through practical activities. "Project-based learning (PBL) - Project-based learning is a teaching method in which students deeply study, analyze, and solve a specific topic or problem, thereby developing language or other subject skills. In this approach, students: study real-life problems, work creatively and independently, and as a result, create a project - that is, a product, presentation, video, report, or poster. The primary goal of this method is to develop students' independent thinking, collaborative work, problem-solving, and creative approach skills through the active, practical application of language or knowledge. In the Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) - integrated content and language teaching approach, students learn the language along with the content of other subjects (for example, biology, history, geography, mathematics, etc.) in English. That is, in the CLIL method:

- ✚ The content of the lesson provides subject knowledge;
- ✚ language serves as a tool for understanding and expressing this knowledge.

For example, studying the topic "Ecology" in English is a clear example of CLIL. Each unit in the "Guess What!" textbooks used by primary school (grades 1-4) students ends based on CLIL.

These approaches are considered fundamental in developing creative thinking in the process of teaching English to 2nd-grade students, but in our research observations, students encountered difficulties in performing some exercises given in the textbook, namely: listening comprehension exercises, those teaching correct pronunciation of new words, and reading-based exercises. In order to eliminate the difficulties encountered in the mentioned exercises, it becomes necessary to propose and apply matching exercises created in the context of our research topic. Therefore, this paragraph of the research will cover this issue. Before providing information about Matching Exercises and their types, based on the content and

essence of our research work, it is appropriate to analyze exercises and their types a bit more broadly.

An exercise is a practical action or task performed repeatedly for the purpose of forming and reinforcing certain knowledge, skill, or competence. In foreign language teaching, an exercise is a type of educational-methodical activity aimed at students' assimilation of language material, its application in speech, and the development of independent expression skills. It would not be an exaggeration to say that foreign language learning consists of performing exercises. An exercise manifests both statically (in the form of a task in the textbook) and dynamically (through the student's practical performance). That is, an exercise is the main tool for applying theoretical knowledge in practice. Prof. Igor Vladimirovich Rakhmanov distinguished all exercises by the names of language and speech exercises. Prof. Vulf Abramovich Bukhbinder researched informational, operational, and motivational exercises. Simply put, it is appropriate to call them exercises that provide knowledge, skills, and competencies. V. A. Bukhbinder's theory of exercises is based on psycholinguistic data and more accurately reflects the reality of teaching foreign languages in schools. In scientific researches conducted by Uzbek scholars J. Jalolov, T. Sattorov, A. Soynazarov, and others, the system of foreign language exercises is classified as formative, developmental, and perfective exercise types in accordance with Uzbek methodology. Formative exercises ensure the initial assimilation of language material, developmental exercises strengthen students' skills in actively using this material in speech activity. Perfective exercises are aimed at expanding knowledge, enhancing skills and competencies in the process of independently expressing thoughts in a foreign language and understanding the interlocutor's thoughts, and they consistently support the stages of acquiring knowledge, forming skills, and developing competencies [J.J. Jalolov. Ibid. P-14. P-434.]

Research Problem

Observations of the "Transportation" unit in "Guess What! 2" revealed interference in receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking) skills, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, and preposition usage. These issues stem from negative transfer from students' native language or prior linguistic experiences (Jalolov, 2012). Effective teaching requires holistic skill integration, competency development per state standards, interdisciplinary connections, oral-written linkages, and independent learning promotion (Ruzmetova, 2021).

Objective

This study aims to design, implement, and evaluate adaptive matching exercises to mitigate interference and enhance creative thinking in 2nd-grade English learners.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining observational analysis, experimental implementation, and qualitative evaluation. The study was conducted in Uzbekistan's general secondary schools with 2nd-grade students using the "Guess What! 2" textbook series, which includes a student's book, workbook, multimedia resources, and teacher's guide, aligned with state curricula and enriched with TBLT, PBL, and CLIL methodologies.

In the process of teaching English, it is recommended to use formative, developmental, and perfective types of matching exercises created for the practical results of our research for 2nd-grade students to develop their creative thinking. We will explain in detail about Matching exercises and their types below.

Matching exercises are a widely used and effective method in language learning, which is a type of exercise that requires students to find and correctly match semantic, formal, or functional connections between two or more elements. There are several types of Matching exercises, which are as follows:

1. Matching linguistic units with their meanings (Definition-matching)

In this type of exercise, students are given several linguistic units, and definitions corresponding to these units are provided. Students must match the given linguistic units with the appropriate definition. For example:

1. An apple - a) is a vehicle with four wheels used for transporting people from one place to another.

2. A car - b) a fruit that grows on trees

Answers: 1-b, 2-a.

2. Matching sentence parts (Sentence half matching)

The sentence is divided into two parts, and the first part must be correctly paired with the second part. For example:

1. If it rains, ... a)apples and bananas

2. I like... b)we will stay home.

Answers: 1-b, 2-a.

3. Multiple-option matching (Three/Four/Five-option matching)

In this type of exercise, multiple options are offered for each element (usually 3, 4, or 5), one of which is correct. Sometimes one or two options may be extra. For example, it can be used in studying the topic "to be"

1. My father ____ a doctor a) are
b) is
c) am
2. I __ eight years old. a) is
b) am
c) are

Answers: 1-b, 2-b.

4. Matching sentence to sentence (Sentence to sentence matching)

In this type of exercise, a sentence given in the form of a question must be matched by finding the appropriate answer from the randomly given answers. For example:

1. A. Where is the bus?
B. It is a truck.
2. A. What type of transport sounds like "kruck-kruck"?
B. It may be a plane.
3. A. What type of transport flies in the air?
B. It is near us.

Answers: 1-3, 2-1, 3-2

The basis of the exercises created for the practice of our research work is precisely the "Sentence-to-sentence matching" exercise.

As the practical part of our research work, for 2nd grades, the types of matching exercises: "Word-to-picture matching", "Sentence matching", and "Sentence to sentence matching" were developed and used in the experimental process. Today, we will describe the exercises given in the "Guess What! 2" student's book used by 2nd-grade students, the difficulties arising in performing these exercises, as well as the recommended matching exercises to prevent these interference situations, and their role in developing creative thinking.

In our country, the process of teaching English to 2nd-grade students based on the new edition textbook sets was launched from the 2022/2023 academic year. This textbook set consists of the "Guess What! 2" student's book (together with the workbook), multimedia educational resources, and a methodological guide for the teacher, and is currently widely used in general secondary education institutions. The units of the textbook and the subtopics within them are structured based on the requirements of the curriculum, enriched with effective English language acquisition technologies, practical exercises, colorful illustrations and tasks, multimedia CLIL (Content language integrated learning), task-based, and project-based teaching methods. These aspects serve to develop independent, critical, and creative thinking in students.

In the "Guess What 2" textbook set recommended by experts from the University of Cambridge for 2nd grades, exercises and methods aimed at developing students' imagination, interest, and vocabulary are presented. Based on the proposal to develop creative thinking, we will describe some exercise examples below.

✚ Developing creative thinking through question-and-answer. Based on the pictures in the textbook, to form students' speech competencies, one can address not only simple questions, but also questions like "What if?", "How can it be solved in another way?".

For example: "What if the animals could talk? What would they say?"

✚ Developing creative thinking through role plays. After reading the textbook texts, students can enter various roles and compose dialogues. For example: acting as "Shopkeeper-Customer, Doctor-Patient, or Explorer-Tour Guide". This teaches them to find ways out of situations.

✚ Developing creative thinking through creative writing. An exercise to write a short story based on the linguistic units taught in the textbook topics.

For example: "Use five words from today's lesson to write a funny story."

✚ Developing creative thinking through storytelling. We can suggest asking students to imagine where the next journey of the pictures or characters in the supplementary textbook might be.

For example: "What will happen to the boy in the picture next?"

✚ Developing creative thinking through Project-based learning. It is possible to prepare mini-projects with students based on the textbook topics.

For example: "My dream school", "A new planet", "An unusual animal".

✚ Developing creative thinking through comparison and imagination tasks. One can give a question related to the speaking speech activity by asking students to compare 2 transport.

For example: "Compare a bicycle and a horse. Which is better for traveling to school? Why?" You wrote all of these by analyzing yourself, so I didn't touch them

In the 4th week, 8th lesson of the "Guess What 2" textbook set, in teaching the "Transportation" unit (Student's Book page #16, Workbook page #12), the presence of interference situations in students was identified. Within the methodology of teaching foreign languages, students' previous language experience may have a negative impact (interference) on the process of acquiring the foreign language being studied or, conversely, support it through positive impact (transposition). Interference is errors and difficulties arising due to the influence of the native language or other known languages in the process of learning a foreign language [J.J. Jalolov. Tashkent - 2012. P-29. P-434.]. This process is complex, and its

effectiveness depends on a number of factors. First, teaching the types of speech activity such as listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing in English teaching in a holistic and consistent manner; second, gradually developing linguistic (speech, language), sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competencies in accordance with the requirements of the State Education Standard; third, taking into account interdisciplinary integration (interconnections between academic subjects); fourth, ensuring organic connection between oral and written speech forms and types; fifth, directing students to independent educational activity, and so on [M.SH. Ruzmetova Mukhabbat Shakirovna. Tashkent- 2021. P-35. P-231.]. Below, details will be provided on the interference difficulties that are hindering students in teaching English in primary grades (grades 2-4). It is recommended to use several Matching exercises to eliminate the arising difficulties.

We know that, according to the characteristics of speech acquisition, more precisely, depending on the participation of senses and analyzers, receptive and reproductive speech exercises are performed. In implementing receptive and productive speech, based on methodological requirements, the requirement to develop creative thinking was mainly taken into account in perfective exercise types. In the first "Unit 1. Transportation" unit of the Student's book, vocabulary related to Transportation in English is given. On page 16 of the textbook, the practical exercise "2 CD 1.20 Listen, point and say" is noted. The purpose of this exercise is for students to listen, understand, point to, and say the 9 vehicles (plane, helicopter, bus, car, truck, motorcycle, train, boat, tractor) given with colorful pictures in the textbook. This exercise helps to increase students' vocabulary, develop speech skills: listening comprehension, reading, and speaking. The presentation of new words with colorful pictures increases students' interest. As a result of our observations in the experimental process, we witnessed that most students did not encounter difficulties in performing this exercise; on the contrary, colorful illustrations increased their interest in mastering the new topic.

On page 18 of the Student's book, through the exercise "7 CD 1, 24 Sing the song", the grammatical topic (I have a truck) is intended to be taught to students. Students sing the song text given in the textbook chorally and learn the present simple affirmative form "I have / you have/ he/she has" through listening and singing. During our observations, we analyzed the difficulties in performing this exercise using the VARK (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic learners) model. It is known that in auditory learners, no interference situations were observed in understanding and performing this exercise, but some difficulties were observed in visual learners, kinesthetic learners, and reading/writing learners. Students with observed interference situations limited themselves to only

listening to the music and following the text. They could not actively participate in performing this song in a group. However, since the multimedia educational resource materials in this exercise were interesting and effective for students to assimilate, was no need felt to create additional educational resources for this exercise. Such exercises are considered developmental exercise types and help to develop students' receptive (listening comprehension and reading) and productive (speaking) speech competencies.

The next analysis is the exercise "9 CD 1, 27. Listen, look and say" on page 19 of the Student's book, where there are tasks given to teach grammar through the structure "Does he have/she have?" present simple question and short answer (Yes, he does/No, she does not), and difficulties were observed in students independently asking questions on this topic. To assimilate this grammatical topic and eliminate the errors made, it is recommended to perform the "Funny bags (funny little bags)" exercise for the practical part of the research work. This exercise is considered a developmental exercise type and is recommended to consolidate students' independent use of the present simple structures "I have / Do you have / Does he/she have...?", asking questions, and correctly using short answers. In applying this exercise, 6-8 colored bags or envelopes, with one transportation picture (bike, car, plane, train, bus, and helicopter) placed in each bag by the teacher. 6 bags are distributed to each of 6 students. The student selected by the teacher looks at the picture in the bag but does not show it to others. It is explained to the remaining students in the class by the teacher to ask questions to the first 2 bag owners using the "Do you have...?" structure, to 2 girl students using the "Does she have ...?" structure, to 2 boy students using the "Does he have...?" structure. Through this, the teacher consolidates how to ask questions and give answers for the 3rd person singular. In the question-answer stage, students in the class address the bag owners with individual questions:

"Do you have a bike?", "Do you have a train?", "Does she have a plane?", "Does she have a bus?", "Does he have a car?", "Does he have a helicopter?"

The bag owner gives a precise answer since they know the picture inside:

"Yes, I do." or "No, I don't.", "Yes, she does." or "No she doesn't."

"Yes, he does." or "No he doesn't.",

Students are given the opportunity to ask up to 3 questions to find the answers inside the bags. The bag owner confirms whether the given answers are correct or incorrect. In this situation, the teacher places another student in front of the board with a drawing of two columns for questions and answers. After each question, the student connects the mixed answers on the board with a line to the answer confirmed by the bag owner. Below, we describe this exercise.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. "Do you have a bike?" | A. Yes, she has. |
| 2. "Do you have a train?" | B. Yes, he has. |
| 3. " Does she have a plane?" | C. No, she doesn't have. |
| 4. " Does she have a bus?" | D. Yes, I have. |
| 5. " Does he have a car?" | E. No, he doesn't have. |
| 6. " Does he have a helicopter?" | F. No, I don't have. |

Answers: 1-F, 2-D, 3-A, 4-C, 5-B, 6-E.

This form, prepared in advance on the board by the teacher, is simple, understandable, and visual for 2nd-grade students, helping them to clearly remember the questions and answers. To develop students' creative thinking, the teacher gives the "Dream transport" task to the students. Pictures such as "a flying car", "a speaking plane", prepared in advance with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) by the teacher, are shown to students via a monitor, then they create similar vehicles through their fantasies, and students in pairs find out what vehicle they have created by asking questions. Through this, the teacher achieves consolidating the question-asking structure once more for the students. For example, "Do you have a dream transport?". "Yes, I have a flying car". After the answer, the student can compose an additional sentence about their transport. This allows for students' creative thinking.

In the exercise "CD1, 34. Listen and say." on page 23 of the "Student's book", students can listen to and repeat the given word combinations. Difficulties were observed in students' understanding of prepositions used with transport. To eliminate this interference situation, it is recommended to perform the "Land, Water or Air?" exercise developed for the practice of our research work. This exercise type is considered developmental and develops students' listening comprehension skills as well as quick thinking abilities. Moreover, by distinguishing vehicles moving on "Land, Water, and Air", it helps to develop their analytical and logical thinking. In this exercise, students listen to the transports being divided into 3 groups: "on land, on water, in the air" through the "Audio" prepared by the author. Then, they are required to place the appropriate transport correctly. To perform this exercise, 3 large pictorial posters, 6 transportation pictures (car, bus, boat, ship, plane, helicopter) are needed. Students work as a team. Short sentences are played in the "Audio" file prepared by the author: It is a car. It moves on land. It is a boat. It moves on water. It is a plane. It moves in the air. It is a bus. It moves on land. It is a ship. It moves on water. It is a helicopter. It moves in the air.

After each audio text, students take the transport picture card and place it in front of the appropriate poster:

“It is a car. It moves on land.” → Car card in front of ON LAND.

“It is a boat. It moves on water.” → Boat card in front of ON WATER.

“It is a plane. It flies in the air.” → Plane card in front of IN THE AIR.

“It is a bus. It moves on land.” → Bus card in front of ON LAND.

“It is a ship. It moves on water.” → Ship card in front of ON WATER.

“It is a helicopter. It flies in the air.” → Helicopter card in front of IN THE AIR is placed. After the task is completed, they repeat the sentences chorally together:

At the end of the exercise, the teacher mixes all the transports and says the sentences faster, and students try to place them quickly on the appropriate poster. For the purpose of developing students' creative thinking, the teacher explains to students that they should fantasize their favorite transportation vehicle and that this transportation vehicle should be able to move both on land and in the air, and gives an example by the teacher: a flying car. It moves on land and in the air. Students also describe their invented transports to the teacher in the same way. The transportation vehicles created through students' fantasies also indicate to what extent their creative thinking has developed.

The exercises noted above were analyzed in terms of the educational process, and efforts were made to eliminate the interference situations observed in students by proposing matching exercises corresponding to them. This exercise is based on the principles of consciousness and activity. Moreover, in terms of content, it is considered an integrative exercise (simultaneously listening comprehension, reading, phonetic differentiation, logical thinking, lexical-grammatical connection), harmoniously developing several speech skills and knowledge. According to its educational purpose, this exercise belongs to the developmental (expands logical, critical, and creative thinking) and perfective (repetition of previously learned transport names, question words) types.

Currently, there are various types of matching exercises in the teaching and learning process. One of them, as we emphasized above, is the “Sentence Matching” exercise. In this form, students are usually given the task to read a sentence given in the form of a question and then find the matching answer from the options presented in a random order. This exercise is structured in such a way that in the process of answering the question, the pronunciation of key words in the questions is similar to the pronunciation of words in the answers, which allows students to find the answers without extra difficulties.

Other forms of matching exercises exist in the “Student’s Book”, but specifically the “Sentence Matching” exercise is not present in the 2nd-grade “Student’s Book” and “Workbook”. As the practical result of our research work, a “Sentence Matching” exercise based on five questions was developed to consolidate

the “Transportation” topic. This approach not only encourages students to creative thinking but also helps to effectively assimilate Wh-questions and pronouns.

Matching the questions (A) with answers(B).

1. A: Where is the bus?

B: It is a truck.

2. A: Where is a frog?

B: It may be a plane.

3. A: The word “tractor” without “tr” letters is..

B: It is near us.

4. A: What type of transport sounds like “kruck-kruck”?

B: It is in the boat.

5. A: What type of transport flies in the air?

B: It is an actor.

Correct answer order: 1 → 3, 2 → 4, 3 → 5, 4 → 1, 5 → 2.

Advantages and analysis of the exercise.

In the question “Where is the bus?”, the word “Where” indicates location. Students must identify the keyword - “bus” and match the answer. Here, the phonetic similarity between “bus” and “us” is taken into account. This method stimulates students' logical and critical thinking, and at the same time consolidates grammatical concepts such as the question word “where (where?)”, transport type “bus (bus)”, and 1st person plural possessive pronoun (us). Second question: “Where is my coat?” - here too, the interrogative word “where (where?)” expressing location is used. Key word - “frog (frog)”. Students analyze the recommended options and choose the word “boat” that is semantically close. In this process, students learn the question word “where”, the creature living both in water and on land (frog), 3rd person singular pronoun (it), and transport type (boat). Third question: “The word “tractor” without “tr” letters is..” students should continue part of the sentence Key word - “tractor (tractor)”. Students choose the word “an actor” through phonetic similarity. Fourth question: “What type of transport sounds like ‘kruck-kruck’?” - “What” is used to answer the question what kind. Key word - sound (“kruck-kruck”). In pronouncing this word, students choose the word “truck,” which is pronounced in a similar way. Through this, the question word “what”, transport type (truck), and 3rd person singular pronoun (it) are assimilated. Fifth question: “What type of transport flies in the air?” - In this question, too, the question word “what” is used to determine what type of vehicle. Key word in the question “air (air)”. Students analyze this question and find the transport that flies in the air - “plane”. Through answering the given questions, not only does students' creative thinking develop, but also their listening

comprehension and speaking skills are achieved. These questions are developed according to the principles of consciousness and activity, and belong to the developmental type of exercises.

“Sentence Matching” exercises develop in students: creative thinking, logical, and critical thinking abilities. Identifying keywords in questions and matching answers through phonetic proximity not only increases students' interest but also consolidates their grammatical knowledge. As a result, students learn to correctly use Wh-questions, identify pronouns, remember transportation vehicles, and engage in creative thinking.

Results

- **Listen, Point, and Say (p. 16):** Most students succeeded due to colorful visuals, enhancing vocabulary and skills (listening, reading, speaking) without notable interference.

- **Sing the Song (p. 18):** Auditory learners performed well, but visual, kinesthetic, and reading/writing learners showed interference, limiting participation to passive listening. Multimedia resources mitigated this, negating additional exercise needs.

- **Listen, Look, and Say (p. 19):** Difficulties in using “Does he/she have...?” structures were observed. The “Funny Bags” exercise improved independent questioning, with students creating imaginative descriptions (e.g., “I have a flying car”).

- **Listen and Say (p. 23):** Preposition comprehension posed challenges. The “Land, Water, or Air?” exercise enhanced categorization and quick thinking, with students inventing creative transports (e.g., “a car that swims and flies”).

- **Sentence Matching Exercise:** Correct pairings (1-3, 2-4, 3-5, 4-1, 5-2) reinforced Wh-questions, pronouns, and vocabulary via phonetic clues, boosting engagement.

Outcomes

The exercises reduced interference, improved receptive and productive skills, and fostered creative thinking, as evidenced by students' imaginative outputs and increased participation.

Discussion

The results align with TBLT, PBL, and CLIL principles, demonstrating that adaptive matching exercises effectively address interference while cultivating creativity. The “Funny Bags” and “Land, Water, or Air?” exercises enhanced analytical, logical, and creative thinking, supporting Jalolov (2012) and Ruzmetova (2021). The sentence matching exercise's phonetic and semantic design increased engagement and grammatical mastery.

Conclusion

Matching exercises, obviously sentence-to-sentence matching, are effective in mitigating interference and fostering creative thinking in 2nd-grade English learners, offering a balanced approach to skill development.

REFERENCES:

- Jalolov, J.J. (2012). *Chet tillar oliy o'quv yurtlari (fakultetlari) talabalari uchun darslik: Chet til o'qitish metodikasi*. Tashkent: O'qituvchi nashriyot-matbaa ijodiy uyi.
- Ruzmetova, M.Sh. (2021). *Umumiy o'rta ta'limning 5-7-sinf o'quvchilariga ingliz tilini o'qitishda kompetensiyalarni rivojlantirish texnologiyalari* [Dissertation]. Tashkent.