

Hook, Book, Look, Took

Herwindy M Tedjaatmadja and Willy A Renandya keep it simple.

Introduction

Are you teaching English to young children and looking for a simple lesson framework that you can use and reuse productively?

The Hook Book Look Took (HBLT) lesson structure might be the answer. Originally developed by Lawrence O Richards and Gary J Bredfeldt (1998), HBLT is a four-step strategy that is particularly popular with Sunday school teachers. The four-step lesson structure enables the teacher to introduce and prepare the children for the lesson through various fun activities (the Hook), to focus the children's attention on the contents of a section of the Bible (the Book),

to guide the children to think about how to apply the message in life (the Look), and to summarize the lesson in such a way so that the children finish the lesson with a concrete takeaway (the Took).

We stumbled on this lesson structure quite accidentally when someone mentioned it casually to us and said that she fell in love with it the moment she learned about it and had since then tried it out with her Sunday-school children. It dawned on us almost immediately that this could be adapted for teaching English to young children. The structure is simple, which goes down well with teachers working with young learners, and is versatile enough to allow for

creative interpretations and variations within each of the steps. The name is also quite catchy and easy to remember, which we think is another plus point.

The Hook Book Look Took lesson structure

We describe in Table 1 below our version of the HBLT lesson framework. We have kept the terms the same but given different meanings to the four steps, in particular the Book and Look steps, so that they are more reflective of current theories of and principles for teaching English to young learners. We describe the four steps along with the language learning principles that underpin the steps in the table below.

| Step | Description | Principles |
|-------------|---|--|
| Hook | <p>All good teachers understand the importance of this step, especially when working with young learners. This is where we introduce and prepare the students affectively, cognitively and also linguistically for the main part of the lesson. With young children, the hook should be fun and enjoyable. Fun activities include, but are not limited to, singing, playing games, dancing, drawing, or other activities that involve bodily movement. The use of a multi-sensory approach by appealing to the children's sense of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste is highly recommended to get their attention.</p> <p>Given that young learners have a short attention span, they will need to be hooked and rehooked as the main lesson progresses. In a 30-minute lesson, two or three hooking activities may need to be planned in order to keep the children engaged throughout the lesson.</p> <p>The best kind of hook should be related to the main objective of the lesson and also guide learners to the main activities of the lesson. This way, the hook provides a bridge between the aim of the lesson and the main activities of the lesson.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Learning is best facilitated when children are cognitively and affectively ready, when they can devote their full attention to what they are about to learn. Learning is also best facilitated when children are in a happy state of mind. This state of mind can best be achieved through play or game-like activities. Schema theory is also at play here as the teacher tries to activate learners' prior knowledge and interest with the content of the lesson through fun activities. |
| Book | <p>This is the main part of the lesson. The book here refers to any textual materials that appeal to young learners. Story books of various genres such as folklores, legends, fairy tales, fables and modern-day stories can be used to engage the learners. The key consideration when selecting stories is that they should be interesting, enjoyable and comprehensible to the learners. Materials of this type are likely to get the learners' full attention; while those that are uninteresting, unenjoyable and incomprehensible will just be noise to the children and will be filtered out.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Books in general and stories in particular can provide a lot of comprehensible input to the children (Krashen, 2009), which is a necessary condition for language acquisition. |

| Step | Description | Principles |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Book (continued) | <p>There are many book-based instructional procedures that teachers can use to explore the contents of the story. These procedures usually require the teacher to do some form of reading aloud; either reading to or with the children. The latter, reading with the children, is preferred because research has shown that this type of reading keeps the learners mentally engaged, which tends to result in deeper and durable learning (Blok, 1999).</p> <p>Teacher read-aloud techniques include the following: <i>Read and predict.</i> The teacher stops at interesting points in the story and encourages the children to predict what will happen next. This technique supports learner thinking and helps learners to think ahead and predict the contents of the next portion of the story. This is an important skill that good readers use to enhance their comprehension.</p> <p><i>Tell and check.</i> The students are paired up and assigned as either a teller or a checker. The teacher reads a section of the story and asks the teller to retell that portion of the story to the checker. The checker checks if the teller has included all the relevant details. This technique keeps the students on task when listening to the story as they have to do the telling and checking afterward. The telling and checking can be done in either English or in the pupils' first language.</p> <p><i>Listen and draw.</i> The teacher can ask the students to draw pictures in response to what they are listening to to represent their understanding of the story. Listening and drawing keep them productively occupied throughout the lesson.</p> <p>A great book that contains a lot of practical tips and hundreds of recommended read-aloud titles is Jim Trealeas' now classic <i>The Read-aloud Handbook</i> (2006).</p> <p><i>Expressive reading.</i> Read with expression so that the story comes alive and the words become more vivid and meaningful. Use different voices when reading a dialogue. Bring a lot of excitement to your voice so that the children know that you are excited about the story. Slow down the speed to create suspense and read faster when the story gets exciting.</p> <p>Some teachers value student read-aloud and often ask pupils to do choral reading. While this activity can be useful (e.g., for fluency development), this can be a chore after a while and students may get bored.</p> <p>The benefits of reading aloud are many. Reading aloud, according to Kathleen Odean (2003), an expert on children's books, is most beneficial when it is done in a way that is enjoyable to both the teacher and the students. Her advice: "Just enjoy the books together; the increased vocabulary, understanding of story structure, exposure to correct grammar, and other benefits will follow naturally."</p> | <p>b. Teacher read-aloud makes the language input more comprehensible, thus further enhancing language acquisition.</p> <p>c. This Book step reflects Paul Nation's (1996) first learning strand, i.e., learning through meaning focused input, where the learners' attention is primarily on the contents (meaning) of the stories, not on the form, thus promoting incidental learning.</p> <p>d. The teaching methods suggested for this step are geared towards developing learners' implicit knowledge of the English language, which is consistent with SLA theories (Ellis, 2005).</p> |
| Look | <p>The third step is to get the students to look more closely at the language features of the story. After receiving a lot of meaningful language input at the Book step, students should be made aware of which particular aspects of the input need to be attended to. These can be the meanings, spellings or pronunciation of words used to describe the characters in the story, the structure of the storyline (e.g. how the author builds up the climax of the story), certain grammatical structures, etc.</p> | <p>a. Noticing language features increases the chance of these features being incorporated into the learners' developing language system.</p> <p>b. The Look step reflects Paul Nation's (1996) second strand: language focused learning. Research has shown that deliberate attention to language features enhances learning.</p> |

| Step | Description | Principles |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Look (continued) | This step can be integrated with the second step in which the teacher can explain briefly certain language features that are worth highlighting. It can also be done as a separate activity after the second step. What is important for the teachers to remember is that they should not spend too much classroom time on it or turn this step into traditional discrete grammar exercises (e.g., turning statements into questions, which is not a meaningful activity for young children). | c. Noticing language features (e.g. certain grammatical features or vocabulary) from a meaningful text is more productive than learning these features out of context. |
| Took | <p>The Took is the conclusion of the whole lesson. It is the takeaway of the lesson. The questions to ask are: what is it that we want our students to remember most from the lesson? Is it the meanings of some new words? Is it the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds? Some grammar points? Is it some newly introduced comprehension skills?</p> <p>With young children, the take-away activities should be fun and enjoyable. For example, if the focus of the lesson is on the pronunciation of /ei/, the teacher can end the lesson by showing a YouTube video clip (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3v0rJqyCTM) entitled "Rain, Rain, Go Away!", which contains a lot of words with the /ei/ sound and get the children to sing along.</p> <p>If the objective of the lesson is on adjectives, the children can be shown the following poem (http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/davidc/6c_files/Poem%20pics/cinquaindescrip.htm), and asked to replace the three adjectives (messy, spicy and delicious) with their own adjectives. This is a meaningful activity as the pupils get to practice using some adjectives and at the same time be involved in a creative text reconstruction activity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Spaghetti Messy, spicy Slurping, sliding, falling Between my plate and mouth Delicious</p> | <p>a. Ending the lesson in this way increases the retention of the key points of the lesson.</p> <p>b. This step also enables the students to apply or transfer learning to a new situation.</p> |

Table 1: HBLT Lesson Structure

Conclusion

As is clear from the foregoing discussion, the HBLT lesson structure is simple but flexible. The four steps are easy to remember but flexible enough for teachers to carry out the steps according to their preferences, teaching styles and creativity. The language learning principles that underpin this lesson structure are sound too and reflect what second language experts believe to be important for teaching young learners. The key steps of the HBLT lesson structure, the Book and the Look, reflect a balanced view of instructed language learning principles that promote both meaning-focused and language-focused learning (Ellis, 2005; Nation, 2007) through the use of high interest story books (Elley, 2001). The teacher read-aloud methodology

is also well-suited for young children before they can read independently and later benefit even more from engaging in extensive or pleasure reading (Renandya, 2007).

We have included a HBLT planner in the appendix and hope that you will use it when you plan your HBLT lesson.

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Appendix

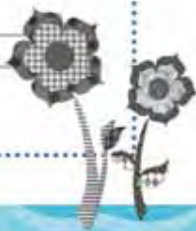
H B L T PLANNER

Hook 

Book 

Look 

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