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## Theme: "Teaching different age groups"

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# THEME: TEACHING DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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# INTRODUCTION

After getting the Independence the Republic of Uzbekistan has worked out an own model of development, talking into account the specific social and political traditions in the country. One of the most important conditions for the development of any country is a well functioning education system. As the education system ensures the formation of a highly developed that must be able to live en a highly, with social and personal activity, ability to function independently in the public and political Ufe.

By 1997 on the basis of the National Model of development there had been worked out the national program for Personal Training which defined conceptional ways and concrete details, mechanisms for radical reforming the education system and personnel training.

The program is the normative scientific basis for reforms. Starting from 1997 it is being put into practice stage by stage. The document paves the way for radical reforms in the structure and content of education system of the National Program we need to change some ways of teaching the English language under school conditions as the old ap-proacheseno longer meet the requirements of the last year. The historic changes took place in Uzbekistan since there have been obtained. Independence and sovereignty after September 1991, in Independent Uzbekistan many political economical cultural and social factors have changed. Therefore, the very time of getting Independence the head of the republic I.A.Karimov attended to change Educational System and the attempts reflected on changing in Educational System in 1997, the Educational system and personnel Training so high developed before Independence no longer meets requirements of democratic and market changes occurred in the Republic Today.

It should be noted that the National Program of Personnel training had some unique features. The reforms are carried out on a extensive scale and are supported scientifically.

As the President I.A.Karimov emphasized in his book “Uzbekistan along the road of

Independence and progress".[1] There are four path of reform and development is based:

- adherence to universal human values
- consolidation and development of the nations spiritual heritage
- freedom for the individuals realization
- patriotism

The highest objective of reformation in Uzbekistan is to revive those traditions, fill them with new content and set up all necessary conditions achieving peace and democracy, prosperity, cultural advancement freedom of conscience and intellectual maturity for every person on earth.

According to the requirement on the National Program of Personnel training and reforming of highest education in the republic of Uzbekistan it is important to make effective changes in the System of Higher Education.[2]

As Karimov I.A. highlighted "Our young generation must be quick-cutter, wiser, healthier and of course, must be happier than us"[3]

In order to achieve "Harmoniously developed generation" Educators should use all the suitable aids.

[1]I.A.Karimov. "Uzbekistan along the road of Independence and progress". Tashkent, 1993, p.67
[2] I.A.Karimov. "There is no future without history", Tashkent, 1997, p.47
[3] I.A.Karimov. "Harmoniously developed generation is a basis of progress of Uzbekistan", 1998, Tashkent

## Language Acquisition: Age Factor

Many conventional assumptions about differences between children and adults in language learning may turn out, when subjected to careful examination or research to be not quite so obvious or inevitably true as they seem. In Box 1. are some statements that represent these assumptions; comments follow.

### BOX 1. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT AGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

1. Younger children learn languages better than older ones; children learn better than adults.
2. Foreign language learning in school should be started at as early an age as possible.
3. Children and adults learn languages basically the same way.
4. Adults have a longer concentration span than children.
5. It is easier to interest and motivate children than adults.

### Critical assessment

Look at the statements in Box 1, and note for each whether you agree or disagree, adding any comments or reservations you might have. Compare your reactions with those of colleagues if possible; then read on.

### *Comments*

### 1. Young children learn languages better

This is a commonly held view, based on many people's experience seeing (or being) children transplanted to a foreign environment and picking up the local language with apparent ease. The obvious conclusion from this experience would seem to be that children are intrinsically better learners; but this has not been confirmed by research (Singleton, 1989).[4] On the contrary: given the same amount of exposure to a foreign language, there is some evidence that the older the child the more

[4] Singleton D. 1989. Language acquisition: The age factor. Clevedon, Philadelphia: multilingual Matters

effectively he or she learns (Snow and Hoefnagel-Hoehle,[5] 1978; Ellis, 1994: 484-94); probably teenagers are overall the best learners. (The only apparent exception to this is pronunciation, which is learned more easily by younger children.) The reason for children's apparently speedy learning when immersed in the foreign environment may be the sheer amount of time they are usually exposed to the language, the number of 'teachers' surrounding them, and the dependence on (foreign-language-speaking) people around to supply their needs ('survival' motive). The truth of the assumption that young children learn better is even more dubious if applied to formal classroom learning: here there is only one teacher to a number of children, exposure time is very limited, and the 'survival' motive does not usually apply. Moreover, young children have not as yet developed the cognitive skills and self-discipline that enable them to make the most of limited teacher-mediated information; they rely more on intuitive acquisition, which in its turn relies on a larger volume of comprehensible input than there is time for in lessons.

**2. Foreign language learning in school should start early**

Some people have argued for the existence of a 'critical period' in language learning: if you get too old and pass this period you will have significantly more difficulty learning; thus early learning in schools would seem essential. But this theory is not conclusively supported by research evidence: there may not be a critical period at all; or there may be several (Singleton, 1989; Long, 1990).[6] The research-supported hypothesis discussed above — that children may actually become more effective language learners as they get older, particularly in formal teacher-mediated learning situations - means that the investment of lesson time at an early age may not be cost-effective. In other words, if you have a limited number of hours to give to foreign language teaching in school, it will probably be more rewarding in terms of sheer amount of learning to invest these in the older classes. We have heard one

[5] Snow C., Hoefnagel-Hoehle M. 1978. Age differences in second language acquisition. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House

[6] Long M.H. 1990. Maturational constraints on language development. Studies in second language acquisition, 12, 217.

authority on the subject, C.Snow[7] in a lecture 'Using LI skills for L2 proficiency: Why older L2 learners are better', at the Conference of the English Teachers' Association of Israel, Jerusalem, 1993) claim that twelve is the optimum age for starting a foreign language in school; my own experience is that ten is about right.
Having said this, however, it is also true that an early start to language learning is likely to lead to better long-term results if early learning is maintained and reinforced as the child gets older (Long, 1990). In a situation, therefore, where there are as many teachers and teaching hours as you want, by all means start as early as you can.

### 3. Children and adults learn languages the same way

In an immersion situation, where people are acquiring language intuitively for daily survival, this may to some extent be true. In the context of formal courses however, differences become apparent. Adults' capacity for understanding and logical thought is greater, and they are likely to have developed a number of learning skills and strategies which children do not yet have. Moreover, adult classes tend on the whole to be more disciplined and cooperative - as anyone who has moved from teaching children to teaching adults, or vice versa, will have found. This may be partly because people learn as they get older to be patient and put up with temporary frustrations in the hope of long-term rewards, to cooperate with others for joint profit, and various other benefits o self-restraint and disciplined cooperation. Another reason is that most adults are learning voluntarily, have chosen the course themselves, often have a clear purpose in learning (work, travel, etc.) and are therefore likely to feel more committed and motivated; whereas most children have little choice in where, how or even whether they are taught.

### 4. Adults have a longer concentration span

Teachers commonly notice that they cannot get children to concentrate on certain

[7] Snow C. Using L1 skills for L2 proficiency: why older L1 learners are better. Lecture. Israel, Jerusalem

learning activities as long as they can get adults to do so. However, the problem is not the concentration span itself - children will spend hours absorbed in activities that really interest them - but rather the ability of the individual to persevere with something of no immediate intrinsic interest to them. I lore older learners do exhibit noticeable superiority, because they tend to be more self-disciplined. One implication for teaching is the need to devote a lot of thought to the (intrinsic) interest value of learning activities for younger learners.

**5. It is easier to motivate children**

In a sense, this is true: you can raise children's motivation and enthusiasm (by selecting interesting activities, for example) more easily than that of older, more self-reliant and sometimes cynical learners. On the other hand, you can also lose it more easily: monotonous, apparently pointless activities quickly bore and demotivate young learners; older ones arc more tolerant of them. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that younger learners' motivation is more likely to vary and is more susceptible to immediate surrounding influences, including the teacher; that of older learners tends to be more stable.

## CHAPTER II. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Language acquisition is one of the most impressive and fascinating aspects of human development. We listen with pleasure to the sounds made by a three-month-old baby. We laugh and 'answer' the conversational 'ba-ba-ba' babbling of older babies, and we share in the pride and joy of parents whose one-year-old has uttered the first 'bye-bye'. Indeed, learning a language is an amazing feat—one that has attracted the attention of linguists and psychologists for generations. How do children accomplish this? What enables a child not only to learn words, but to put them together in meaningful sentences? What pushes children to go on developing complex grammatical language even though their early simple communication is successful for most purposes? Does child language develop similarly around the world? How do bilingual children acquire more than one language?

In this research work, we will look briefly at some of the characteristics of the language of young children. We will then consider several theories that have been offered as explanations for how language is learned. There is an immense body of research on child language. Although much research has been done in middle-class North American and European families, there is a rich body of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural research as well. Researchers have travelled all over the world to observe, record, and study children's early language development. Our purpose is to touch on a few main points in this research, primarily as a preparation for the discussion of second language acquisition, which is the focus of this book.

### 2.1. The first three years: Milestones and developmental sequences

One remarkable thing about first language acquisition is the high degree of similarity in the early language of children all over the world. Researchers have described developmental sequences for many aspects of first language acquisition. The earliest vocalizations are simply the involuntary crying that babies do when they are hungry or uncomfortable.

Soon, however, we hear the cooing and gurgling sounds of contented babies, lying in their beds looking at fascinating shapes and movement around them. Even though they have little control over the sounds they make in these early weeks of life, infants are able to hear very subtle differences between the sounds of human languages. In cleverly designed experiments, Peter Eimas and his colleagues (1971) [8] demonstrated that tiny babies can hear the difference between 'pa' and 'ba', for example. And yet, it may be many months before their own vocalizations (babbling) begin to reflect the characteristics of the language or languages they hear.

By the end of their first year, most babies understand quite a few frequently repeated words. They wave when someone says 'bye-bye'; they clap when someone says 'pat-a-cake'; they eagerly hurry to the kitchen when 'juice and cookies' are mentioned. At twelve months, most babies will have begun to produce a word or two that everyone recognizes. By the age of two, most children reliably produce at least

[8]Eimas P.D. and E.R.Siqueland. 1978. Speech perception in infants. Science 171, 303-6.

fifty different words and some produce many more. About this time, they begin to combine words into simple sentences such as 'Mommy juice' and 'baby fall down. These sentences are sometimes called 'telegraphic' because they leave out such things as articles, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs. We recognize them as sentences because, even though function words and grammatical morphemes are missing, the word order reflects the word order of the language they are hearing and because the combined words have a meaning relationship that makes them more than just a list of words. Thus, for an English-speaking child, 'kiss baby' does not mean the same thing as 'baby kiss'. Remarkably, we also see evidence, even in these early sentences, that children are doing more than imperfectly imitating what they have heard. Their two- and three-word sentences show signs that they can creatively combine words. For example, 'more outside' may mean 'I want to go outside again.' Depending on the situation, 'Daddy uh-oh' might mean 'Daddy fell down or 'Daddy dropped something' or even 'Daddy, please do that funny thing where you pretend to drop me off your lap.'

As children progress through the discovery of language in their first three years, there are predictable patterns in the emergence and development of many features of the language they are learning. For some language features, these patterns have been described in terms of developmental sequences or 'stages'. To some extent, these stages in language acquisition are related to children's cognitive development. For example, children do not use temporal adverbs such as 'tomorrow' or 'last week' until they develop some understanding of time. In other cases, the developmental sequences seem to reflect the gradual mastery of the linguistic elements for expressing ideas that have been present in children's cognitive understanding for a long time. For example, children can distinguish between singular and plural long before they reliably add plural endings to nouns. Mastering irregular plurals takes even more time and may not be completely under control until the school years.

**Grammatical morphemes**

In the 1960s, several researchers focused on how children acquire grammatical morphemes in English. One of the best-known studies was carried out by Roger

Brown[9] and his colleagues and students. In a longitudinal study of the language development of three children (called Adam, Eve, and Sarah) they found that fourteen grammatical morphemes were acquired in a , remarkably similar sequence. That research is reported in Browns 1973 book. The list below (adapted from that book) shows some of the morphemes they studied.

present progressive -*ing* (Mommy runn*ing*)

plural -*s* (Two book*s*)

irregular past forms (Baby *went*)

possessive *'s* (Daddy *'s* hat)

copula (Annie *is* happy)

articles *the* and *a*

regular past -*ed* (She walk*ed*)

third person singular simple present -*s* (She run*s*)

auxiliary *be* (He *is* coming)

Brown and his colleagues found that a child who had mastered the grammatical morphemes at the bottom of the list was sure to have mastered those at the top, but the reverse was not true. Thus, there was evidence for a 'developmental sequence' or order of acquisition. However, the children did not acquire the morphemes at the same age or rate. Eve had mastered nearly all the morphemes before she was two-and-a-half years old, while Sarah and Adam were still working on them when they were three-and-a-half or four.

Brown's longitudinal work was confirmed in a cross-sectional study of twenty-one children. Jill and Peter de Villiers (1973) found that children who correctly used the morphemes that Adam, Eve, and Sarah had acquired late were also able to use the ones that Adam, Eve, and Sarah had acquired earlier. The children mastered the morphemes at different ages, just as Adam, Eve, and Sarah had done, but the order of their acquisition was very similar. They were similar to each other and similar to Adam, Eve, and Sarah. Many hypotheses have been advanced to explain why these grammatical morphemes are acquired in the observed order. Researchers have

[9]Brown R. 1973. A first language: The early Stages. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

studied the frequency with which the morphemes occur in parents' speech, the cognitive complexity of the meanings represented by each morpheme, and the difficulty of perceiving or pronouncing them. In the end, there has been no simple satisfactory explanation for the sequence, and most researchers agree that the order is determined by an interaction among a number of different factors.

To supplement the evidence we have from simply observing children, some carefully designed procedures have been developed to further explore children's knowledge of grammatical morphemes. One of the first and best known is the so-called 'wug test' developed by Jean Berko Gleason in the 1950s. In this 'test', children are shown drawings of imaginary creatures with novel names or people performing mysterious actions. For example, they are told, 'Here is a wug. Now there are two of them. There are two____'. or 'Here is a man who knows how to bod. Yesterday he did the same thing. Yesterday, he ____'. By completing these sentences with 'wugs' and 'bodded', children demonstrate that they know rules for the formation of plural and simple past in English. By generalizing these patterns to words they have never heard before, they show that their language is not just a list of memorized word pairs such as 'book/books' and 'nod/nodded'.

The acquisition of other language features also shows how children's language develops systematically, and how they go beyond what they have heard to create new forms and structures.

### *Negation*

Children learn the functions of negation very early. That is, they learn to comment on the disappearance of objects, to refuse a suggestion, or reject an assertion, even at the single word stage. However, as Lois Blooms (1991)[10] longitudinal studies show, even though children understand these functions and express them with single words and gestures, it takes some time before they can express them in sentences, using the appropriate words and word order. The following stages in the development of

[10]Bloom L. 1991. Language development and language disorders. New York: John Wiley

negation have been observed in the acquisition of English. Similar stages have been observed in other languages as well (Wode 1981).[11]

***Stage 1***

Negation is usually expressed by the word 'no', either all alone or as the first word in the utterance.

No. No cookie. No comb hair.

***Stage 2***

Utterances grow longer and the sentence subject may be included. The negative word appears just before the verb. Sentences expressing rejection or prohibition often use 'don't'.

Daddy no comb hair.

Don't touch that!

***Stage 3***

The negative element is inserted into a more complex sentence. Children may add forms of the negative other than 'no', including words like 'can't' and 'don't'. These sentences appear to follow the correct English pattern of attaching the negative to the auxiliary or modal verb. However, children do not yet vary these forms for different persons or tenses:

I can't do it. He don't want it.

***Stage 4***

Children begin to attach the negative element to the correct form of auxiliary verbs such as 'do' and 'be':

You didn't have supper. She doesn't want it.

Even though their language system is by now quite complex, they may still have difficulty with some other features related to negatives.

[11] Wode H. 1981. Language acquisitional universals: A unifield view of language acquisition New York

I don't have no more candies.

***Questions***

The challenge of learning complex language systems is also illustrated in the developmental stages through which children learn to ask questions.

There is a remarkable consistency in the way children learn to form questions in English. For one thing, there is a predictable order in which the *'wh-* words' emerge (Bloom 1991). 'What' is generally the first *wh-* question word to be used. It is often learned as part of a chunk ('Whassat?') and it is some time before the child learns that there are variations of the form, such as 'What is that?' and 'What are these?'

'Where' and 'who' emerge very soon. Identifying and locating people and objects are within the child's understanding of the world. Furthermore, adults tend to ask children just these types of questions in the early days of language learning, for example, 'Where's Mommy?', or 'Who's that?'

'Why' emerges around the end of the second year and becomes a favourite for the next year or two. Children seem to ask an endless number of questions beginning with 'why', having discovered how effectively this little word gets adults to engage in conversation, for example, 'Why that lady has blue hair?'

Finally, when the child has a better understanding of manner and time, 'how' and 'when' emerge. In contrast to 'what', 'where', and 'who' questions, children sometimes ask the more cognitively difficult 'why', 'when', and 'how' questions without always understanding the answers they get, as the following conversation with a four-year-old clearly shows:

**Child** When can we go outside?

**Parent** In about five minutes.

**Child** 1-2-3-4-5!! Can we go now?

The ability to use these question words is at least partly tied to children's cognitive development. It is also predicted in part by the questions children are asked and the linguistic complexity of questions with different *wh-* words. Thus it does not seem surprising that there is consistency in the sequence of their acquisition. Perhaps

more remarkable is the consistency in the acquisition of word order in questions. This development is not based on learning new meanings, but rather on learning different linguistic forms to express meanings that are already understood.

***Stage 1***

Children's earliest questions are single words or simple two- or three-word sentences with rising intonation:

Cookie? Mummy book?

At the same time, they may produce some correct questions—correct because they have been learned as chunks:

Where's Daddy? What s that?

***Stage 2***

As they begin to ask more new questions, children use the word order of the declarative sentence, with rising intonation.

You like this? I have some?

They continue to produce the correct chunk-learned forms such as 'What's that?' alongside their own created questions.

***Stage 3***

Gradually, children notice that the structure of questions is different and begin to produce questions such as:

Can I go? Are you happy?

Although some questions at this stage match the adult pattern, they may be right for the wrong reason. To describe this, we need to see the pattern from the child's perspective rather than from the perspective of the adult grammar. We call this stage 'fronting' because the child's rule seems to be that questions are formed by putting something—a verb form or question word—at the 'front' of a sentence, leaving the rest of the sentence in its statement form.

Is the teddy is tired? Do I can have a cookie?

Why you don't have one? Why you catched it?

***Stage 4***

At stage 4, some questions are formed by subject—auxiliary inversion. The questions resemble those of stage 3, but there is more variety in the auxiliaries that appear before the subject.

Are you going to play with me?

At this stage, children can even add 'do' in questions in which there would be no auxiliary in the declarative version of the sentence.

Do dogs like ice cream?

Even at this stage, however, children seem able to use either inversion or a *wh*- word, but not both. Therefore, we may find inversion in 'yes/no' questions but not in *wh*- questions, unless they are formulaic units such as 'What's that?'

***Stage 5***

At stage 5, both *wh*- and yes/no' questions are formed correctly.

Are these your boots? Why did you do that? Does Daddy have a box?

Negative questions may still be a bit too difficult.

Why the teddy bear can't go outside?

And even though performance on most questions is correct, there is still one more hurdle. When *wh*- words appear in subordinate clauses or embedded questions, children overgeneralize the inverted form that would be correct for simple questions and produce sentences such as:

Ask him why can't he go out.

***Stage 6***

At this stage, children are able to correctly form all question types, including negative and complex embedded questions.

Passage through developmental sequences does not always follow a steady uninterrupted path. Children appear to learn new things and then fall back on old

patterns when there is added stress in a new situation or when they are using other new elements in their language. But the overall path takes them toward mastery of the language that is spoken around them.

### 2.2. The pre-school years

By the age of four, most children can ask questions, give commands, report real events, and create stories about imaginary ones—using correct word order and grammatical markers most of the time. In fact, it is generally accepted that by age four, children have mastered the basic structures of the language or languages spoken to them in these early years. Three- and four-year-olds continue to learn vocabulary at the rate of several words a day. They begin to acquire less frequent and more complex linguistic structures such as passives and relative clauses.

Much of children's language acquisition effort in the late pre-school years is spent in developing their ability to use language in a widening social environment. They use language in a greater variety of situations. They interact more often with unfamiliar adults. They begin to talk sensibly on the telephone to invisible grandparents (younger children do not understand that their telephone partner cannot see what they see). They acquire the aggressive or cajoling language that is needed to defend their toys in the playground. They show that they have learned the difference between how adults talk to babies and how they talk to each other, and they use this knowledge in elaborate pretend play in which they practise using these different Voices'. In this way, they explore and begin to understand how and why language varies.

In the pre-school years, they also develop metalinguistic awareness, the ability to treat language as an object separate from the meaning it conveys. Three-year-old children can tell you that it's 'silly' to say 'drink the chair', because it doesn't make sense. However, although they would never say 'cake the eat', they are less sure that there's anything wrong with it. They may show that they know it's a bit odd, but they will focus mainly on the fact that they can understand what it means. Five year-olds,

on the other hand, know that 'drink the chair' is wrong in a different way from 'cake the eat'. They can tell you that one is 'silly' but the other is 'the wrong way around'.

**The school years**

Although pre-school children acquire complex knowledge and skills for language and language use, the school setting will require new ways of using language and bring new opportunities for language development.

Children develop the ability to understand language and to use it to express themselves in the pre-school years. In the school years, these abilities expand and grow. Children also develop more sophisticated metalinguistic awareness. Learning to read gives a major boost to this aspect of language development. Seeing words represented by letters and other symbols on a page leads children to a new understanding that language has form as well as meaning. Reading reinforces the understanding that a 'word' is separate from the thing it represents. Unlike three-year-olds, children who can read understand that 'the' is a word, just as 'house' is. They understand that 'caterpillar' is a longer word than 'train, even though the object it represents is substantially shorter! Metalinguistic awareness also includes the discovery of such things as ambiguity. Knowing that words and sentences can have multiple meaning gives children access to word jokes, trick questions, and riddles, which they love to share with their friends and family.

One of the most impressive language developments in the early school years is the astonishing growth of vocabulary. Many words are acquired in early childhood, when the repetition of ordinary events and experiences provides frequent exposure to a limited number of words. Children enter school with the ability to understand and produce hundreds or even a few thousand words. Many more are learned at school. In both the spoken and written language at school, some words (for example, 'homework', 'ruler', and 'workbook') appear frequently in situations where their meaning is either immediately or gradually revealed. Words like 'population' or 'latitude' occur less frequently, but they are made important by their significance in academic subject matter. Vocabulary grows at a rate between several hundred and

more than a thousand words a year, depending mainly on how much and how widely children read (Nagy, Herman, and Anderson 1985). The kind of vocabulary growth required for school success is likely to come from both reading for assignments and reading for pleasure, whether narrative or non-fiction. Dee Gardner (2004)[12] suggests that reading a variety of text types is an essential part of vocabulary growth. His research has shown how the range of vocabulary in narrative texts is different from that in non-fiction. There are words in non-fiction texts that are unlikely to occur in stories or novels. In addition, non-fiction tends to include more opportunities to see a word in its different forms (for example, 'mummy', 'mummies', 'mummified'). The importance of reading for vocabulary growth is seen when observant parents report a child using a new word but mispronouncing it in a way that reveals it has been encountered only in written form.

Another important development in the school years is the acquisition of different language registers. Children learn how written language differs from spoken language, how the language used to speak to the principal is different from the language of the playground, how the language of a science report is different from the language of a narrative. As Terry Piper (1998) and others have documented, some children will have even more to learn. They come to school speaking an ethnic or regional variety of the school language that is quite different from the one used by the teacher. They will have to learn that another variety, often referred to as the standard variety is required for successful academic work. Other children arrive at school speaking a different language altogether. For these children, the work of language learning in the early school years presents additional opportunities and challenges. We will return to this topic when we discuss bilingualism in early childhood.

### 2.3. Teaching school-age children

Popular tradition would have you believe that children are effortless second

[12] Gardner D. 2004. Vocabulary input through extensive reading. A comparison of words found in children narrative and expository reading Materials. Applied linguistics 25/1

language learners and far superior to adults in their eventual success. On both counts, some qualifications are in order.

First, children's widespread success in acquiring second languages belies a tremendous subconscious *effort* devoted to the task. As you have discovered in other reading, children exercise a good deal of both cognitive and affective effort in order to internalize both native and second languages. The difference between children and adults (that is, persons beyond the age of puberty) lies primarily in the contrast between the child's spontaneous, **peripheral** attention to language **forms** and the adult's overt, **focal** awareness of and attention to those forms. Therefore, the popular notion about children holds only if "effort" refers, rather narrowly, to focal attention (sometimes thought of as "conscious" attention—to language forms.

Second, adults are not necessarily less successful in their efforts. Studies have shown that adults, in fact, can be superior in a number of aspects of acquisition. They can learn and retain a larger vocabulary. They can utilize various deductive and abstract processes to shortcut the learning of grammatical and other linguistic concepts. And, in classroom learning, their superior intellect usually helps them to learn faster than a child. So, while children's fluency and naturalness are often the envy of adults struggling with second languages, the context of classroom instruction may introduce some difficulties to children learning a second language.

Third, the popular claim fails to differentiate very young children (say, 4- to 6-yearolds) from pubescent children (12 to 13) and the whole range of ages in between. There are actually many instances of 6- to 12-year-old children manifesting significant difficulty in acquiring a second language for a multitude of reasons. Ranking high on that list of reasons are a number of complex personal, social, cultural, and political factors at play in elementary school education.

Teaching ESL to school-age children, therefore, is not merely a matter of setting them loose on a plethora of authentic language tasks in the classroom. In fact, for some TESOL professionals (Cameron, 2003), the challenge of teaching children warrants a separate acronym: TEYL (teaching English to young learners). Teacher reference books are devoted solely to the issues, principles, and methodology

surrounding the teaching of children (Linse, 2005; Moon, 2000; Pinter, 2006;[13] Reilly & Ward, 1997). To successfully teach children a second language requires specific skills and intuitions that differ from those appropriate for adult teaching. Five categories may help give some practical approaches to teaching children.

**1. Intellectual development**

An elementary school teacher asked her students to take a piece of paper and pencil and write something. A boy raised his hand and said, "Teacher, I ain't got no pencil "The teacher, somewhat perturbed by his grammar, embarked on a barrage of corrective patterns: "I *don't* have ***a*** pencil. You *don't* have *a* pencil. We *don't* have pencils" Confused and bewildered, the child responded, "Ain't nobody got no pencils?"

Since children (up to the age of about 11) are still in an intellectual stage of what Piaget[14] (1972) called "concrete operations," we need to remember their limitations. Rules, explanations, and other even slightly abstract talk about language must be approached with extreme caution. Children are centered on the here and now, on the functional purposes of language. They have little appreciation for our adult notions of "correctness "and they certainly cannot grasp the metalanguage we use to describe and explain linguistic concepts. Here are some rules of thumb for the classroom:

- Don't explain *grammar* using terms like "present progressive" or "relative clause"
- *Rules* stated in abstract terms ("To make a statement into a question, you add a *do* or *does")* should be avoided.
- Some grammatical concepts, especially at the upper levels of childhood, can be called to learners' attention by showing them certain *patterns* ("Notice the *ing* at the end of the word") and *examples* ("This is the way we say it when it's happening right now. "I'm walking to the door'").

[13] Pinter A. 2006. Teaching young language learners. Oxford: Oxford university Press
[14] Piaget J. 1972. Play dreams and imitation in childhood. New York: Norton

- Certain more difficult concepts or patterns require more *repetition* than adults need. For example, repeating certain patterns (without boring students) may be necessary to get the brain and the ear to cooperate. Unlike the boy who had no pencil, children must understand the meaning and relevance of repetitions.

**2. Attention span**

One of the salient differences between adults and children is attention span. First, it is important to understand what attention span means. Put children in front of a TV showing a favourite cartoon and they will stay riveted for the duration. So, you cannot make a sweeping claim that children have short attention spans! But short attention spans do come into play when children have to deal with material that to them is boring, useless, or too difficult. Since language lessons can at times be difficult for children, your job is to make them interesting, lively, and fun. How do you do that?

- Because children are focused on the *here and now,* activities should be designed to capture their immediate interest.
- A lesson needs a *variety* of activities to keep interest and attention alive.
- A teacher needs to be *animated,* lively, and enthusiastic about the subject matter. Consider the classroom a stage on which you are the lead actor; your energy will be infectious. While you may think that you're overdoing it, children need this exaggeration to keep spirits buoyed and minds alert.
- A *sense of humor* will go a long way in keeping children laughing and learning. Since children's humor is quite different from adults', remember to put yourself in their shoes.
- Children have a lot of natural *curiosity.* Make sure you tap into that curiosity whenever possible, and you will thereby help to maintain attention and focus.

**3. Sensory input**

Children need to have all five senses stimulated. Your activities should strive to go well beyond the visual and auditory modes that we feel are usually sufficient for a

classroom.

- Pepper your lessons with *physical* activity, such as having students act out things (role-play), play games, or do Total Physical Response activities.
- Projects and other *hands-on activities* go a long way toward helping children to internalize language. Small-group science projects, for example, are excellent ways to get them to learn words and structures and to practice meaningful language.
- *Sensory aids* help children to internalize concepts. The smell of flowers, the touch of plants and fruits, the taste of foods, liberal doses of audiovisual aids like videos, pictures, tapes, music—all are important elements in children's language teaching.
- Remember that your own *nonverbal language* is important because children will indeed attend very sensitively to your facial features, gestures, and body language.

**4. Affective factors**

A common myth is that children are relatively unaffected by the inhibitions that adults find to be a block to learning. Not so! Children are often innovative in language forms but still have a great many inhibitions. They are extremely sensitive, especially to peers: What do others think of me? What will so-and-so think when I speak in English? Children are in many ways much more fragile than adults. Their egos are still being shaped, and therefore the slightest nuances of communication can be negatively interpreted. Teachers need to help them to overcome such potential barriers to learning.

- Help your students to laugh *with* each other at various mistakes that they all make.
- Be patient and supportive to build self-esteem, yet at the same time be firm in your expectations of students.
- Elicit as much oral participation as possible from students, especially the quieter ones, to give them plenty of opportunities for trying things out.

**5. Authentic, meaningful language**

Children are focused on what this new language can actually be used for here and now. They are less willing to put up with language that doesn't hold immediate rewards for them. Your classes can ill afford to have an overload of language that is neither authentic nor meaningful.

- Children are good at sensing language that is not *authentic;* therefore, "canned" or stilted language will likely be rejected.
- Language needs to be firmly *context embedded*. Story lines, familiar situations and characters, real-life conversations, meaningful purposes in using language—these will establish a context within which language can be received and sent and thereby improve attention and retention. *Context-reduced* language in abstract, isolated, unconnected sentences will be much less readily tolerated by children's minds.
- A *whole language* approach is essential. If language is broken into too many bits and pieces, students won't see the relationship to the whole. And stress the interrelationships among the various skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), or they won't see important connections.

It takes a very special person to be able to teach children effectively. Along with all these guidelines, an elementary school teacher develops a certain intuition with increasing months and years of experience. If you don't yet have the experience, you will in due course of time. Meanwhile, you must begin somewhere, and these rules of thumb will help.

**Ten Helpful Ideas for Teaching English to Young Learners**

Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has become its own field of study as the age of compulsory English education has become lower and lower in countries around the world.[15] It is widely believed that starting the study of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) before the critical period—12 or 13 years old—will build more proficient speakers of English. However, there is no empirical evidence

[15] Shin J.K. 2006, Ten Helpful Ideas for Teaching English to Young Learners English Teaching Forum

supporting the idea that an early start in English language learning in foreign language contexts produces better English speakers (Nunan 1999). Levels of proficiency seem to be dependent on other factors—type of program and curriculum, number of hours spent in English class, and techniques and activities used (Rixon 2000). If an early start alone is not the solution, then what can EFL teachers of young learners do to take advantage of the flexibility of young minds and the malleability of young tongues to grow better speakers of English? As the age for English education lowers in classrooms across the globe, EFL teachers of young learners struggle to keep up with this trend and seek effective ways of teaching.

This article contains some helpful ideas to incorporate into the TEYL classroom. These ideas come from the discussions and assignments done in an online EFL teacher education course designed for teachers, teacher supervisors, and other TEYL professionals. The participants in the online course came from a number of different classroom situations and countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Some of the teachers worked in immersion classrooms; others saw their students in class two to three hours per week. Regardless of the country and the types of classrooms these teachers of young learners came from, the list of helpful ideas below seemed to be applicable to most situations.

To clarify for whom these ideas are targeted, it is important to define *young learner*. The online course used the definitions provided by Slatterly and Willis (2001, 4): "Young Learners" (YL) were 7—12 years old; "Very Young Learners" (VYL) were defined as under 7 years of age. Although the online course was designed to train teachers of young learners, participants discussed ideas related to their teaching situations, which focused on both YLs and VYLs. Therefore, the ideas given below can be applied to learners ranging from approximately 5 to 12 years old and can be used for various proficiency levels.

**1. Supplement activities with visuals, realia, and movement.**

Young learners tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. In addition, children are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested

in the physical and the tangible. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990, 2) describe, “Their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times.”

One way to capture their attention and keep them engaged in activities is to supplement the activities with lots of brightly colored visuals, toys, puppets, or objects to match the ones used in the stories that you tell or songs that you sing. These can also help make the language input comprehensible and can be used for follow-up activities, such as re-telling stories or guessing games. Although it may take a lot of preparation time to make colorful pictures and puppets or to collect toys and objects, it is worth the effort if you can reuse them in future classes. Try to make the visuals on thick paper or laminate them whenever possible for future use. Sometimes you can acquire donations for toys and objects from the people in your community, such as parents or other teachers. A great way to build your resources is to create a “Visuals and Realia Bank” with other teachers at your school by collecting toys, puppets, pictures, maps, calendars, and other paraphernalia and saving them for use in each other's classes.

Included with the concept of visuals are gestures, which are very effective for students to gain understanding of language. In addition, tapping into children's physical energy is always recommendable, so any time movement around the classroom or even outside can be used with a song, story, game, or activity, do it! James Asher's (1977) method, Total Physical Response (TPR), where children listen and physically respond to a series of instructions from the teacher, is a very popular method among teachers of young learners.

This popular method can be used as a technique with storytelling and with songs that teach language related to any kind of movement or physical action. Children have fun with movement, and the more fun for students, the better they will remember the language learned.

**2. Involve students in making visuals and realia**

One way to make the learning more fun is to involve students in the creation of the

visuals or realia. Having children involved in creating the visuals that are related to the lesson helps engage students in the learning process by introducing them to the context as well as to relevant vocabulary items. In addition, language related to the arts and crafts activities can be taught while making or drawing the visuals. Certainly students are more likely to feel interested and invested in the lesson and will probably take better care of the materials (Moon 2000).

You can have students draw the different animal characters for a story or even create puppets. For example, if the story is *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, you may want to use puppets to help show the action of the story. To get students more excited about the story, have them make little pencil puppets of the three bears and Goldilocks before the storytelling. It's a nice little art project that doesn't have to take up too much time. If your students are too young to draw well, make copies of the characters on paper and have students color the characters and cut them out. The cut-out paper pictures can be taped to their pencils. After the storytelling, you can use the puppets to check comprehension of the story plot and have students practice the language by retelling the story using their puppets.

If you cannot spare the time in class to make the visuals you want to use, another idea is to consult the art teacher at your school (if you have one) and combine your efforts. If the art teacher is making some objects, pictures, or puppets, you could ask the teacher to make them for use in a particular storytelling or game in your class. Then, when students come to English class, they will bring their art projects to use. In addition, before the lesson, you can warm up by having students explain in English what they made in art class.

Some activities could use objects, toys, stuffed animals, or dolls. A “show and tell” activity is a perfect way to get students interested in the lesson with their own toys. The introduction to the lesson could be a short “show and tell” presentation that gives students a chance to introduce their objects in English. After this activity, get right into the lesson using the objects the students brought in.

**3. Move from activity to activity**

As stated before, young learners have short attention spans. For young students, from ages 5 to 10 especially, it is a good idea to move quickly from activity to activity. Do not spend more than 10 or 15 minutes on any one activity because children tend to become bored easily. As children get older, their ability to concentrate for longer periods of time increases. So for students ages 5—7, you should try to keep activities between 5 and 10 minutes long. Students ages 8—10 can handle activities that are 10 to 15 minutes long. It is always possible to revisit an activity later in class or in the next class.

For example, if you are teaching a song or telling a story, don't stay on that song or story the whole class time. Follow up the song or story with a related TPR activity to keep the momentum of the class going. Then have students play a quick game in pairs. As shown in this brief example, varying the types of activities also helps to keep young learners interested. Scott and Ytreberg (1990, 102) suggest creating a balance between the following kinds of activities:

quiet/noisy exercises

different skills: listening/talking/reading/writing

individual/pairwork/groupwork/whole class activities

teacher-pupil/pupil-pupil activities

When teachers mix up the pace of the class and the types of activities used, students will be more likely to stay focused on the lesson, there by increasing the amount of language learning in class.

**4.Teach in themes**

When you plan a variety of activities, it is important to have them connect to each other in order to support the language learning process. Moving from one activity to others that are related in content and language helps to recycle the language and reinforce students' understanding and use of it. However, moving from activity to activity when the activities are not related to each other can make it easy to lose the focus of the class. If students are presented with a larger context in which to use

English to learn and communicate, then attainment of language objectives should come more naturally. Thematic units, which are a series of lessons revolving around the same topic or subject, can create a broader context and allow students to focus more on content and communication than on language structure.

It is a good idea to use thematic unit planning because it builds a larger context within which students can learn language. When teaching English to young learners this way, you can incorporate many activities, songs, and stories that build on students' knowledge and recycle language throughout the unit. This gives students plenty of practice using the language learned and helps them scaffold their learning of new language. Common themes for very young learners are animals, friends, and family, or units revolving around a storybook, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, which includes food and the days of the week. As children get older, units could be based on topics such as the environment, citizenship, and shopping, or based on a website or book relevant to them.

Haas (2000) supports the use of thematic unit planning for young foreign language learners by pointing out that "Foreign language instruction for children can be enriched when teachers use thematic units that focus on content-area information, engage students in activities in which they must think critically, and provide opportunities for students to use the target language in meaningful contexts and in new and complex ways." A good way to plan a unit is to explore what content your students are learning in their other classes and develop English lessons using similar content. Look at the curriculum for the other subjects your students take in their native language (LI) or talk to your students' other teachers and see if you can create a thematic unit in English class related to what you find.

**5. Use stories and contexts familiar to students**

When choosing materials or themes to use, it is important that you find ones that are appropriate for your students based on their language proficiency and what is of interest to them. Because young learners, especially VYLs, are just beginning to learn content and stories in their native language in school and are still developing

cognitively, they may have limited knowledge and experience in the world. This means that the contexts that you use when teaching English, which may be a completely new and foreign language, should be contexts that are familiar to them. Use of stories and contexts that they have experience with in their LI could help these young learners connect a completely new language with the background knowledge they already have. Teachers could take a favorite story in the LI and translate it into English for students or even teach the language based on situations that are found in the native country, especially if the materials the teachers have depict English-speaking environments that are unfamiliar to students.

This is not to suggest that stories and contexts from the target culture should not be used. Certainly one goal of foreign language instruction is to expose students to new languages and new cultures in order to prepare them to become global citizens in the future. However, teachers should not be afraid to use familiar contexts in students' LI in the L2 classroom. In fact, even when presenting material from the target, English-speaking cultures, it is always a good idea to relate the language and content to students' home culture to personalize the lesson and allow students an opportunity to link the new content and language to their own lives and experience. Young learners are still making important links to their home cultures, so it is important to reinforce that even in L2 instruction.

**6. Establish classroom routines in English**

Young learners function well within a structured environment and enjoy repetition of certain routines and activities. Having basic routines in the classroom can help to manage young learners. For example, to get students' attention before reading a story or to get them to quiet down before an activity, the teacher can clap short rhythms for students to repeat. Once the students are settled down, the teacher can start the lesson by singing a short song that students are familiar with, such as the alphabet song or a chant they particularly enjoy. Here is a chant with TPR that can get students ready to begin the class.

Reach up high! (Children reach their arms up in the air)

Reach down low! (Children bend over and touch their toes.)

Let's sit down and start the show! (Children sit down.)

Look to the left! (Turn heads to the left.)

Look to the right! (Turn heads to the right.)

Let's work hard and reach new heights!

The movements can be substituted to teach new words. For example, instead of "Look to the left! Look to the right!" the teacher can use "Point to the left! Point to the right!" Providing some variation can keep this chant engaging. Just remember to keep the ending since it starts the class on a positive note.

Add classroom language to the routines as well. When it's time to read a story, the teachers can engage students in the following dialogue:

Teacher: It's story time! What time is it, everyone?

Students: It's story time!

Teacher: And... what do we do for story time? Student: We tell stories!

Build on this language by adding more after students have mastered the above interaction. The teacher can follow up the previous interaction with: "That's right! The story is called *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. What's the story called?" (Students answer.) Whatever the routine is, the teacher should build interactions in English around that routine. As Cameron (2001, 10) points out, "...we can see how classroom routines, which happen every day may provide opportunities for language development." The example below illustrates how the teacher and students can have real communicative interactions in English using some classroom language.

Teacher: Good morning, class!

Students: Good morning, Ms. Shin.

Teacher: Faida, what day is it today?

Faida: I don't know.

Teacher: Okay, then ask Asli.

Faida: Asli, what day is it today?

Asli: Today is Tuesday.

Teacher: Good! And what is Tuesday?

Students: Tuesday is Storytelling Day!

Notice that the communication is real and that a routine has been established—that Tuesday is Storytelling Day. Once students become fluid with certain interactions, as in the example above, you can begin introducing more language into the daily routines.

**Nursery Rhymes**

**First Road to Learning:** Language through Stories • *Myrtis Mixon* and *Philomena Temu*

**Wee Willie Winkle**

Wee Willie Winkle runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs, in his nightgown:
Rapping at the window, crying through the lock:
"Are the children in their beds?
For now it's eight o'clock."

**One, Two**

One, two, buckle my shoe.
Three, four, shut the door.
Five, six, pick up sticks.
Seven, eight, lay them straight.
Nine, ton, a good fat hen.

**Rain, Rain**

Rain, rain, go away.
Come again another day.
Little Johnny wants to play.

**The Cat and the Fiddle**

Hey, diddle, diddle!

The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

**Humpty Dumpty**

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's horses and all the King's men
Could not put Humpty together again.

**Little Bo-Peep**

Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,
And can’t tell where to find them;
Leave them alone and they'll come home,
Wagging their tails behind them.

**Three Blind Mice**

Three blind mice,
See how they run!
See how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
She cut off their tails with a carving knife.
Did you ever see such a sight in your life.
As three blind mice?

**Baa, Baa, Black Sheep**

Baa, baa, Black Sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full;

One for my master, one for my dame,
And one for the little boy that lives in the lane.

**Pat-a-Cake**

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can;
Roll it and pat it and mark it with "B"
And put it in the oven for baby and me.

**There Was a Little Girl**

There was a little girl,
And she had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead.
When she was good,
She was very, very good,
And when she was bad,
She was horrid.

**Sample Story with Teaching Strategies**

First Road to Learning: Language through Stories • *Myrtis Mixon* and *Philomena Temu*

**Before you read**

1. Describe an elephant, a hippo, and a tortoise. Discuss with students how die animals differ from each other;
2. Pre-teach unfamiliar vocabulary such as *insult, apologize, challenge, vine, respect, tug of war.* (Note: This story is readily adaptable to choral reading.)

**The Tortoise and the Tug of War**

Many years ago, Tortoise was walking in die jungle. He was unhappy because Hippo had chased him out of the river. Suddenly, Elephant ran across the path and

almost stepped on Tortoise.

“Watch where you're going, you big fool!” said Tortoise.

Elephant did not like to be insulted. He said, “You watch where you're going, tiny Tortoise, and also watch your tongue. Don't insult me,”

“You don't frighten me,” said Tortoise. “I'm stronger than you think. In feet, I'm as strong as you.”

“No, you're not!” shouted Elephant. “You are too small to be strong. Apologize or I will step on you.”

“I have a better idea,” said Tortoise, as he took hold of a thick vine. “I challenge you to a tug-of-war. You hold one end of this long vine with your trunk and I'll go down to the river with die other end. I will yell, 'Pull, big animal, pull!' when I'm ready.”

“Very well,” agreed Elephant, “it will be fun to make a fool of you.”

Tortoise took the other end of the vine and went into the jungle. When he got to the river, he called, “Hippo! Hippo! Stick your head out of the water!”

Hippo raised his head. “What do you want, little one?”

“You chased me out of the fiver, and I'm angry. You think that you're strong because you are big, but I will show you that I am strong too.”

Hippo laughed, “Your words are bigger than you are. You are not strong like me. “I challenge you to a tug of war!” said Tortoise. “You take this end of the vine in your mouth and I'll go into the jungle with die other end. You try to pull me into the river, and I will try to pull you into the jungle. I'll yell, 'Pull, big animal, pull!' when I'm ready.

Hippo agreed. He bit on the end of the vine and Tortoise walked back into the trees. Then he yelled in his loudest voice, “Pull, big animal, pull!”

Both Elephant and Hippo pulled and pulled with all of their strength, but neither could move the other.

“Tortoise is as strong as Hippo!” said Elephant as he pulled harder.

“Tortoise is as strong as Elephant!” said Hippo and he pulled harder.

Tortoise saw they were tired. He yelled, “Stop, stop! The vine is breaking. Let's call it a tie!”

Both of the large animals were happy to stop pulling.

Tortoise ran to the Elephant, and Elephant said, “You are strong, friend, and I will be careful not to step on you.”

Then Tortoise went down to the river and Hippo said, “I'm sorry for chasing you out of the water, little friend. You are strong.”

They treated Tortoise with great respect from then on.

After reading the story, ask students:

1. Did you understand the story?
2. What did Tortoise do to trick Hippo and Elephant?
3. Hew did the big animals act toward Tortoise in die end?

## Chapter III. Teaching Adolescents and Adults

### 3.1. Teaching pre-adolescents

In general, children have a greater immediate need to be motivated by the teacher or the materials in order to learn effectively. Prizes and similar extrinsic rewards can help, but more effective on the whole are elements that contribute towards intrinsic motivation: interest in doing the learning activity itself. Such elements are most likely to be effective if they are based on appeal to the senses or activate the children in speech or movement.

Three very important sources of interest for children in the classroom are pictures, stories and games: the first being obviously mainly a visual stimulus; the second both visual and aural; and the third using both visual and aural channels as well as activating language production and sometimes physical movement.

#### Pictures

Lack of aural stimulus is relatively easy to tolerate: even young learners will work for a while in silence without searching for something to listen to. This, however, is not true of the visual, which is a very dominant channel of input: so much so, that if young learners are not supplied with something to look at that is relevant to the learning task in hand they will find and probably be distracted by something that is

not.

The most obvious type of visual material for children is the picture: and the more clearly visible, striking and colourful the better. On the whole, professionally drawn pictures or photographs are used: those in the textbook, or coloured posters, or pictures cut from magazines. But there is also a place for the teacher's own quick sketches on the board (however unprofessional and untidy!); and of course for the children's own drawing. There are, incidentally, books that give advice and help with drawing: have a look, for example, at Wright (1984), 1000 Pictures for Teachers to Copy.[16]

**Stories**

Young children love having stories told to them (even adults continue to enjoy it!); and older ones begin to read for themselves. Moreover stories - in contrast to pictures or even games - are pure language: telling a story in the foreign language is one of the simplest and richest sources of foreign language input for younger learners.

The most effective combination in teaching is pictures and stories together: and the success of use of picture-books with young learners has been attested by many (see articles in Brumfit et al., 1991 and in Kennedy and Jarvis, 1991).[17]

**Games**

Some years ago I wrote an article which began with the words: 'I am not, in principle, in favour of the use of games in language teaching' (Ur, 1986). This was an obviously provocative statement, but based on a serious argument. Games are essentially recreational 'time out' activities whose main purpose is enjoyment; language study is serious goal-oriented work, whose main purpose is personal learning. Once you call a language-learning activity a 'game' you convey the message that it is just fun, not to be taken too seriously: a message I consider

[16] Wright A. 1984. 1000 pictures for teachers to copy. London; Collins
[17] Brumfit C.J. 1991, Teaching English to Children. London; Collins

anti-educational and potentially demoralizing. Very occasionally we do play real games in the classroom, (at the end of a course, for example, or as a break from concentrated work); but to call something a game when our goal is in fact serious learning may harm the learning - and/or, indeed, spoil the 'game'! - as well as being dishonest.

Two further dangers are: first, the tendency of some teachers to call activities 'games' for the sake of raising initial motivation, when they are not in fact games at all ('Let's play a game: I'll give you a word, you tell me how it is spelt!'); second, the danger that the obvious activity and enjoyment caused by a game may obscure the fact that its contribution to learning is minimal (see, for example, Scenario 1 in Box 2.2).

However, another definition of 'games' ignores the implication of non-serious recreation and concentrates rather on their quality as organized action that is rule-governed, involves striving towards a clear goal through performance of a challenging task, and provides participants and/or onlookers with a feeling of pleasurable tension. Children in general learn well when they are active; and when action is channelled into an enjoyable game they are often willing to invest considerable time and effort in playing it. If we design our games in such a way that they are productive of language learning they become an excellent, even essential, part of a programme of children's learning activities.

My conclusion would certainly be to include game-based procedures as a substantial component of any children's language course; though I am to this day uncomfortable about using the term 'game', because of the misleading and belittling implication. I would rather think of and present them as (game-like) language-learning activities.

### 3.2. Teaching adolescents: student preferences

For inexperienced teachers, classes of adolescents are perhaps the most daunting challenge. Their learning potential is greater than that of young children, but they may be considerably more difficult to motivate and manage, and it takes longer to build up trusting relationships.

One source of guidance about how to teach adolescents successfully is books on developmental psychology. Another-arguably no less reliable, and perhaps under-used - is the adolescents themselves.

## Finding out how adolescents like to be taught

### *Stage 1: Preparation*

Look through the questionnaire shown in Box 2, noting down for each item which responses you expect. Optionally, administer it also to an experienced teacher of adolescents, and compare their answers with yours. This will help you to familiarize yourself with the items, and will also raise some interesting speculations to which your later survey may supply answers. Add further items if you wish, or delete any you feel irrelevant.

### BOX 2: SURVEY OF STUDENT OPINIONS

Put a tick in the appropriate column:

| | Vary much agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Totally disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is important for a teacher to dress nicely and look good. | | | | | |
| 2. It is important for a teacher to care a lot about his/her teaching. | | | | | |
| 3. A good teacher controls the class firmly. | | | | | |
| 4. A good teacher treats his/her students with fairness and respect. | | | | | |
| 5. A good teacher is warm and friendly towards students. | | | | | |
| 6 A good teacher knows and uses students' names. | | | | | |
| 7. A good teacher is interested in each student as a person. | | | | | |
| 8. A good teacher will change the lesson plan and do something else if that is what the students want. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. A good teacher lets students mark their own tests. | | | | | |
| 10. I like it when the students take over and run the lesson. | | | | | |
| 11. A good teacher makes sure students have fun in lessons. | | | | | |
| 12. A good teacher gets students to work hard. | | | | | |
| 13. I prefer working in groups or individually to having a teacher-dominated lesson. | | | | | |
| 14. I like it when the teacher asks my opinion in class. | | | | | |
| 15. A good teacher always gives interesting lessons. | | | | | |
| 16. A good teacher uses corporal punishment occasionally. | | | | | |
| 17. If we need help, the good teacher finds time to talk outside the classroom. | | | | | |

***Stage 2: Interviews***

If you are working on your own, find some teenagers learning foreign languages locally who are willing to answer your questions: if possible about fifteen of them, but it is worth doing even with a smaller number. (If you are in a group, each participant may work with two or three respondents, pooling results at the end.)

You may do this as a series of interviews, noting a mark or tick in the appropriate space on your copy of the questionnaire for each answer. Or make multiple copies, and distribute to respondents, collating results later. (I did it by distributing copies in a lesson, letting students fill in answers on their own, but being myself on hand to clarify uncertainties about meanings.)

***Stage 3: Summarizing results***

Look at your results, or pool them with colleagues. Were there any surprises? If so, how would you account for the difference between your expectations and the respondents' answers?

***Stage 4: Drawing conclusions***

Assuming that your results are based on honest and fairly representative student opinions, in what way can you use them to guide you in planning your own teaching approach and procedures? Discuss this question with colleagues, or note ideas for yourself in writing.

Some general comments and conclusions of my own, based on a similar survey carried out by teachers in my own school are given in the following section.

***Results and comments***

The following comments are based on responses from two classes of fifteen-year-olds in the school where I teach, and are not necessarily all true for or applicable to other situations; implications for teaching are therefore expressed as personal conclusions. Nevertheless, you may find some interesting points of similarity between your own results and reflections and mine!

**Statement 1**

On the whole I found that students in fact care a lot less about their teachers' appearance than the teachers expect. If this is generally true, then relax!

**Statement 2**

Most agreed. The fact that teachers care about their teaching is apparently clearly, if unconsciously, conveyed; and this appears to be important to adolescent students. 1 should therefore not be misled by outward displays of indifference or cynicism!

**Statement 3**

This was strongly agreed with. Most students appear to like to feel that the teacher has authority and is clearly in control.

**Statements 4 and 5**

These were both predictably agreed with by most adolescents: the interesting point is that the first of the two scored noticeably higher than the second; and this may represent a general truth. In spite of the image of the warm and loving teacher promoted by some romantic fiction, most adolescents may prefer their teachers to value and respect them rather than to be their friends.

**Statements 6 and 7**

These two questions apparently relate to the same teacher characteristic: but my respondents showed noticeably less enthusiastic agreement with the second than with the first. They certainly want their teachers to identify them as individuals, but do not necessarily want them to be too interested in what may be seen as private territory.

**Statements 8-10**

Many of my respondents are used to being consulted in classroom affairs, and take quite a lot of responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, their" responses to statements 8 and 10 were lukewarm, and to 9 outright disagreement. Most students seem to see responsibility for decisions about learning and assessment as part of the teacher's job, and regard you as irresponsible or unprofessional if you 'opt out'. There is something in this. On the other hand, it is clearly desirable to have students participate in decisions on what happens in the classroom, so that they too feel some ownership of and commitment to the learning programme: such participation has also educational value and provides some preparation for adult learning situations. However, collaborative decision-making cannot usually be demanded abruptly or immediately where the students are not used to it, and bringing it about may demand tact and careful planning.

**Statements 11 and 12**

Here, answers change perceptibly as students get older. The younger adolescents are more in favour of fun, less keen on working; older ones tend to switch priorities. My own conclusion: they judge us, ultimately, by how much they learn from us, not by how much they enjoy our lessons, and as they get older realize that good learning costs effort.

**Statement 13**

Answers varied, depending on the background of the individuals: whether they were used to doing group or individual work, or were chiefly taught in teacher-fronted lessons. I need to know their preferences, and, if I wish to introduce a change, should be aware that there may be difficulties.

**Statement 14**

Again, answers here varied very widely, even within one group, since they are closely linked to the individual's personality and learning style: it was difficult here to draw any general conclusions.

**Statement 15**

Most respondents agreed with this one fairly enthusiastically; they do not stop to consider whether it is reasonable to demand from even a first-rate teacher that all lessons be consistently interesting!

**Statement 16**

This is another culture-bound proposition. My respondents rejected it strongly; but elsewhere it may well be approved of by students, and seen as making a positive contribution to education.

**Statement 17**

This was agreed with enthusiastically and almost unanimously; the implications for my own behaviour with students is clear.

## TEACHING TEENS

It is of course much too absolute to consider that a child ceases to be a child at the age of puberty and that all of the rules of adult teaching suddenly apply! It is therefore appropriate to consider briefly the sort of variables that apply in the teaching of “young adults,” “teens” and high school-age children whose ages range between 12 and 18 or so.

The “terrible teens” are an age of transition, confusion, self-consciousness, growth, and changing bodies and minds. What a challenge for the teacher! Teens are in between childhood and adulthood, and therefore a very special set of considerations applies to teaching them. Perhaps because of the enigma of teaching teenagers, little is specifically said in the language-teaching field about teaching at this level. Nevertheless, some thoughts are worth verbalizing, even if in the form of simple reminders.

1. Intellectual capacity adds abstract operational thought around the age of 12.

Therefore, some sophisticated intellectual processing is increasingly possible. Complex problems can be solved with logical thinking. This means that linguistic metalanguage can now, theoretically, have some impact. But the success of any intellectual endeavor will be a factor of the attention a learner places on the task; therefore, if a learner is attending to self, to appearance, to being accepted, to sexual thoughts, to a weekend party, to whatever, the intellectual task at hand may suffer.

2. Attention spans are lengthening as a result of intellectual maturation, but once again, with many diversions present in a teenager's life, those potential attention spans can easily be shortened.
3. Varieties of sensory input are still important, but again, increasing capacities for abstraction lessen the essential nature of appealing to all five senses.
4. Factors surrounding ego, self-image, and self-esteem are at their pinnacle. Teens are ultrasensitive to how others perceive their changing physical and emotional selves along with their mental capabilities. One of the most important concerns of the secondary school teacher is to keep self-esteem high by
    - avoiding embarrassment of students at all costs,
    - affirming each person's talents and strengths,
    - allowing mistakes and other errors to be accepted,
    - de-emphasizing competition between classmates, and
    - encouraging small-group work where risks can be taken more easily by a teen.
5. Secondary school students are of course becoming increasingly adultlike in their ability to make those occasional diversions from the “here and now” nature of immediate communicative contexts to dwell on a grammar point or vocabulary item. But as in teaching adults, care must be taken not to insult them with stilted language or to bore them with overanalysis.

This research work is intended to offer a number of factors for you to consider as you attend to the age of your learners. These factors were noted as a series of pointers and reminders rather than as anecdotal or observational references to

classrooms full of students. You can make those references yourself as you observe and as you begin to teach. The next time you're in an ESL classroom, notice how someone you're observing (or how you yourself) accounted for age variables in the overall lesson, in the type of techniques that were used, in the management of the classroom, in verbal registers as well as body language, in the teacher-student exchanges, and in the relationship that those exchanges conveyed. And remember that in some "adult" classes, students in their teens may be sitting next to classmates in their sixties, representing two or more generations! You may actually surprise yourself by how much of what we do and say as teachers is a factor of students' age.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND RESEARCH

[Note: (I) Individual work; (G) group or pair work; (C) whole-class discussion.]

1. (G) Direct small groups to think back to the ESL lesson that was described in Chapter 1. That was an adult class. Now, groups are to talk about how they would go about teaching virtually the same grammar and discourse to children of, say, ages seven and eight. Would the general topic fit? Would the same grammatical and communicative goals apply? What would you do differently? What would you delete, and what would you add? How would you alter the various techniques?
2. (G/C) Ask groups to brainstorm other considerations—beyond those mentioned in this chapter—that should be brought to bear on teaching ESL to (a) children, (b) adults, (c) teenagers. Groups should then share their thoughts with the rest of the class.
3. (G) Pair up students to look again at the five major categories of factors to consider in teaching children and to come up with some specific classroom examples that illustrate the factor under consideration. For example, it was suggested that teachers should have a sense of humor, use sensory aids, be patient and supportive, and use context-embedded language. Pairs should offer some examples of each of these and other suggestions in that section.
4. (C) Ask the class if they would like to take issue with any of the five factors

regarding teaching ESL to children. For example, do children have inhibitions and fragile egos? How do adults' and children's inhibitions differ? See if there are other factors you might want to debate. Ask students to defend their assertions with examples.

5. (C) Engage the class in a discussion about whether one should teach language to children at all. Aren't their innate capacities sufficient without having to be instructed? What would happen if children (in a context you specify) were just "exposed" to English with no classroom instruction? What would they gain? What would they lose? You might want to debate this issue, with some class members arguing for the "no-classroom-instruction" position and others defending the contention that language classes for children can be beneficial.
6. (G/C) Assign groups of three to make three ESL observations: one person goes to an elementary school, one goes to a secondary school, and one goes to a class for adults. Each observer should take careful note of the following:
    - topic or subject matter of the lesson
    - teacher talk and student talk
    - variety and type of techniques
    - discipline or behavior problems
    - physical activity and sensory input
    - apparent motivation and interest

After their observations, group members should get together to share perceptions, compare differences, and see what insights were garnered about teaching at the different age levels. Each group's findings can then be shared with the rest of the class.

**Create Your Own Sporting Event**

The topic of sports is a favorite of many students; this lesson plan helps students learn and use language associated with sports. In the final activity, students use their imaginations and language skills t6 create and describe their own sporting event.

The focus of this lesson is on speaking and listening, although several activities also

have a written component. You should not feel obligated to do every activity in this lesson .plan, but be sure to do enough scaffolding with the target language so that students are able to complete the final activity successfully.[18]

**Level:** Intermediate

**Focus:** Discussion, group work, writing, presentation

**Purpose:** Students will become familiar with language related to sports, and they will be able to describe a sporting event, using appropriate language and structure.

**Goal:** Students will develop sports-related vocabulary, learn structures used with sports vocabulary in sentences, use language to describe someone playing a sport, and design and describe their own version of a sporting event.

**Materials:** Poster paper, whiteboard/blackboard and markers/chalk, markers or crayons, glue, pictures from magazines or newspapers of people engaged in sporting activities (if available)

**Activity 1: Warm-up (*15 minutes*)**

**Goal:** To think about and generate already-known sports vocabulary (activate schema)

1. Write the word *sports* on the board. Give students two minutes to think about this topic.
2. Have students form pairs or, groups of three and brainstorm lists of words associated with sports. Encourage them to think of any words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) related to this topic-for example, *ball (noun), fast* (adjective), *quickly* (adverb), *throw* (verb).
3. After five minutes, ask each pair/group to write their words on the board (if space allows), or elicit words from students and write them on the board.
4. When all groups have contributed, ask students to identify the types of words used: nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs. Categorize the words on the board (you might use colored chalk or markers to do this).
5. Focus on the nouns—specifically, names of sports. Ask students if they have had

[18] Westbrook F. Create your own sporting event. 2010, English Teaching Forum

any experience with these sports. Encourage discussion by asking students questions such as:

- Which sports have you played?
- What sports have you seen on television?
- What sports have you heard on the radio?

6. Tell the students that they are beginning a unit on sports that will culminate in a group project based on developing their own sporting event. Tell them that as they move through the activities they are to keep in mind the concept of a large sporting event, such as the Olympics, the World Cup tournament, or the Asian Games. To help students begin to imagine such an event, ask them questions such as these:

    - Have you ever watched the Olympics (or a similar Snorting event or tournament) on television?
    - Which sports do you most like to watch? Why?
    - Which sports are you least interested in watching? Why?
    - Are all sports open to both men and women? If not, why not?
    - In the recent past, what countries have hosted the Olympics or some other large sporting event? Have any nearby countries hosted a large sporting event?

**Activity 2: Vocabulary Build (*20 minutes*)**

**Goal:** To develop sports vocabulary

1. Elicit the names of more sports from students. If possible, use visuals. A good source of visuals for sports is www.mes-english.com/flashcards; another is www.esl-kids.com/flash-cards/flashcards.html. These web resources are free, and the websites have lots of additional puzzles, games, and activities.

If necessary, ask specific questions to elicit different sports:

- What sports are played in the summer?
- What sports are played in the fall?
- What sports are played in the winter?

- What sports do people play individually?
- What sports do people play in teams?
- What sports use water?
- What sports use balls?
- What sports do you need to wear special clothes for?

As students say them, write the names of the shorts on the board. Try to have a minimum of 15-20 sports on the board. Here is a list of sports supported by flashcards from the above websites:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| baseball | (American) football | tennis |
| golf | soccer (football) | rugby |
| basketball | gymnastics | cricket |
| ice hockey | field hockey | boxing |
| badminton | volleyball | swimming |
| Ping-Pong (table tennis) | judo | karate |

You and your students may be able to think of many others

2. Have students form small groups and ask .them to list, in order, the most popular sports in their country. They should list at least three sports. Ask them why they think those particular sports are popular. Students should provide reasons (in complete sentences) for the popularity of these sports. For example, they could say, “Badminton is popular because it's easy to learn, anyone can play it, and the equipment isn't expensive.”
3. Now ask students which sports are the least popular in their country. Have students, still in their small groups, rank the least popular sports. Again, they should mention at least three sports arid give reasons why those sports are not popular in their country. For example, “Skiing isn't popular because there isn't enough snow in [name of the country], and the landscape is flat.”
4. Tell students that one person from each group will present the list of most popular sports, and another student will present the list of least popular sports to the class, and the presenters will explain why their group chose those sports. Be

sure that the students are prepared to justify their answers.

5. As a whole class, have students compare lists. Are the lists and the reasons the same? Different? Encourage students to discuss the similarities and differences in the lists and to defend the reasons they give for a sport's popularity or lack of popularity. You might ask a group with an unusual list to defend its choices to the rest of the class.

During the discussion and after you finish, leave the list of sports on the board.

**Activity 3: Language Focus (*60 minutes*)**

**Goal:** To practice the grammar associated with sneaking or writing about sports, specifically using the correct verbs with different sports

1. On the board, draw the following chart:

| Play | Do | Go |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Explain to students that when people speak about sports in English, they use the above three verbs to describe the action: we *play* baseball, we *do* gymnastics, we *go* swimming, etc. Have students get into small groups. Then ask them to refer to the list of sports elicited in the previous activity and to categorize the sports according to the verb that is used with each sport. Tell students they can add other sports to their lists.

2. Elicit the categorization from the students. Here is what a sample chart could look like:

| Play | Do | Go |
|---|---|---|
| baseball<br>football<br>golf<br>basketball<br>rugby<br>badminton<br>volleyball<br>Ping-Pong (table tennis)<br>cricket<br>tennis | gymnastics<br>judo<br>karate<br>yoga | ice skating<br>skiing<br>snowboarding<br>hiking<br>running<br>jogging<br>swimming |

Ask students why each verb is used with some sports and not with others.(A quick answer is that *play* is often used with team sports or sports with mote than one person playing, *do* is used for sports that are individual activities, and *go* is used for sports whose most common form, is a gerund.)

3. Show a-picture to the class of someone engaged in a sporting activity. (If you don't have a picture, use the board to draw a person doing something athletic.) Ask students what the person is doing.

Now you have two options. Your choice of Option 1 or Option 2 will depend on what you wan your students to write about in the next step—a paragraph about sports Dr a paragraph, that, is more general.

**Option 1** is to focus on sports. Ask sports-related questions about the person in the picture:

- Why does she like this sport?
- When did she begin playing this sport?
- How did she learn to play this sport?
- How often does she practice?

Write students' answers on the board.

**Option 2** is to ask students to use their imagination to come up with more information about the person in the picture.

- Where does she live?
- What else does she like to do besides this sport?
- What kinds of food does she eat?
- What kind of music does she like?
- Does she like movies?'
- Who is her favorite actor?
- Where does she go to school?
- What subjects does she like to study in school?

Write students' answers on the board.

For both Option 1 and Option 2, if the class has been practicing a particular tense or

language structure, you can ask questions that will elicit that structure from the students. To practice the present simple tense, you could ask about the person's routine (for example, “How often does she play tennis?”). To practice the past tense, ask what sports the person played at a specific time in the past (“When did he swim?” or “What sport did he play yesterday?”). If the class is practicing the future tense, ask what the person will do after he or she has finished the sporting activity. If the class has been practicing the present perfect, ask what other sports the person might have done or played in the past or how long the person has played the sport shown in the picture. Here are examples of possible answers:

She *plays* tennis *every day.*

He *swam yesterday.*

*After she plays* volleyball, she *will do* her homework.

She *will do* gymnastics *tomorrow.*

He *has played* football *for three years.*

Note: If you have a picture of a famous athlete, you can elicit information about this particular person instead of drawing a picture on the board. Or, if you draw an athlete on the board, it might help to contextualize the activity if you or the class names the person on the board after a famous athlete your students know.

4. As a class, decide how the information you have generated could be used to write a paragraph about the athlete. Together, “write” a paragraph on the board about the person in the picture. (This is an optional step. If your students are familiar with writing paragraphs, they might not need the extra practice this class-writing task would give them. Later in this activity, students will write a paragraph either in pairs or individually, so you can decide whether this step is necessary.)
5. Distribute pictures of people engaged in sporting activities. (If no pictures are available, write the names of different sports on slips of paper, enough for each student in the class. It's all right if more than one student gets the same sport. Ask students to draw a picture of a person doing or playing that sport. Give a quick time limit to keep students from putting too much effort into the drawing—that isn't the point of the exercise. Then collect the pictures and redistribute them

among students.)

6. Ask students to individually write a rough draft of a paragraph about the person in the picture they received. For example, if the picture shows someone playing soccer, the paragraph might include information about the person's soccer team, likes and dislikes habits, etc. Giving students sentence prompts can get them on the right track; examples include:

   She likes to____. [play football]

   He doesn't like to____. [play in the rain]

   She loves_____. [to play in the snow]

   He hates____. [being cold]

   She never____. [plays with her sister]

   He always____. [catches the ball]

   Her team____. [practices hard]

Another choice is to have students write the paragraphs in pairs, collaborating equally on the task.

7. If time permits, students should exchange papers for peer review work. Remind students to focus first on the ideas in the paragraph and then on Mechanics (grammar, spelling, etc.). Tell students to pay particular attention to whether the verbs *play, do,* and *go,* when used with sporting activities, have been used correctly.
8. Optional: Have students revise their paragraphs as homework.

### 3.3. Teaching adults

Throughout the world, people are moving from one country to another. Whether they are immigrants or visitors, most of these people have one thing in common: They must learn a new language in order to survive and thrive in their new environment. As a result, there are thousands of language classes for adult newcomers. There are great differences from one country to another with regard to these classes. In some countries government-sponsored programs are the norm, whereas in others there is a mix of public and private funding. In the case of

immigrants, often a limited length of time is allowed for language study before newcomers are expected to be self-sufficient. Although we recognize these differences, we also feel that teachers of second languages to adults have much in common.

This unit is intended for the teachers of adult second language learners. In it we address general questions concerning lesson organization and content as well as providing specific activities to make your classes more successful. Bearing in mind that in some situations teachers are expected to assess and place students and to organize their own curriculum in addition to teaching, we have included basic information on these topics.

Adults come to a new country for a variety of reasons. Some come simply to learn the language and culture, but most come to work or study. Some come in order to accompany or join family or friends and others to escape from difficult circumstances at home.

Just as reasons for coming vary, so does the length of stay in the new country. Some are short-term visitors, staying for a few months, others stay for a few years, and still others for the rest of their lives. Some, who do not need the language for employment outside their homes and whose family members take care of most of the practical aspects of their lives, attend classes primarily for social reasons. For them, the language class provides a respite from the loneliness of staying at home in a strange country. Others are immigrants who are under pressure to join the workforce as quickly as possible. Still others already have jobs but need to increase their language skills in order to keep or advance in their jobs.

Although these newcomers represent many countries, first languages, and cultures, they still have a number of things in common. They want and need to learn to *use* the language. They need to be able to shop, to bank, to use buses, and to work. To function successfully in their new environment they need to be able to speak to and understand the people around them, as well as read and write.

**What do adult learners bring to a class?**

Because of the heterogeneous nature of adult classes, it is important to consider the following dimensions.

***Language***

First, adults already know one language well, and that language is a vital part of their identity and the means through which they relate to others. The newcomer knows the sound and structure systems (and in many cases the written conventions) of his[19] first language, which both help and hinder learning a new language. In a social sense, using a new language represents a tremendous risk: of being misunderstood, of being corrected, of being laughed at, of feeling embarrassed or childish, and even in some cases of being rejected by one's own compatriots. On the other hand, the need and desire to communicate with others in the new language provides strong motivation for most newcomers.

***Background knowledge***

In addition to language, adult students bring background knowledge and experience of their own and other cultures as well as knowledge and experience gained from work or home. This knowledge of the world is a rich resource for the teacher who chooses to exploit it. By drawing on the students' previous knowledge, the teacher not only validates a lifetime of learning but also has a base on which to build new knowledge.

***Expectations***

These learners also bring with them the attitudes and knowledge developed in previous schooling. Those who have had little schooling and who lack literacy skills in their first language may find language classes intimidating unless a special effort is made to welcome and include them. Those who have studied a second language previously will be influenced by that experience. If they have been successful, they are likely to assume that they will be successful again. Not only will they be more confident, but they will also have developed strategies to help them learn a new

[19] In order to avoid awkwardness in construction, we have chosen to refer to the learner as masculine and to the teacher as feminine throughout this book. No bias is intended, of course: Many teachers are men and many learners are women.

language. Students who have had unpleasant or unsuccessful experiences as learners are likely to expect more of the same.

Learners with prior language learning experiences are also likely to bring with them expectations of how language classes should be organized and taught. They may associate language learning exclusively with grammar and translation, and feel threatened when they find that speaking and listening are major features of their new class. If they come from a culture in which the teacher's job is to transmit knowledge, they may feel uncomfortable with group or pair work and may question the validity of a class in which the teacher does not stand in front of the students and lecture. If they are from a culture in which the teacher is considered all-knowing, they may doubt the competence of a teacher who admits to not knowing something. It is important for the teacher to find out what the students' expectations are and to address areas in which the students' expectations differ from the teacher's or from each others'. Differences in expectations may sometimes necessitate that the teacher and students negotiate what and how to learn. In addition, the teacher needs to share with the students the goals and theoretical justifications for specific classroom activities.

***Learning styles***

Like all learners, adults have different learning styles. Some feel comfortable learning by watching and listening, whereas others feel they cannot learn unless they take down notes and analyze rules. They may also have preferences for learning through different sense modalities: touching, hearing, smelling, tasting, and seeing. The teacher will need to understand and cater to these differences by utilizing cycles of teaching that exploit different learning styles at different points in the lesson. This will also have the advantage of enabling the students to extend their range of learning styles by exposing them to new ones.

***Confidence***

Adult learners also bring many other personal characteristics, perhaps the most important of which is confidence or the lack thereof. Many students with little initial proficiency leap ahead of their classmates, in large part because they are confident

that they can and will learn the language. These students go out and take the risks involved in using the new language to communicate with anyone and everyone they encounter. Others of comparable ability and background may languish at a low level of proficiency because they lack the confidence to use the language. It is therefore very important to provide a supportive classroom atmosphere where risk taking and other positive learning behaviors are fostered.

***Motivation***

Students also vary considerably in their motivation. One student may want desperately to communicate with his neighbors and coworkers; another may perceive little use for the new language once his basic needs are met. Grades may provide additional motivation for younger students, but this is not the case for most adult second language students. They are not generally required to attend classes nor to take tests. Motivation, then, must come from within them and be based on their perception that what they are learning is of interest and of value to them. For such students the teacher can enhance motivation by providing interesting activities and by making clear the value of what is being taught and its relevance to their goals.

***Personal circumstances***

Age, health, and other personal circumstances also influence adult learners. Adult classes often include students ranging in age from 18 to 80 or more. Students may feel they have little common ground among them. Younger students may perceive those who are older as slow and rigid, while older adults may feel that younger ones are frivolous and irresponsible. Health, particularly for the older adults, may be a complicating factor. Difficulties with hearing, eyesight, and memory need to be taken into account. A history of arthritis or stroke may make writing difficult. In addition, personal circumstances, such as employment or lack of it, difficulties with child care or transportation, or concerns about problems at home necessarily take priority, making attendance, punctuality, and concentration difficult for some students. Although we may not be able to change the students' personal circumstances, we can, by being flexible and by encouraging a sense of community in the classroom, provide a source of support.

Effective instructors need to inform their teaching by collecting information about their students' first language knowledge, knowledge of the world, previous learning experience, learning styles and preferences, personalities and personal circumstances, as well as their existing second language skills and goals.

## How can instructors obtain information about their students?

### *Initial data collection*

In most adult education programs, a great deal of information is collected before the student arrives in the instructor's classroom. Forms are filled out, interviews are conducted, and frequently formal tests are administered to ascertain the student's second language level. In some programs, instructors are involved in these placement procedures, but in others they are not. In either case it is important for the teacher to be aware of the information collected, as it relates to both the student's proficiency level and to his circumstances, goals, and background. In this section we talk about some of the tools that can be used at this initial stage.

#### Formal tests

Formal tests provide only a starting point for data collection because they generally focus exclusively on the student's proficiency in the language. It is possible to utilize either a standardized test or one created in-house. Standardized tests have the advantage of being normed across a large population, but an in-house test may provide information which is more pertinent to the particular program in which the student is enrolled. Furthermore, there is often a problem of fit between the adult program's typical focus on language use and the focus on form of many standardized tests. If a standardized test is used, it is important to make sure that it in fact provides information that is appropriate and relevant to the curriculum of the program.

#### Interviews

An interview provides another way to assess a student's proficiency while at the same time allowing the teacher to learn more about his background and interests. In an ideal world, the interview should be carried on in a comfortable, quiet, and private setting, free from distractions. In practice a corner of the classroom or the

corridor often has to suffice. In any case, it should be made clear to the student that this is an interview. Distractions should be kept to a minimum. The interviewer can create a sense that the student is the center of her attention by arranging chairs so that she and the student can look at each other without barriers such as desks between them. Needless to say, it is important for the interviewer to smile, to focus on, and to respond to the student's answers and not to perform other tasks at the same time. An interview is a time to listen and not a time to correct the student. It is useful to have pictures available to provide lower-level or shy students with visual support. This interview should be done alone, without intervention from friends of the student. Although this placement interview is usually carried out in the second language, it may be appropriate later, in order to learn more about the student's background and expectations, to conduct an additional interview in his first language.

The interviewer can begin by introducing herself. The body of the interview should be arranged from easier to more difficult questions. A possible sequence of questions and cues is provided in Box 1. Begin with formulaic questions concerning personal information. These familiar questions will help the student feel comfortable and will also give the interviewer basic information and an opportunity to ascertain the student's control of functions related to personal identification and verb tenses.

If the student has difficulty answering these questions, the interviewer should try to elicit language by using pictures. Every attempt should be made to allow the student to make some successful response. This includes the use of single-object pictures and yes/no questions.

If the student is successful in the first part of the interview, more difficult open-ended questions should be used. The interviewer should be sensitive to the student's verbal and nonverbal responses to these questions and change the topic if there is evidence of any discomfort. For more advanced students, a challenging task is to make comparisons of countries, cities, jobs, or schools. The interviewer should encourage the student to expand on his answers by use of follow-up questions and judicious silence. When it is clear that the student has reached the limit of his competence, the interviewer should end the interview by thanking the student.

It will, of course, depend on the individual program how students are placed based on the interview, but factors that may be considered are control of functions, structures, and vocabulary; complexity of thought and language, and risk taking. It needs to be taken into account that one student might avoid errors by using only simple vocabulary and structures, whereas another might take greater risks and consequently make more mistakes.

**BOX 1.**

**Interview sequence**

| |
|---|
| What is your name?<br>How do you spell it?<br>Do you live in_____(city)?<br>Do you have a job?<br>Where are you from?<br>When did you come to this country?<br>How long have you been in_____(city)? |
| Tell me about your daily routine.<br>Tell me about your family.<br>Tell me about your education.<br>Tell me about your job.<br>Tell me about your language learning experience.<br>What do you do in your spare time or on weekends?<br>What questions would you like to ask about the program? |
| What are your plans for the future?<br>What are the main differences between_____<br>(country of origin) and_____(country currently living in)?<br>What are the main differences between schools (or cities) in<br>_____(country of origin) and in<br>_____(country currently living in)? |

If you could have any job, what would you like to be? (Why?)
I read an article saying that_____
What do you think about that?

Although many of the "rules" for teaching children can apply in some ways to teaching adults, the latter age group poses some different, special considerations for the classroom teacher. Adults have superior cognitive abilities that can render them more successful in certain classroom endeavors. Their need for sensory input can rely a little more on their imaginations (they can be told to imagine" smelling a rose versus actually smelling one). Their level of shyness can be equal to or greater than that of children, but adults usually have acquired a self-confidence not found in children. And, because of adults' cognitive abilities, they can at least occasionally deal with language that isn't embedded in a "here and now" context.

So, as you consider the five variables that apply to children, keep in mind some specific suggestions and caveats.

1. Adults are more able to handle abstract rules and concepts. But beware! As you know, too much abstract generalization about usage and not enough real-life language use can be deadly for adults, too.
2. Adults have longer attention spans for material that may not be intrinsically interesting to them. But again, the rule of keeping your activities short and sweet applies also to adult-age teaching.
3. Sensory input need not always be as varied with adults, but one of the secrets of lively adult classes is their appeal to multiple senses.
4. Adults often bring a modicum of general self-confidence (global self-esteem) into a classroom. With children you must compensate for their fragile egos; such compensation may not be as critical with adults. Yet we should never underestimate the emotional factors that may be attendant to adult second language learning.
5. Adults, with their more developed abstract thinking ability, are better able to understand a context-reduced segment of language. Authenticity and

meaningfulness are of course still highly important, but in adult language teaching, a teacher can take temporary digressions to dissect and examine isolated linguistic properties as long as students are returned to the original context.

Some implications for general classroom management can be drawn from what we know about differences between children and adults. Some management “do's” and “don'ts”:

1. *Do* remember that even though adults cannot express complex thinking in the new language, they are nevertheless intelligent grown-ups with mature cognition and fully developed emotions. Show respect for the deeper thoughts and feelings that may be “trapped” for the moment by a low proficiency level.
2. *Don't* treat adults in your class like children by
    a. calling them “kids,”
    b. using “caretaker” talk (the way parents talk to children), or
    c. talking down to them.
3. *Do* give your students as many opportunities as possible to make *choices* (cooperative learning) about what they will do in and out of the classroom. That way, they can more effectively make an investment in their own learning process.
4. *Don't* discipline adults in the same way you would children. If discipline problems occur (showing disrespect, laughing, disrupting class, etc.), first assume that your students are adults who can be reasoned with like adults.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Learner populations differ according to various parameters: whether the learners are beginner, intermediate or advanced; their objectives in learning the language, and how they are motivated whether their environment outside the classroom is target-language or mother-tongue; how heterogeneous or homogeneous the class is; the size of the group; and many more.

Most of these issues have been touched on incidentally within earlier modules, as they affects the different topics under discussion. This work however, focuses entirely on characteristics of learners, or groups of learners, which seem to me particularly important or problematical: the question of learner motivation; learners of different ages; and heterogeneous classes it. Looks at different kinds of learner motivation, and examines particularly the ways in which the teacher can influence it. The assumption is made here that the teacher has a responsibility not only to provide opportunities for learning, but also actively to 'push' learners to realize their full potential and make maximum progress; and that the enhancement of motivation is probably the most effective way to do this.

The topic of younger and adult learners is dealt with differences between the age groups in learning styles, abilities and motivation entail corresponding differences in the selection of materials and methodology and in lesson planning. It is also useful to be aware of the unreliability of various popular myths: for example, that children learn languages better then adults. Deals with heterogeneous classes, sometimes called 'mixed-ability' classes. The term 'mixed-ability', however, implies that the important difference between members of a mixed class is in their language-learning ability, but this is not necessarily so. Even if the main observed difference between them is in the amount of language they know, this may have its roots in all sorts of other reasons besides ability ( previous teaching, motivation, etc.). And there are plenty of other differences of between learners that need to be taken into account by a teacher: preferred learning style, personality, interests, cultural

background – to name only a few. Thus the term ‘heterogeneous’ - composed of different kinds of people - is I think more suitable in defining such classes. To some extent, any class is heterogeneous (one definition of the term is ‘ a class of two‘!); but certainly some are more so than others. Very heterogeneous classes can be extremely difficult to teach: hence the importance of studying the main problems and searching for principles ideas that can contribute to effective solutions.

The problem of heterogeneity is, of course, compounded if the class is also large; and in fact many teachers see the ‘large heterogeneous class’ as a single, generalized problem situations. Hence it seemed logical to treat the two aspects together in a single module.

To sum up we turn to a learner characteristic of a different type: the age at which learning begins. This characteristic is easier to define and measure than personality, aptitude, or motivation, but the relationship between age and success in second language acquisition is hardly less complex or controversial. It is frequently observed that most children from immigrant families eventually speak the language of their new community with NATIVE-LIKE fluency, while their parents often fall short of such high levels of mastery of the spoken language. To be sure, there are cases where adult second language learners have distinguished themselves by their excellent language skills. One often sees reference to Joseph Conrad, a native speaker of Polish who became a major writer in the English language. Many adult second language learners communicate very successfully in the language even though subtle differences of accent, word choise, or grammatical features distinguish them from monolingual native speakers and from second language speakers who began learning the language while they were very young.

It has been hypothesized that there is a critical period for second language acquisition just as there is for first acquisition. The Critical Period Hypothesis is that there is a time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success language learning. Developmental changes in the brain, it is argued,

affect the nature of language acquisition, and language learning that occurs after the end of the critical period may not be based on the innate biological structures believed to contribute to first language acquisition or second language' acquisition in early childhood. Rather, older learners may depend on more general learning abilities-the same ones they might use to learn other kinds of skills or information. It is argued that these general learning abilities are not as effective for language learning as the more specific , innate capacities that are available to the young child. It is most often claimed that the critical period ends somewhere around puberty, but some researchers suggest it could be even earlier.

Of course, it is difficult to compare children and adults as second language learners. In addition to possible biological differences suggested by the Critical Period Hypothesis, the conditions for language learning are often very different. Younger learners in informal language learning environments usually have more time to devote to learning language. They often have more opportunities to hear and use the language in environments where they do not experience strong pressure to speak fluently and accurately from the very beginning. Further more, there early imperfect efforts are often praised, at least, accepted. Older learners are more likely to find themselves in situations that demand more complex language and the expression of more complicated ideas. Adults are often embarrassed by their lack of mastery of the language and they may develop a sense of inadequacy after experiences of frustration in trying to say exactly what they mean. Such negative feels may effect their motivation and willingness to place themselves in situations where they will need to use the new language.

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