

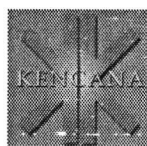
Teaching English^{to} Indonesian Young Learners



Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Syafei, M.A.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO INDONESIAN YOUNG LEARNERS

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Edisi Pertama

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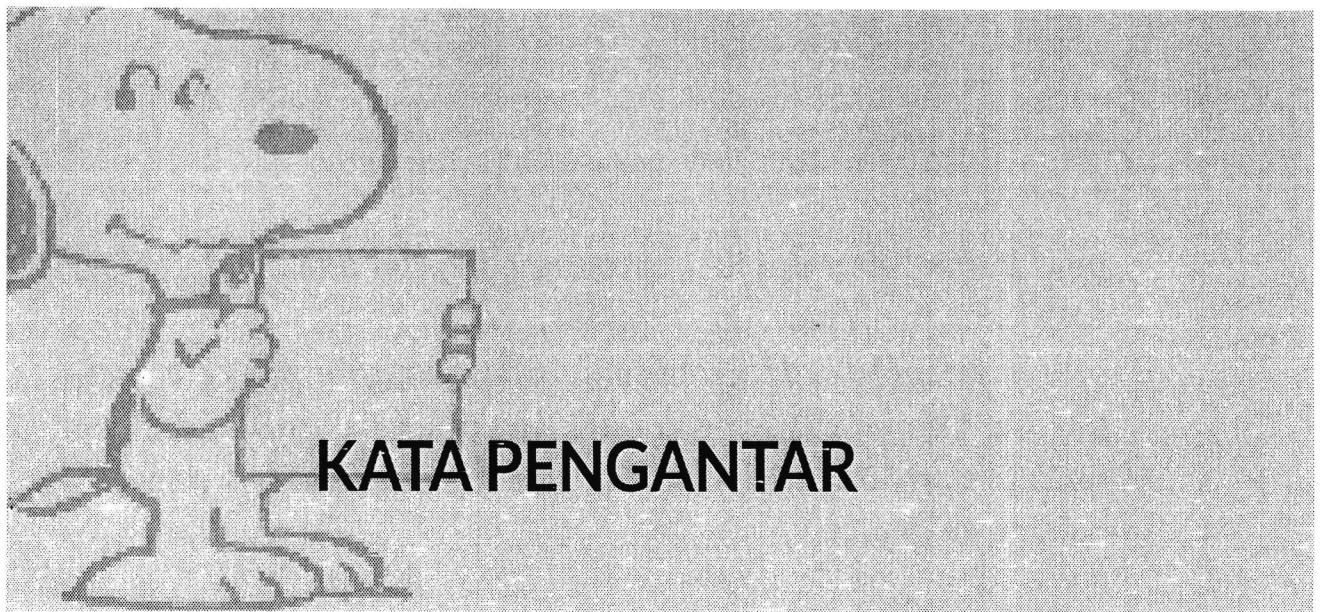
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INDONESIA

Dilarang mengutip sebagian atau seluruh isi buku ini dengan cara apa pun, termasuk dengan cara penggunaan mesin fotokopi, tanpa izin sah dari penerbit.

*To my husband, M. Irsyad,
my son - M. Ichsan and my daughter - Siti Atina
without your encouragement, this book will never finish
So, thank you very much*



KATA PENGANTAR

Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris untuk anak, untuk saat ini, belum menjadi perhatian serius masyarakat. Hal tersebut dapat dilihat dari kebijakan pemerintah yang menjadikan Bahasa Inggris sebagai muatan lokal saja, sehingga sedikit banyak berpengaruh kepada kualitas pengajaran yang ada. Masalah tersebut muncul karena mayoritas sarjana pendidikan Bahasa Inggris hanya dipersiapkan untuk mengajar sekolah lanjutan, bukan sekolah dasar dengan murid yang sedang bertumbuh dengan unik.

Keunikan tersebut ditambah dengan masih kurangnya pengetahuan sang guru tentang psikologi perkembangan anak baik dari segi kognitif, sosioemoisonal, maupun moral, menjadikan mereka kewalahan dalam membuat persiapan mengajar dan pemilihan metode mengajar. Karena itu, tak heran jika pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di tingkat pendidikan dasar berlangsung kurang efektif dan akhirnya menambah beban anak.

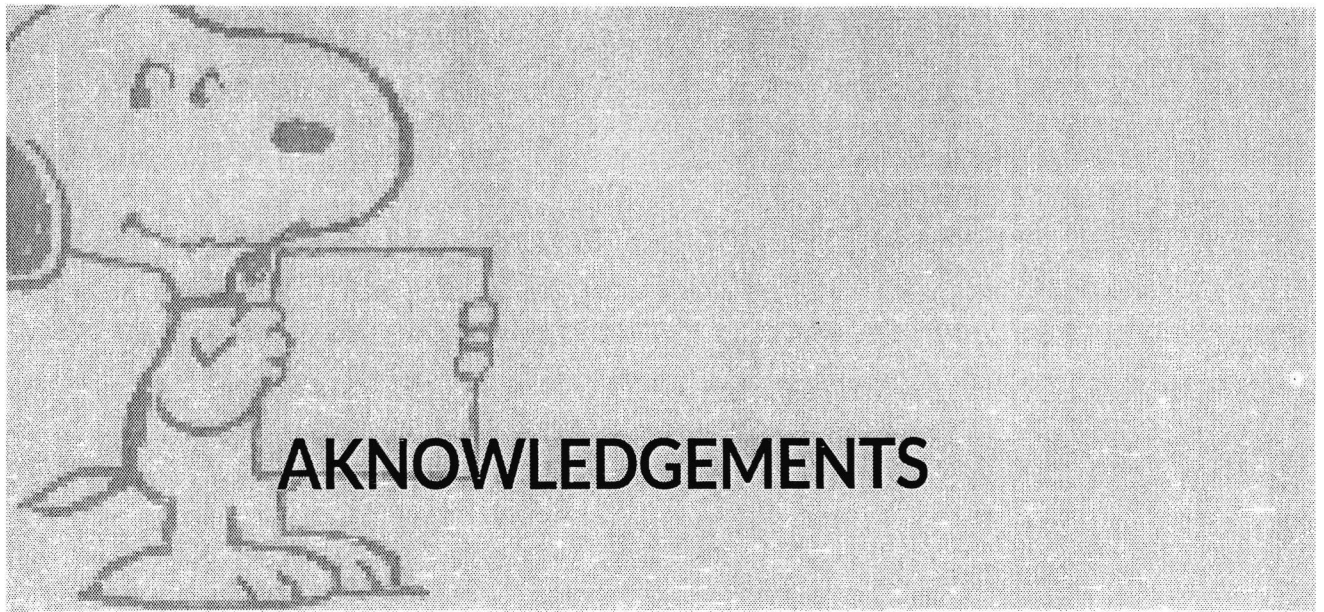
Karena itu, buku ini disusun untuk memberikan wawasan dan pengetahuan yang dibutuhkan proses belajar mengajar Bahasa Inggris bagi siswa sekolah dasar. Dimulai dengan pengetahuan tentang perkembangan tentang anak serta karakteristik anak yang kemudian disusun dengan metode pengajaran empat



pilar utama keterampilan berbahasa kepada anak: mendengar, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis.

Buku ini jauh dari kata sempurna. Sebagaimana kata pepatah, tiada gading yang tidak retak, maka segala kritikan dan respons tentang buku ini akan sangat kami hargai untuk pengembangan ke depan.

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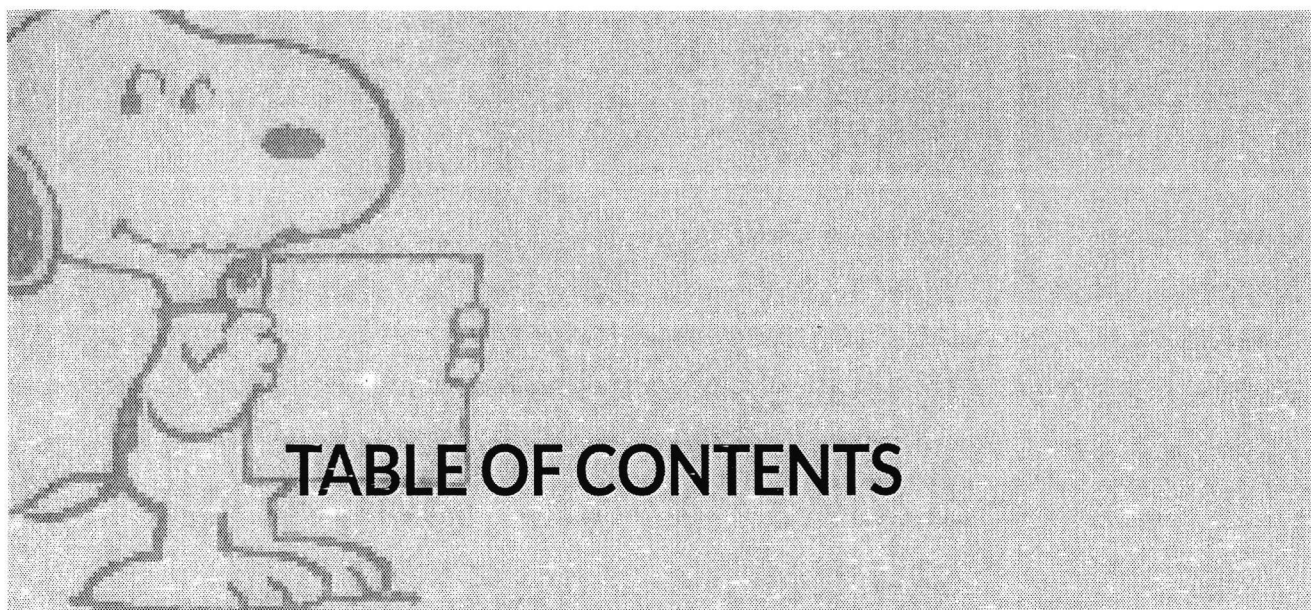
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chapter ONE

INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:



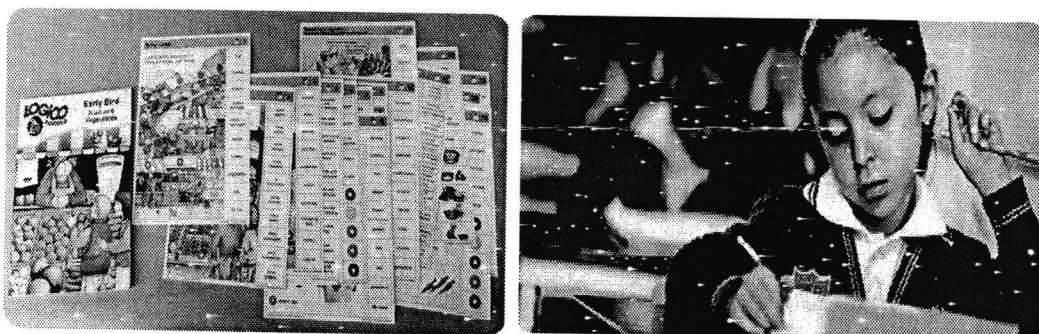
describe	what is English for Young Learners?
identify	who are the Young Learners?
explain	how to teach English to young learners
distinguish	between language acquisition and language learning



1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the issues related to what English for Young Learners is and who the young learners are. We will begin the information about the concept of teaching English as foreign language to young learners and the young learners itself. We will then move to suggestions for teaching English as foreign language to young learners, especially for Indonesian young learners. The distinction between the concept of language acquisition and language learning is provided, to give the brief view about the base of teaching foreign language to Indonesian young learners.

2. WHAT IS ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS?



With the increasing demands for accountability and high academic achievement for all students, educational policymakers are increasing their attention to young children from non-English speaking backgrounds. Children who speak a language other than English in the home and are not fluent in English are designated as English Language Learners (ELLs).

The rate of growth of ELLs in the school systems has been increased over the past decade. In Indonesia, the demand of parents toward mastering English earlier on their children become the hallmark of this trend. Then, it fosters the occurrence of teaching English in all level of education, starting from pre kindergarten up to high school. This fact has created an urgent need to design and implement instructional approaches and school



structures that will ensure that ELL students thrive and achieve at high levels. The issue of how to best educate our non-English speaking students spread out and need to be answered, but it must take into account the local condition of Indonesia, in term of students, teachers, and community.

Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English to Young Learners is guiding and facilitating Young Learners in aging 5-12 years old, for their activities in learning, knowing, understanding, and comprehending ideas, attitudes values, skills, and information of English using tricks and strategies which will be used in changing and redefining their thought forward their daily surrounding situation as a foreign languages learners.

In language learning context it is believed that children will learn a foreign language more effectively under certain conditions. Therefore, there are some assumptions about language learning that should be considered when teaching English as foreign language to children, as follow:

1. Learning should be fun and natural for children. In order for them to be successful in learning the target language, there must be the absence of stress. It is commonly believed that the environment of the foreign language learning often causes stress and anxiety. Children are believed not to learn language forms directly; commands are believed to helpful for children to interpret meanings. This activity is believed to liberate self-conscious and stressful situations.
2. The language should be first presented through sounds, not written symbols. Listening and speaking are worked on as the learners produce meaningful utterances concerning physical objects and their own experience. After children can produce sounds in the target language and connect the sounds with the truth, the may begin to read symbols in the target language. This process can begin after the children



- are able to understand what other people speak (listening) and able to produce the language (speaking).
3. Children are more sensitive to anything that touches the senses; they react easily to physical objects. Language is taught by having the students use their senses: touch, see, listen, smell, and even taste if necessary. This will help them relate the linguistics signs to truth that they perceive with their senses.
 4. Meaning should be made perceptible through concrete objects or by presentation of experience. When a language learner makes a mistake or misconception of something, the teacher does not correct it through translation but she tries to show something to make the meaning clear.
 5. The idea that teaching should start from what the students already know in order to encourage association processes seems to favor children. By teaching through this way, children are expected to know what they are doing. They are not only saying something without being aware of what they are saying.

The methods for teaching children should maintain the characteristics of children in order that the students can learn the target language optimally. One of the common principles that may be considered to develop or choose methods for children is that learning English language should be fun and natural. From this principle a language teacher may develop his or her own techniques, such as introducing songs and games to make their learning fun and natural. In addition to the techniques, the choice of vocabulary and structure also make teaching children different from other levels. A language teacher should choose the simple vocabulary and structure that are relatively easy to learn.

For the successful teaching of English in primary schools, above all, it is essential for the teacher to understand the young learners' characteristics, instincts, and interests in their cogni-



tive, linguistic, and emotional aspects, because this will play a crucial role in how the teacher builds a lesson, how he or she can make sure that the young learners are fully involved in the learning process, how he or she achieves the objectives of a lesson, and how they respond. In this respect, these lines, in the first place, get the English teacher not only to understand general characteristics of the young learners, but also to recognize the qualifications as a primary English teacher. Secondly, the goals, the contents, and the syllabuses of primary English teaching should be discussed in terms of the English curriculum in primary schools. And finally, how to build a lesson for primary English teaching is likely to be more specifically discussed, in terms of teaching procedures including its key stages and their sub stages, the learners' interactions and activities at each stage, and teaching skills and techniques at each sub stage, and so on.

For some consideration, what Shelley Vernon's says in her website, *Teaching English Games*, about some possible problems that many teachers have when teaching English to children should be got our attention:

- Children have short attention span and forget things quickly. So, teachers should vary their techniques to break the boredom. They should give varied activities as handwriting, songs, games etc.
- Children are very active. So, teachers can ask them to play games, role play dialogues and involve them in competitions.
- Children respond well to praising and rewards from the teacher. So, teachers should always encourage them and praise their work. Children love prizes and rewards even if the prize is a key ring or box of Smartest. A smart teacher can make badges and pin them on winners if prize-giving becomes too pricey. Even though children love prizes they shouldn't be the focus for every task.
- Children differ in their experience of language. So, te-



acher can treat them as a unit , don't favor those who know some English at the expense of those who do not know.

- Children are less shy than older learners. So, teacher can ask them to repeat utterances, resort to mechanical drills. But, be carefull learn through repetition sometimes can be boring.
- Children are imaginative, but may have some difficulties distinguishing between imagination and real world. So, teacher can use realia or pictures to teach new vocabulary related to concrete meanings.
- Children enjoy learning through playing. Young learners learn best when they learn through games. Let games be an essential part of your teaching. Games put the fun back into learning, and playing is what children do naturally, so a smart teacher should capitalize on what children want to do. A teacher should have a selection of games and songs ready so that activities can be changed every 5 to 15 minutes depending on the age group of the children. Games can be used to teach vocabulary and expressions and develop listening and comprehension skills.
- Children enjoy imitating and skill full in listening accurately and mimicking what they have heard. And teacher need to be remind that very small children may not speak their own language correctly yet.
- Children develop at different rates so there may be mixed ability levels in one class eventhough all the children are of the same age. And, children can be shy and hesitant to participate in activities.
- Children have a great need to be motivated in order to learn effectively. And it is quicker to raise a child's motivation and enthusiasm than an adult's but it is also easier to lose a child's motivation and enthusiasm than



it is with an adult's. Intrinsic motivation or interest in doing the learning activity is what counts so a teacher should use the 3 important sources of interest for children: pictures, stories and games. Pictures or posters should be colorful, clear and professionally drawn. Photographs or the children's own drawings can be used too. For children, the dominant sense is the visual channel. If young learners are not given something to look at that is relevant to the learning task, they will get distracted by something else that is of more interest to them.

- Children love being read stories, and most of the vocabulary for a story can be pre-learnt through games before the story is read. Telling a story in a foreign language is one of the simplest and richest sources of input for children as long as there are lots of colorful pictures the children can look at while listening.



Think and Share

1. Think about your current English Language teaching situation at elementary school. Do the school have an English program? If yes, how do they run the program? Do they consider the program as a second or foreign language teaching?
2. Also think whether the school consider the characteristics of the children when they run the program? If so, you may conclude what English for Young Learners is? Then share your thought to your colleague.

3. WHO ARE THE YOUNG LEARNERS?

Young Learners are the students of Elementary School who are at grade one up to grade six. Their ages range from seven to twelve years of age. They have learned English for about one up to four years. From those three statements, we may conclude that Young Learners are students who are studying in Elementary or Senior High School aging 7-12 and they are studying English



as second language for about one up to four years. It can be at pre school or kindergarten. But in some cases, they can be have no English at all.

While there are commonalities across learners of all ages, young children differ from older children in many ways. Studies of young children show how learning changes across development. However, we now know that even very young children have a predisposition to learn in certain domains, and that young children are actively engaged in making sense of their world. Young children appear to be predisposed to acquire information.

These biases toward certain types of learning should pave the way for competence in early schooling. Children lack knowledge and experience, but not reasoning ability. Indeed, although young children are inexperienced, they reason with the knowledge they have. Precocious knowledge may jump-start the learning process, but because of limited experience and underdeveloped systems of logical thinking, children's knowledge contains misconceptions. Misinformation can impede school learning, so teachers need to be aware of the ways in which children's background knowledge influences their understanding. Such awareness should help teachers anticipate children's confusion and recognize why children have difficulties grasping new ideas. Strategies for learning are important.

When children are required to learn about unfamiliar knowledge domains, they need to develop intentional learning strategies. Children need to understand what it means to learn, who they are as learners, and how to go about planning, monitoring and revising, to reflect upon their learning and that of others, and to learn how to determine if they understand. These met cognitive skills provide strategic competencies for learning.

The children have their own characteristics, which are different from adults. The characteristics cover their ways of thinking, their attitude, their aptitude, et cetera. They also prevail to the children's ways of learning language. This, of course, influences



the ways of teaching them. To give the best quality of teaching English to the children, the teachers should know and understand them.

In learning a language, young learners respond to the language, depending on what it does or what they can do with it rather than treating it as an intellectual game or abstract system. Moreover, theories of the children's learning require that young learners be supported by moving from the abstract to the concrete and through being involved in activity. It can be understood that the children need activities that are more concrete rather than abstract and to be involved in those activities in order that they can learn the language well.

While, some experts on young learners says that the characteristics which young learners share are as follow:

1. Young learners are only just beginning their schooling, so that teachers have a major opportunity to mould their expectations of life in school.
2. As a group they are potentially more differentiated than secondary or adult learners, for they are closer to their varied home cultures, and new to the conformity increasingly imposed across cultural grouping by the school.
3. They tend to be keen and enthusiastic learners,
4. Their learning can be closely linked with their development of ideas and concepts, because it is so close to their initial experiences of formal schooling.
5. They need physical movement and activity as much as stimulation for their thinking, and the closer together these can be the better.

Most primary level learners will share these characteristics. Those opinions give the researcher some important notes about children's special characteristics in learning the language. They are as the following:

1. Children respond the language well through concrete things



- (visual things) rather than abstract things,
2. Children need physical movements and real activities to stimulate their thinking,
3. Children will be enthusiastic if they are taught using fun activities or being involved in activities,
4. Children love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves,
5. Children learn well through something that is close to their culture,
6. Children like to work together.



Think and Share

Try to understand the overall characteristics of young learners as mention above, then share to your colleague what you see from your elementary school student. Do you think they face the same situation? If yes, browse the information how do they learn something?

4. WHAT IS LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING?

Teaching English as Foreign Language for Indonesian young learners is not an easy task. We need to take into consideration the concept of language acquisition and language learning before designing the instruction for them. Krashen (1978) has examined language development and has differentiated the process of language acquisition from the process of language learning.

Language acquisition is the natural process used to develop language skills in a child's native language. The home environment for acquiring a native language is often different from classroom environment used to teach a second or foreign language. When a child is acquiring their native language at home, the focus is on the message being conveyed rather than the form or correctness of the language. For example, when a native English speaking child says the word, "Muma" instead of "Mama",



his mother would applaud the effort and not worry that the pronunciation was not perfect. When a five year old is telling a story about something exciting that took place at school, his grandmother would focus on what he was talking about rather than how he was saying it.

The term language learning is often used to describe the more formal approach to language instruction. Language learning usually refers to the language instruction that takes place in a classroom. Focus is usually on the form of the language rather than on the message being conveyed. For example, in a language learning classroom, you might see children learning phonics rules – hopefully using a game-format.

It is important to note that even native speakers spend time learning about their language. When it comes to language acquisition and language learning, it doesn't need to be an either or situation. The focus can be on the message conveyed and the form of the language being used.



To get more understanding on the concept of language acquisition take a look into the child's learning strategies below:

First, a child is not in the least interested in language for its own sake. In fact, a young child never focuses his attention upon language at all. He is too interested in his toys, in his playmates, and in the things that he can find that are not to be played with. Language is always of secondary importance, and all of his early language learning is peripheral learning. To a child, the value of language is measured by its ability to help him better enjoy his primary interests. If he breaks all the imaginable rules of grammar and pronunciation, and yet gets the response he wants, he feels as if he has been completely successful. In some cases, this explains why a child is perfectly happy to use words and constructions that he does not hear from anyone else's lips. He has continued to use the words wow, eehu and gaga precisely be-



cause we understand what he means. They function for him, and that is all he cares about.

Second, a child does not let language that he does not understand confuse him. When he hears something he does not understand, it disturbs him about as much as water disturbs a duck's back. This is related to the fact that language is never the center of his attention. So he just does not care about what he cannot understand.

Third, a child enjoys the repetitive events of his life, and uses this enjoyment to help him learn the new language. These repetitive events give the child a sense of security and order, and as he begins to understand the order in the events of his life, he also begins to understand the order in the language that is associated with those events. Conversely, rare events rarely leave much of a mark on a child's language ability.

Fourth, a child uses his primary interests to help him learn the language related to those interests. Whatever captures his attention captures it all. He focuses his attention on that one thing, excluding the rest of the world for that moment in time. And thus, the language associated with his object of interest is brought to the front and center, and all the rest of the language around him is temporarily pushed back into the shadows. This can be illustrated from a child's speaking vocabulary by looking at one of his earliest words, eye. When mom would lie down on the couch, and usually her little kid would lie on the chest and use his hands to play with mummy face. His first point of interest was the eyes. When mom would try to redirect his interest in the eyes, interest that he expressed by putting his fingers in mummy eyes, to some other part of body, he would have none of it. He wanted to touch mummy eyes, not mummy ears or mummy hands. And because his interest was so strongly focused on mummy eyes, he learned that word first.

These last three points are closely related. They deal with how a child focuses his attention. He does not simply let the lan-



guage pour over him and slowly ooze into his mind. Rather, he is very selective about the language he pays attention to. An adult learner tends to become first confused then discouraged when he receives too much new information at one time. He tries to take in all that is presented to him, often with the result that he does not learn any of it well. Because of this, special care must be taken not to present too much at one time to an adult learner of a foreign language. The excess causes the adult learner real problems. But a child never tries to take in all that is around him. He is the one who is in control, and he selects what he likes best, ignoring the rest. A child is very picky about the language he listens to, just as he is often very picky about the food he eats. But precisely because he is so effective in shutting out what does not interest him, his mind is not cluttered or divided, and he can bring to bear the full resources of his mental facilities for the purpose of learning what he has selected. This ability to focus on the material at hand while effectively excluding the rest is a very important ingredient in learning.

Fifth, a child directs his attention to things that are easy to understand. He does not think about the world economy or foreign cultures. He thinks about the people around him, and the things around him. And these things can easily be given a name. One of the interesting features of child's vocabulary is the lack of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. The words are mostly nouns. Late in the list, some verbs appear (read, walk), and one adjective (hot), but the great majority of his first words were simple nouns that were easy to learn from context.

Sixth, a child possesses a natural desire to call an object by its name, and he uses that natural desire to help him learn the language. He receives real joy from just pointing out something and calling it by name. He never thinks it is stupid or silly to say something that others might consider obvious. For him, it is delightful. When a child learned the words for star and moon, he would point them out to us at every opportunity. He could not



play with them or eat them, but he loved to call them by name.

Seventh, a child uses his natural desire to participate in the life around him to help him learn new language. He wants to do what he sees others doing, and when that includes language, he want to speak it too. Here a child often says things he does not understand at all. He is simply imitating others. He has learned that in a given situation, a word or phrase is always used, so he tries to use it too. At this point in his language development, most of his sounds were still babble, so he merely selected one set of sounds from his babble and elevated it to the position of a word to say after receiving something. His words hi and bye bye were also first learned in this way.

Eighth, a child adds words to his speaking vocabulary more easily if he already knows how to pronounce them. In other words, he can attach a new meaning to a sound sequence that he already knows more easily than he can learn both a new meaning and new sound sequence. For example, a child words for nail and snail, which are both pronounced as nail, became a part of his speaking vocabulary at about the same time. They had both been in his listening vocabulary for quite a while, but it was not until he had learned to say the word nail for nail that he was able to point to the picture of a snail in one of his books and give it a name. He used related sounds to help him learn.

Ninth, a child immediately puts to use the language he is learning, and uses his success in communication to build up his confidence. He does not try to store up his knowledge for use at a later date. He applies it in context as soon as he can. And every time he uses a piece of language successfully, it is reinforced in his mind and his confidence grows. And this confidence encourages him to use the new language even more, thus bringing him more success, more reinforcement, and more confidence. This confidence cycle built upon successful usage of the language is difficult to establish and keep going in an adult learner. But a young child is able to get it going and keep it going in the face of



a lot of obstacles. All of the learning strategies mentioned are important, but this one, it seems to me, must be one of the most important. A learner without confidence is in trouble from the very beginning, but one who possesses the confidence that comes from success, even when the success is limited, can overcome a host of other learning problems.

And tenth, a child brings tremendous ingenuity to the task of learning a new language. He has no fear of failure. He is not inhibited by what others might think. He just plunges in head first, attacking the problems with all the resources that he has. Just one of the many places where a child's ingenuity is evident is in the associations he makes between objects and words. Many of these associations are obviously wrong (to us), but he does not know they are wrong and he does not care. He sees the world through different eyes, and orders it in different ways. Who can say that our ordering of the world is any more logical than a child's? For a child, why should the word train be any better than the word gaga? After all, gaga more closely represents the sound that you hear when a train is approaching the railroad crossing where you happen to be waiting. And why should the word airplane be any better than the word dayday? When we see an airplane in the sky, it is soon leaving us, so why not call it a dayday (which came to mean good bye by a similar application of ingenuity)? A child's ability to use language in this way is not at all exceptional, as any parent can testify. But because this ingenuity is common among children, it is no less wonderful, and no less important in helping them to learn their first language.



Summary of the Child's Language Environment and Learning Strategies

The Child's Language Environment

1. There is **NO DIRECT PRESSURE** to learn (no tests, no grades, etc.).
2. There is **NO TIME LIMIT** for learning (no end of the semester).
3. There is **NO WAY OF ESCAPING** into a different language (no vacations).
4. The language is **NOT SEQUENCED BY GRAMMAR OR VOCABULARY** (no textbook).
5. There is **LOTS OF REPETITION**. His life contains repetitions and the language around him reflects it.
6. Both the **LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD ARE NEW** (and therefore interesting).
7. All the language is spoken **IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SURROUNDING WORLD**.
8. **THE LANGUAGE IS ALL AROUND**. The child has native speakers of the language speaking to him often.
9. The child has **MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR USING** the language to communicate to those around him.
10. Much of **THE LANGUAGE IS SIMPLIFIED** to the level of understanding of the child. It is tailor-made for the child.

The Child's Learning Strategies

1. The child is **NOT INTERESTED IN LANGUAGE** for its own sake.
2. The child is **NOT DISTURBED** by the language he does not understand.
3. The child **ENJOYS THE REPETITIVE** events of his life, and uses this enjoyment to help him learn.
4. The child **USES HIS PRIMARY INTERESTS** to help him learn.
5. The child directs his attention to things that are **EASY TO UNDERSTAND**.
6. The child possesses a natural desire **TO CALL AN OBJECT BY ITS NAME**.
7. The child uses his natural desire **TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AROUND HIM** to help him learn new language.
8. The child adds words to his speaking vocabulary more easily **IF HE ALREADY KNOWS HOW TO PRONOUNCE THEM**.
9. The child **IMMEDIATELY USES** the language, and his **SUCCESS IN COMMUNICATION BUILDS CONFIDENCE**.
10. The child brings **TREMENDOUS INGENUITY** to the task of learning.



Think and Share

1. When you were a child between the ages of 5 and 12, what things did you talk about with your family? Were the conversations mostly focused on form or meaning?
2. At school, what type of things did you learn about your native language? Did you learn uncommon grammatical constructions?

Share your thought to your colleague.