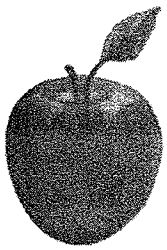

Developing Children's Listening and Speaking in ESL

SABRINA PECK

In "Developing Children's Listening and Speaking in ESL," Peck addresses teachers of adult ESL/EFL who are beginning to work with children. She outlines how children differ from adults as classroom learners of oral language. She also discusses how to make use of resources such as songs, chants, drama, and storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps you have taught ESL or EFL before, but never to children. You may have some hunches about how child second language learners could differ from adults. In many ways, children who are learning ESL *are* different from adult students. Consider these anecdotes:

1. An ESL teacher instructs a group of 7 children every day for 45 minutes. They sing "I'm a Little Teapot" over and over again. Standing, they use one arm as the spout of the teapot. Bending, they use the other arm to show the tea pouring out. It feels like an eternity to the teacher: "I'm a little teapot, short and stout, here is my handle, here is my spout. When I get all steamed up, hear me shout, just *tip* me over and pour me out." And then the group starts again.
2. A kindergarten child, already in school for six months, still declines to speak in English. She hides under the table during group lessons. She speaks under her breath in Japanese to the other children, who speak English and/or Spanish.
3. In visiting the class of a noted and successful ESL teacher, you are struck that each activity lasts no more than ten minutes, that children are usually in movement—making something, holding something, moving their hands or walking somewhere. The class looks like an art class.

There are a few major contrasts that we can make between child and adult ESL learners. Children are more likely to play with language than adults are. Children can be more effectively engaged through stories and games. Younger children are less likely to notice errors or correct them. In general, children are more holistic learners who need to use language for authentic communication in ESL classes. In this chapter, I explain some ways in which children often differ from adults as developing listeners and speakers of a second language. I suggest listening and speaking activities and ways to focus on grammar within the authentic and communicative language of a children's ESL class.

HOW CHILDREN DIFFER FROM ADULTS AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In an ESL class for adults, the materials are books, papers, the blackboard, an overhead projector, and little else. In a children's class, all sorts of materials are used—magnets, hamsters, stuffed animals, art supplies, costumes, and so on.

Activities need to be child centered and communication should be authentic. This means that children are listening or speaking about something that interests them, for their own reasons, and not merely because a teacher has asked them to. Many authors (e.g., Enright

1991; Enright and Rigg 1986; Genesee 1994; Phillips 1993; Rigg and Allen 1989; McKeon and Samway 1993; Scott and Ytreberg 1990; Vale 1995) advise teachers to teach ESL holistically and to focus on the whole child. Several themes repeatedly come up:

- **Focus on meaning, not correctness.** Eight-year-olds, in groups, decide on themes for a class party: cowboys, dancing, or dinosaurs. Each group makes a poster and presents an argument for their theme. Children speak, write, listen, or draw according to their ability. The teacher does not correct errors.
- **Focus on the value of the activity, not the value of the language.** Advanced beginners each receive a potato. Each child has to name his or her potato, prepare an oral introduction (e.g., "This is my potato. Her name is Patricia."), and make a poster with an image of the potato that could be used if the potato were to get lost. (Activity described by Perros 1993.)
- **Focus on collaboration and social development.** Twelve-year-olds form groups in which they compare maps of North America that were drawn in different centuries. They discuss the comparison as a group, prepare an oral report, and do a written report. Each child has a role in the group.
- **Provide a rich context, including movement, the senses, objects and pictures, and a variety of activities.** Six-year-olds learn terms for community occupations such as doctor, teacher, and police officer. They wear appropriate hats, line up in order, follow directions by the teacher, act out brief scenes, and sing a song while moving and pointing. Note that in this way, teachers accommodate the kinesthetic and visual learning styles favored by most children (Keefe 1979).
- **Teach ESL holistically, integrating the four skills.** Seven-year-olds listen to the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Later, they repeat a refrain in the story and supply some missing words. They help the teacher retell the story, and discuss the qualities of each character. They label cards with the names of the characters and read aloud a version of the story written on word cards and sentence strips. Eventually, some will copy their own version of the story and make a small book to take home.
- **Treat learners appropriately in light of their age and interests.** At the end of an ESL content unit on volcanoes, eleven-year-olds play bingo using vocabulary and pictures from the unit.
- **Treat language as a tool for children to use for their own social and academic ends.** Eight-year-olds enjoy being part of a group as they sing and chant the same pieces in ESL class. They enjoy activities that allow them to work with friends in the class.
- **Use language for authentic communication, not as an object of analysis.** Eleven-year-olds in one class do not know the term *modal verb,* but enjoy making up role plays in which characters are polite to each other. (Activity from Ur 1988, p. 178).

Thus, the principles that underlie children's ESL classes are those of progressive education: that teachers adjust to the child's developmental level, use materials and techniques that appeal to children, and stress communication and the expression of authentic meaning. This progressive stance is not always carried out in schools.

HOW ESL CHILDREN APPROACH ORAL LANGUAGE

In some ways, children approach oral language differently than adults do. The role of language play within language learning is examined by Cook (2000). Children appear more likely than adults to play with language (Peck 1978) and may learn through language play (Peck 1980; Tarone 2000). They enjoy rhythmic and repetitive language more than adults do. They play with the intonation of a sentence, and most are willing to sing. They enjoy repeating a word or an utterance in a play situation. With less awareness of the ways in which languages can differ, children are more likely to laugh at the sounds

of a second language, or to be reminded of a word in the first language. Young children such as kindergartners may comfortably talk to themselves, perhaps as part of a fantasy role play.

TECHNIQUES AND RESOURCES

Using Songs, Poems, and Chants

Given children's greater ability to play with language, teachers need to use songs, poems, and chants more than they would with adults. Many children do not tire of practicing a repetitive and rhythmic text several times a day, many days a week. They build up a repertoire of songs or chants and delight in reciting them, or playfully altering them. Often they incorporate gestures and movement into their songs and chants.

Some suggested poems are Mother Goose rhymes. Anthologies of children's poems from language arts anthologies for children are also useful (e.g., dePaola 1988). A guiding principle in choosing poems, chants, and songs is to pick the ones that you like, both as a teacher and as an individual. This is important because you will find yourself listening to them again and again!

Sometimes the line between poems and chants can be thin. In general, chants have a strong and catchy rhythm. Many are written for two parts, with a call and a response, such as for two groups or an individual and a group. Many reflect jazz or rap rhythms. Carolyn Graham originated the term *jazz chants* and has published several books of chants for children and for adults (among them, Graham 1978; 1979; 1993). Many current ESL materials for children, such as *Into English!* (Tinajero and Schifini 1997) include a chant (and a song and poem) in each thematic unit. In the following example, note the two voices or parts and how simple past forms of irregular verbs are practiced.

You Did It Again!

You did it again!
  What did I do?
You did it again!
  What did I do?
I told you not to do it, and you did it again!
  I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
You broke it!
  What did I break?
You took it!
  What did I take?
You lost it!
  What did I lose!
You chose it!
  What did I choose?
I told you not to do it, and you did it again!
  I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
You wore it!
  What did I wear?
You tore it!
  What did I tear?
I told you not to do it, and you did it again!
  I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

(Graham, *Jazz Chants for Children*, 1978, p. 25)

Written collections of children's folklore (for example, Opie and Opie 1959) are another source of chants. You will need to make sure that the values conveyed in a folk chant fit with your own values and the overall requirements of your school. Much of this folklore conveys rebellion against authority, put-downs of various ethnic groups, and joking about body parts and sexuality. Still, as you read Opie and Opie, you may remember less offensive rhymes from your own childhood that you will be able to use. Chants and jump rope rhymes overheard on your own school playground might also be used in ESL lessons. Printed versions of these chants may exist, but children usually learn them from their classmates. In the process, ESL students become familiar with the culture of their English-speaking classmates. Here are some examples from my childhood and from a child in the year 2000:

Made you look,
You dirty crook,
Stole your mother's pocketbook.
(Massachusetts, USA, 1950s)

Down by the banks of the hanky panky
Where the bullfrogs jump from bank
to banky

With an eeps, opps, soda pops,
Down by the lilies and I got you.
(California, USA, 2000)

Grandma, Grandma, sick in bed,
Called the doctor and the doctor said,
Let's get the rhythm of the head:
ding-dong [touch head],
Let's get the rhythm of the hands:
clap-clap,
Let's get the rhythm of the feet:
stomp-stomp.
Let's get the rhythm of the HOT DOG
[move hips].
Put 'em all together and what've you got?
Ding-dong, clap-clap, stomp-stomp,
HOT DOG.
Put it all backwards and what've you got?
HOT DOG, stomp-stomp, clap-clap,
ding-dong.
(California, USA, 2000)

Chants build children's proficiency in English in many ways. They build vocabulary. Learners hear pronunciation modeled and then they practice the same sounds repeatedly. Often the rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns of the chant exaggerate a typical pattern in English. Learners hear and produce the same grammar structures again and again. In addition, they are exposed to culture. For instance, in "You Did it Again," cited earlier, learners pick up the undesirability of breaking, tearing, or losing objects. They learn to apologize as well: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

A five- or ten-minute session of chanting or singing for an ESL class with varied levels can be fun and effective. The beginners may mostly listen. They will get the gist of the chant if you introduce the vocabulary and context clearly. Providing visuals and objects, and having other students role-play the chant will all help. The beginners will probably enjoy the rhythm of the language, and enjoy being part of a larger group. Intermediate and advanced children can participate fully if they desire. Many will take part in the chanting and singing, thus memorizing the text. Students that choose only to listen can still benefit.

There are several issues to consider when you choose songs for children's ESL instruction. First, you need to like the song yourself. For example, I could happily sing "The Eensy Weensy Spider" (also known as "The Itsy Bitsy Spider") or "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" almost every day for an entire school year. Those songs speak to me of persistence and hope and of looking up to see beauty. But I quickly tire of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" and have seldom taught this song to ESL learners. Your feelings about a song will carry over to the children, so it is important to consider your own likes and dislikes. After all, there are many songs available. You could also choose to set some new and appropriate words to a familiar tune.

You might choose songs because they fit with your ESL or interdisciplinary thematic focus. For instance, if your class is studying water, you may want to teach them songs featuring rivers, oceans, or the rain.

Rivers ("Shenandoah")

Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
Away, you rolling river
Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
Away, I'm bound away,
'Cross the wide Missouri.
(Boni 1947)

Oceans ("Skye Boat Song")

Speed, bonny boat like a bird on the wing,
Onward, the sailors cry.
Carry the lad who's born to be king,
Over the sea to Skye.
(Boni 1947)

Rain ("It's Raining, It's Pouring")

It's raining, it's pouring
The old man is snoring,
Went to bed with a cold in his head
And he couldn't get up in the morning.
(source unknown)

In the United States, a good source of folk songs is the *Wee Sing* series edited by Beall and Nipp. Each title includes a book and cassette tape. Some of the titles are *Wee Sing Children's Songs and Fingerplays* (1979), *Wee Sing Sing-alongs*

(1990), *Wee Sing Silly Songs* (1982), *Wee Sing Fun 'n' Folk* (1989), and *Wee Sing and Play: Musical Games and Rhymes for Children* (1981). A British source is *Jingle Bells* (Byrne and Waugh 1982), which includes a book of songs for children and an accompanying cassette.

Sometimes the language of a song or poem seems archaic or unusual ("the lad," "I'm bound away.") Some teachers do not teach songs with lines such as "Meat nor drink nor money have I none," and some teachers try to modernize the language, substituting "food" for "meat," for instance. Other teachers (and I am one) go ahead and teach songs with archaic language. In singing an unaltered folk song, children can pick up language, vocabulary, and culture in combination. Students usually sense that the archaic vocabulary is not appropriate in their own speech. For example, young children learn the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill," but I have never heard a child complain that someone has broken his or her "crown." Children realize that the language of songs and nursery rhymes is not the language of everyday life. It is another register and not for use with family or classmates.

Choose songs with body movement and hand motions. Many children are kinesthetic learners: They learn best through lessons that involve movement. Just as Asher proposes with his Total Physical Response Approach (1969), they seem to learn language quickly and thoroughly when the brain and the body work together. You can find songs, particularly for young children, that have movements set to them (Beall and Nipp 1979), or you can make up the movements yourself.

One way of teaching a poem, chant, or song is to start with the context and vocabulary, and gradually move the students from listening to repeating to independent recitation or singing. This method is similar to traditional methods for introducing audiolingual dialogues. Here is a suggested sequence of steps:

1. Familiarize the children with the vocabulary and content by using pictures and objects. For instance, in teaching "The Farmer in the Dell," you could start with a picture of a farm, your own drawings, or dolls and stuffed animals representing the characters in the song. You might also ask children to wear hats or masks that correspond to the characters. Your goal here is for the children to understand the vocabulary while you use the visuals.
2. Recite the poem or chant. Sing or play a tape of the song. You may point to a poster or overhead transparency as you sing. The children listen.
3. Recite (sing, play) about one line at a time, and have the class repeat after you.
4. Recite the whole text with the class.
5. If the text has two parts, you now take one part, and the class takes the other.
6. Divide the class in two *groups* and have the children perform both parts on their own.
7. Practice the chants (poems, songs) for about five minutes a day.
8. Make costumes and props.
9. Have the class present the chants, poems, or songs to other children.

In summary, ESL teachers who have worked with adults need to keep in mind that many children enjoy playing with language and welcome the repeated and rhythmic language of songs and chants. Teachers need to choose texts with care and be prepared to work with them repeatedly over a long period of time.

Dramatic Activities

Children can be engaged in a lesson through drama more easily than through explanations or instructions. Some shy children will speak through a puppet but are reluctant to speak on their own. Dramatic activities can be beneficial for children whether they have a big or small part in the production. Even if a child has a non-speaking role, he or she may listen intently while silently playing the part of a tree or a river. All in all, children are more willing to take part in drama activities than are adults.

Commercially published skits and plays are available in magazines for children. Within the United States, a children's magazine called *Plays* and others such as *Cricket* and *Ladybug* are good sources.

Role plays can grow out of a story read or told in class. After the children are familiar with the story, assign them parts. Children might act out the story itself, or react in character to a situation that you describe for them.

Graham's *Jazz Chant Fairy Tales* (Graham 1988) are dramatic retellings of favorite fairy tales by a chorus and individual parts. They are suitable both for a mixed-level or a homogeneous class. Many are appropriate for younger children (e.g., "Little Red Riding Hood") and two ("Rumpelstiltskin," "The Fisherman and His Wife") have themes that appeal to children up to eleven or twelve years old. Before introducing the jazz chant fairy tale, the teacher needs to tell or read the traditional version so that everyone in the class is familiar with the tale.

Children enjoy the rhythmic language, the repetition, and the call and response structure of the dialogue. Many adults enjoy the jokes and productions. Graham has embroidered the fairy tales with her sense of rhythm. For instance, in "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," this chant details preparations for breakfast before the bears go for a walk:

Papa Bear: I'll make the porridge.
Mama Bear: I'll pour the milk.
Baby Bear: I'll set the table.
I'll set the table.
Chorus: And they did (clap clap).
And they did (clap clap).
Baby set the table.
Mama poured the milk.
Papa made the porridge,
And they all sat down.
Narrator: Who set the table?
Chorus: Baby set the table.
Narrator: Who poured the milk?
Chorus: Mama poured the milk.
[continues]

(Graham 1988, p. 4)

Rehearsals of jazz chant fairy tales could take place over several weeks or months, so that the children can easily perform with notes or without. The class should make costumes, props, and perhaps a backdrop for the final production.

Reader's theater takes much less time and preparation. In reader's theater, children read aloud a story (usually from a children's book) that has been rewritten in play form. You can write your own reader's theater script by basing it on a children's book that is interesting to your students and at a suitable level for them. Your script can be almost the same as the book, except that you will have several narrators (for example, narrators 1, 2, and 3) to spread out the parts and give each child enough to read. A more difficult task is to use a story such as a Greek myth, a folktale familiar to your students, or an event that happened in the children's neighborhood. Then you will need to write out the story at the children's level, making sure to divide the narration among several children.

You might want to read the original story first with the class and then, if necessary, to read the script aloud to them. To include the whole class, groups of children can be assigned to each part. As a culmination, children can make costumes and perform the reader's theater for another class. You can purchase reader's theater scripts from Reader's Theatre Script Service (PO Box 178333, San Diego, CA 92177). Scripts are also available on some of the websites listed at the end of this chapter. Children can also make up their own skits orally or in writing. Some teachers assign groups to make up skits at the end of a unit. For instance, after the class has studied recycling, groups are asked to dramatize (1) an argument between people who want to recycle and those who don't, or (2) a neighborhood that learns about recycling.

Storytelling

Stories are a powerful means of language teaching. A skillful teacher can use stories to develop "more efficient listening, more fluent speaking and the ability to read and write easily and competently" (Garvie 1990, p. 161). Children usually enjoy hearing the same story many times. The teacher can easily vary the presentation. For instance, you can tell the story using a picture book, or a flannel board and movable characters. You can tell or read the story while children

move puppets or dolls, or as they wear masks and act out the story. You can tell the story while children draw it. You can tell a version of a familiar story such as "Billy Goats Gruff" by a different author and illustrator. Children may listen to a tape-recorded story together or individually, using earphones. Many follow-up activities are possible. When they have heard a story several times, children can retell it, act it out, or write a script for the story.

As described by Donna Brinton (personal communication) and others, story activities can also be games. For example, the teacher chooses a brief story, such as a fable by Aesop, and rewrites it so that there is one sentence for each student to memorize. After the teacher checks each student's ability to recite his or her sentence, the students must first decide how to line up in order, and then recite the entire story. In another activity, three students leave the room, and the teacher tells a short anecdote or story to the remaining students. When members of the class are able to tell the story themselves, student X (who was in the hall) comes back to the classroom, and the other students tell him or her the story. Next, student Y rejoins the class and student X tells the story, and so on. Afterwards, the class can discuss how the story changed in the retelling.

Wright (1995) provides activities to use before, during, and after a story as well as stories and lesson plans for children of different ages. Ur and Wright (1992) describe brief activities that include stories, such as a chain story: One student begins a story and others take turns adding sentences, whether orally or in writing.

Gesture and Movement

Children need to move around more than adults do. As mentioned above, you can combine gesture and movement with songs, poems, or chants, with drama, and with stories. You can ask children to answer a question through movement: for instance, to say *yes* by raising one hand and *no* by looking at the floor. With young children, some teachers break up the lesson every five or ten minutes for a minute or two of physical exercise or dancing.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

The best known ESL approach involving movement is Total Physical Response (Asher 1969). In TPR, the teacher gives commands, models them, and gradually weans the student from watching the teacher's model. Soon students are able to carry out a variety of commands. They understand most of what is said, and in the process acquire receptive language, especially vocabulary and grammar. A lesson might start like this:

Teacher:	Stand up. (pauses, then stands up)
	Touch your shoulder. (pauses, then touches shoulder)
	Sit down. (pauses, then sits down)
	Stand up. (continues modeling)

Later, some students understand and follow the teacher's commands:

Teacher:	Touch your head.
Erika, José, Mahmoud:	(Touch heads)
Most other students:	(follow others and touch heads)
Teacher:	Good! Great job, Erika and José and Mahmoud!

TPR fits within comprehension-based approaches such as the Natural Approach (Krashen and Terrell 1983). Grammar is not overtly taught, the focus is on comprehension, and the input is supposed to be comprehensible.

While books of TPR commands are available, many teachers write their own commands, perhaps relating them to the topic of study. For instance, if children are studying the water cycle, commands such as *Touch/Point to/Pick up* the *Cloud/River/Raindrop* can be carried out using pictures or word cards. With a series of commands, teachers can ask students to carry out a simple process such as making a terrarium in which water will evaporate and condense: *Take the glass terrarium. Put water in the pool. Spray water on the sides Put plastic wrap on top. Put the terrarium by the window.*

Total Physical Response (TPR) Storytelling

TPR storytelling (Ray and Seely 1998; Seely and Romijn 1998) is a method of second or foreign language teaching that includes actions, pantomime, and other techniques. Much is taught through stories. The instructor begins by teaching the words of a story through associated gestures. Each word has its own gesture, perhaps a sign in American Sign Language (the language of the deaf in the United States) or perhaps a gesture that the teacher invents. Students then practice the vocabulary in pairs: One speaks and the other makes the gesture. After the vocabulary has been covered, the teacher tells a mini-story to the students, trying to incorporate the students' names and characteristics. After about a month of instruction, a teacher might tell a mini-story, such as the one below, much of which students would understand because of the previous stories, gestures, and pantomimes:

> Tammy has a cat in the chair. The cat runs away. Tammy looks everywhere for the cat. She comes back and sits down. Oh! The cat is asleep in the chair.
>
> (Seely and Romijn 1998, p. 42)

Later on, students are able to tell the story themselves, while others act it out. In the next step, the teacher tells a main story which students later retell and revise. Last, students create their own stories and tell them. Tests focus on vocabulary. In the second or third year, grammar is taught by telling the stories from another point of view, thus requiring the learner to change tenses, pronouns, and so on.

Teaching Grammar

Younger children are less likely to focus on the vocabulary or pronunciation errors of others, or to correct them. As children grow older, their metalinguistic awareness (ability to analyze language) grows, and they do tend to notice errors much the same as adults do.

As you work with children who are developing their oral language, you will notice many grammatical errors. How are you to respond? In EFL situations, where time is short and class is perhaps the only place where the child speaks English, many teachers are careful about noting errors, and plan lessons and homework in response. Some of the strategies and materials that Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) present for grammar lessons could be used with children. Ur's grammar practice activities (1988) are arranged by grammatical category (*adjectives, negative sentences*) and many can be used as is or adapted.

In the United States, where many teachers favor the Natural Approach, errors are often seen as indicators of the child's knowledge, but not as invitations to correct. Teachers of younger children (ages 5–10) often ignore errors. These teachers respond to the child's ideas, perhaps rephrasing the incorrect language in correct form.

All in all, when teachers notice errors in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, they can choose from a range of strategies: ignore the error, make a mental note, rephrase the sentence, rephrase and expand, or present a lesson to a group or the whole class later on.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

I have focused here on activities that are usually associated with ESL or EFL children's instruction: songs, poems, chants, drama, stories, gesture, movement, TPR, and TPR storytelling. At the same time, many activities associated with content classes can also give children oral language practice. Some examples are class discussions, pairwork, cooperative group work, oral reports, interviews and lectures.

The main point of this chapter is that children's ESL instruction needs to parallel their developmental levels. Since play is a child's successful work, the programs allow for many kinds of play, with talk built in. Since children learn from each other and crave interaction with peers, group activities are provided. Since children often enjoy language play, ample time is given

for rhymes, chants, and jokes. Since children are restless and need to learn through movement, gestures and movement are incorporated into songs and games. In addition, TPR along with TPR storytelling are used. Children also move around as they work on experiments and art projects, and as they handle objects that relate to their topic of study. Stories, told with various kinds of visuals and sometimes supplemented with dramatic activities, provide children with a context for the language they are learning. These are examples for just some of the principles given at the beginning of this chapter. In addition, ESL materials published for children often reflect sensitivity to different learning styles (Peck 1995).

Since the 1960s, oral language has been emphasized more than written language in children's ESL. In the United States, children would often take part in listening and speaking activities in ESL classes, but would get most of their reading and writing instruction in English in a mainstream class.

Currently, in the schools of test-driven states such as California, reading seems to be the skill most taught and tested. Government agencies test children's reading and publicize scores. Publishers market "teacher-proof" materials such as *Success for All* and *Open Court,* asserting their usefulness with all children, including English-language learners. It is likely that publishers will decide that more work on oral language needs to go along with reading and writing activities. At the same time, materials such as *Into English!* may start to incorporate more written language. In all, the pendulum may swing back to oral language and then to an understanding of how all four skills can be taught so that they nourish each other.

Of current ESL methods, TPR storytelling seems ripe for further development and dissemination. When additional materials are produced and marketed—teachers' guides, student books, training videos—more teachers can learn to use this approach on their own, as well as through the existing training programs. Research may further document the success of an approach that relies on gesture, movement, humor and stories. Perhaps other techniques will emerge in which students learn stories, act them out, retell, and vary them.

Teachers who move from ESL instruction for adults to ESL for children may find that their focus on the structure of English changes to a focus on the interests and characteristics of children. Teachers' knowledge of English grammar, of the children's native languages, of lesson planning, and of the contrasts between their own culture and the children's native cultures will stand them in good stead. They also may need to spend time observing some children, whether language learners or not, to become sensitive to children's classroom behavior and preferences. In a way, their task is to adapt tasks that children already enjoy (such as guessing games or jump rope rhymes) to the language classroom. They also can take advantage of some excellent published materials, as well as books and materials written for child native speakers of English.

So, if you are starting a new position as a teacher of ESL or EFL to children, you bring at least three resources: your knowledge of English, your experience with language teaching techniques, and your intuitions about children. As you learn more about children, you will see them more clearly as language students. You will note their learning styles, their need for work in listening and speaking, and their openness to language play; in the process, your work as a language teacher of children can be increasingly successful and enjoyable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think of an incident when the oral language of a child surprised you. Write down, as far as you can remember, what the child said. Was there language play? How can you describe the unusual qualities of the child's language?
2. Are there other ways that you can think of in which children's oral language (both listening and speaking) differs from adults' language?
3. Games, such as jump rope rhymes and guessing games, can be used with children who are learning a language. In one game, children

line up according to the month and year in which they were born. Then each is invited to tell about his or her birthday. The teacher accepts correct responses and understandable ones: "I was born on March 23" is accepted as well as "Me, September." What oral language games did you enjoy as a child? Which ones could you use or adapt with child ESL learners?

4. Consider an oral language game such as "Simon Says" or "Mr. Wolf." How would you adapt it to a class, for instance, with beginners and intermediate learners?
5. What three stories would you most like to learn to tell to a class of ESL children? The stories could come from children's literature or be your own experiences. What visuals would you use?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Talk with some children between six and ten years old. Ask them to teach you their favorite board games. Examples might be "Clue," "Candyland," "Monopoly Jr." (United States), or "Parcheesi" and "Snakes/Chutes and Ladders" (worldwide). Tape record the players' language during one of these games. Write a paragraph or two explaining what ESL level(s) might play this game and why.
2. Choose a story, a poem, or song that tells a story. Obtain or make three sets of objects which you could use in presenting the story. Types of objects or visuals could include puppets, masks, dolls, pictures, posters, overhead transparencies, props, craft activities, art activities, and so on. Tell the story to your classmates, using each set of objects in turn.
3. Observe an intermediate- or advanced-level ESL class for children. Take special note of the grammatical errors in writing and in speaking. List them. Write a brief report listing the most frequent errors. Suggest two communicative activities that would be worthwhile to use in addressing the most common error.
4. Write a brief paper (one or two pages) about an adult's memory of studying a second or foreign language as a child. You may interview someone else or write about your own memories. What feelings are remembered? How do you think learning occurred? In addition, how might a person's past experience influence his or her approach as a teacher?
5. Choose a story to teach to a group of children. Draw a picture or make a collage, using pictures from magazines and newspapers, that will help children to learn the story.

FURTHER READING

Each book can be adapted to an EFL/ESL context.

Claire, E. 1998. *ESL Teacher's Activities Kit.* Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Experienced or inexperienced teachers can draw from this variety of games and activities. Directions and materials are clearly spelled out. Some unusual categories are Total Physical Response activities and activities in which students build social contacts.

Law, B., and M. Eckes. 2001. *The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher.* 2d ed. Winnipeg, Canada: Peguis Publishers.
This comprehensive guide covers all four skills and is useful for teachers who have two or three ESL students, or a whole class. The book is practical, concise, and filled with examples. The authors discuss how child ESL learners feel and how their language proficiency grows. Their discussion of assessment is practical and realistic.

Phillips, S. 1993. *Young Learners.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Phillips provides children's EFL activities in several categories: listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar, games, songs and chants, creative activities, and videos. The last chapter, "Putting It All Together," deals with the content and planning of lessons as well as with classroom management.

Scott, W. A., and L. H. Ytreberg. 1990. *Teaching English to Children.* London: Longman.
A concise, practical and easy-to-read book about children's EFL. The authors also provide a helpful discussion of how young children differ from older people as language learners.

Ur, P. 1998. *Grammar Practice Activities: A Practical Guide for Teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Communicative activities are provided to remedy grammatical errors in areas such as adjectives, interrogatives, and tag questions. Thirty-four areas are given, and Ur provides several activities for each one. While written with the needs of secondary and adult students in mind, many of the activities can be adapted to children.

WEBSITES

Young Learners: Web Resources (Young Learners Special Interest Group, International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) (IATEFL)
This organization is based in the United Kingdom. The site contains more than 150 links to sites in several countries relating to ESL and EFL for young learners. This is the most detailed and complete site that I have seen relating to children's ESL.
http://www.countryschool.com/ylresources.htm

TPRS (Total Physical Response Storytelling)
http://www.tprstorytelling.com/story.htm

This page is sponsored by Education World and shares a site with pages on foreign language resources.
http://www.education-world.com/foreign_lang/classroom/esl.shtml

Aaron Shepard's Reader's Theater site.
http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/index.html

An index of websites dealing with reader's theater, drama, storytelling, etc.
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/drama.htm

E-mail Discussion Group

TESLK-12 (Teachers of English as a second language to children) is an e-mail discussion group (newsgroup) for teachers of children ages 5–18 (kindergarten through 12th grade).
To subscribe send a message to
LISTSERV@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU

Or on BITNET to **LISTSERV@CUNYVM** with a message consisting of one line:

Subscribe TESLK-12 your name