

The Montessori games adapted to the language class

by Valerie Nicholls

Games must feature in language lessons. They certainly feature a great deal in mine. They are a very worthwhile activity on many accounts: they provide a chance to practice vocabulary, they enable the children to interact with each other and with the directress, and they require a certain discipline.

Of course, not all games are suitable for all children. Very young children who cannot understand the notion of losing should have games tailored to their needs, whereas older children prefer games with a little competition.

Montessori games can be adapted to the language class, and I frequently use the following ideas:

The silence game

The principle behind the silence game makes it a good game to play. Invite the children to be very quiet and listen to a tape. Depending on the age of the children and the purpose of the lesson, you can set them a task to direct their listening skills. For instance, you can ask them to notice three animals, or listen to the vehicles, or simply decide where the noises come from: the seaside or the forest, for instance.



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The secret game

Children and secrets make an interesting combination. I play this with six year olds once we have accumulated enough vocabulary. They come to me one by one, look at an A4 size white card where a few pictures have been glued and as they come up and tell me the words on the cards, I tell them that this will remain their secret. They enjoy the game very much.

Use cards or put some props in a basket and ask the children to give you a particular item: *le lion* or *la maison*. They give it to you in secret and you put it in a bag. Make sure the last child still gets a choice of items.

Eyes closed games

Games involving children keeping

their eyes closed is always a welcome game with all ages. The three year olds close their eyes while I put small objects in my hand; older children close their eyes and feel with their hands; some close their eyes while another child sets a clock for a lesson on telling the time. Closing their eyes implies a little mystery and this is what creates the attraction.

Memory games

I use a lot of visual memory

games when introducing vocabulary with children aged six and over. If they have learnt about 10 words, I will put the props in front of them on a plain surface and ask them to close their eyes. We might even use that time of quiet to practice counting. While they have their eyes closed, I will take one of the props away and they have to tell me which one has gone away. Younger children enjoy this with a smaller number of objects. Auditory memory games can be played with children aged six and over: tell them five words they already know and see how many children remember the words. Older children are good at this game because they can use abstract thought more easily.

I spy games (or treasure hunts)

These are very enjoyable games with children of all ages and can be used for