

practicing vocabulary. I display around the classroom a few familiar objects. I put some letter tiles into a bag and I ask the children to fetch the object that matches the letter they pick. Young children use the first letter of the word, but with older children, you can introduce more demanding exercises such as those where the letter they have picked would not necessarily be the first letter of the word they are looking for. With children who can read and write simple French words, you can challenge them with non-sounded letters, such as finding an object with a O in it, such as *poule*, where the letter O is not pronounced in isolation but together with the U, making a different sound.

The five to seven year olds in my classes enjoy my "I spy bag". It is a bag with a clear plastic front. I fill it with various props and they must recognise as many as they can. Of course, since all the props are more or less hiding each other, the children enjoy the searching the game implies. What their minds are focusing on is finding more words than someone else does. What my mind is focusing on is hearing the shower of words that inevitably comes with the game!

Learning a foreign language requires method, memory, judgement, a feel for

structure, and the ability to discriminate between sounds and imitate them. Real learning however is only achieved when the learner is able to "think" a sentence as opposed to remembering a ready-made phrase. This requires the ability to transpose oneself into a different way of thinking, a totally new environment with its own rules. The Sensitive Period for language development makes it easy for a young child to adapt to a different thinking process, as easily and naturally as it is to learn the rules of his mother tongue, and as easily and as naturally as it is to learn about life around him.

Educating the senses is respecting the child's natural ability and assisting him in his ongoing development. Children will benefit a great deal from the Montessori principles applied to the language class.

Remember to use materials so that children become totally involved in their learning experience. Make them feel; make them see colours, feel shapes; make them think. Remember: give them mystery, and make them curious. In other words, create an emotion. 🌈



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