

<p>Children have no reason for learning English</p>	<p>Children use their existing knowledge of English to create phrases or words that they need for communicating. They do this by recombining words they already know in order to create new words and phrases e.g. <i>a flower's stick</i> (child does not know the word 'stem'). They have not been taught such phrases. Although their phrases are not 'correct' in adult terms, we can get an idea of what they mean. Such attempts are useful for language learning as it means they are experimenting with their knowledge of language. They are stretching their language to make it go further and beginning to break down language chunks into words. Through such attempts, they can get feedback on their internal hypotheses about how the language works. They are not usually aware of this process. Teachers need to provide opportunities for children to be creative - to go beyond what they have been taught.</p>
<p>Miss I am bored! Children are still developing their ability to manage their own behavior.</p>	<p>Children have a strong urge or instinct from birth to explore and interact with their environment. Young children like to touch and play with things. If they see a puddle, they will jump over it or splash in it. If they find switches or buttons, they want to press them. This strong tendency enables them to learn about the world and build up their understanding of the world they live in. When children are engaged in doing activities, the language is closely related to the physical actions. So children can get clues about the meaning of the words from the physical activity and the context. Through their involvement in such activities they pick up some of the language associated with the activity quite unconsciously. Children are much more likely to learn/acquire key grammatical points (e.g. past tense) when involved in playful or communicative activities. In such situations, the particular grammatical structures naturally arise out of doing the activity; there is no deliberate focus on the grammatical forms.</p>
<p>Children give priority to meaning not words</p>	<p>Children tend to focus on the meaning of a situation rather than the words used to express the message. They are very quick to work out</p>

	<p>what is happening by using situational or context clues and knowledge of people's intentions. The general tendency in children is - to give less attention to the words themselves. Teachers need to build on children's instinct for meaning as it is very useful for language learning- children can work out what is going on before they have acquired very much language. Once they understand what is happening then it is easier for them to begin to associate certain words with the meanings in that situation. Teachers need to respond positively to children's attempts to make sense of things even if this is expressed inaccurately. Accuracy is important but can be dealt with later once children are familiar with the meaning.</p>
<p>Children can learn from direct experience and activity</p>	<p>Children tend to lose interest in things they are doing in unpredictable ways. One minute they seem engaged and then suddenly they seem to have lost interest. And it is this which makes them different from teenagers/ adults. Children will quickly let the teacher know they are bored through their actions: they become restless, they move around in their seats, they distract other children, and so on. Very young children may innocently announce to the teacher '<i>I don't want to do this activity anymore</i>', without feeling any embarrassment. Adults may also feel bored or frustrated with aspects of their language learning class but because they have chosen to learn English, they will usually keep trying and hide their feelings. Children are not quite clear why they are in school and have not chosen to be there. So they will need to be managed far more carefully than adults when they are carrying out activities in pairs and groups. They do not yet know how to manage their own behaviour. However, as they go through school, they will gradually learn how to regulate themselves.</p>
<p>Picking up language chunks</p>	<p>Children do not have their own reasons for learning English. The decision to learn English is taken for children by a local education authority or by parents on behalf of children. The child may not know what language learning means. By contrast, adults know what it means to learn a language. They usually have very clear reasons and a</p>

	need for learning a language. So with children, the PELT teacher has to motivate them so they are willing to try and use the new language. Children are initially motivated to learn English because they like their teacher or because of interesting activities. As children get older (9 onwards), they become more aware of the importance of English and begin to find their own reasons for wanting to learn English.
Using language creatively	Children tend to pick up ready-made phrases or chunks of language e.g. <i>I don't know</i> in the early stages of language learning. These allow them to take part in conversations before they have learned very much language. They are called chunks because children acquire them as wholes - they are not learned word by word. They pick them up from cartoons or by taking part in songs, rhymes and storytelling. Children tend to use them in appropriate situations. An activity had just come to an end in a lesson and a child shouted out 'Finished'. There is some evidence that children do break down these chunks later into individual words which they then recombine with other words (see creativity) and this needs to be encouraged if children's language is to develop. A child might pick up ' <i>I don't know</i> ' as a chunk but evidence that the child was breaking down the chunk would come if you saw him/her start to say things like ' <i>I don't know his name</i> / <i>I don't know dancing</i> or <i>We don't know/he don't know</i> . He/she has begun to realize that the bits of language can be put together to make many new sentences.