

## Conclusion

The modules presented were developed based on my understanding of relevant readings and my observations of the learning ability of young children. These modules were tested on a small group of children aged between four and five. This group comprised two boys and two girls of middle class families with one working parent. All their mothers were housewives and their mother tongue was Bahasa Malaysia.

I spent about an hour for an ice breaking session before I proceeded with my plans. I found this important, as the young learners did not feel comfortable in the presence of a stranger. The barrier between the learners and the teacher must be taken apart before any teaching and learning can take place. The learners will not come out of their shells if they do not feel comfortable with their surroundings. The introduction or ice-breaking session is vital in any kinds of teaching and learning situation. The learners I had were more willing to participate actively once they felt comfortable with my presence.

Generally, all of them enjoyed doing all the activities. They were very attracted to the coloured pictures. As they went along, I found that they were more comfortable colouring bigger pictures compared to the smaller ones. This could be due to not having fully mastered the control of their hand movements and the holding of the pencil. They found it very difficult and frustrating when colouring the tiny parts of pictures, like the legs of a desk. It is useful to remember to provide bigger pictures when it involves colouring.

Repetitions and pauses were very important to these learners as English was quite foreign to them. The terms or words I used with the learners remained foreign to

them until they were introduced during the lessons. As teachers, we cannot assume the learners know the language as we do. Because of this, teachers have to go very slowly to create some kind of gradual orientation to this new language. Learners should be able to guess the meaning of some of the words as time goes by. They need the pauses in order to process the information presented to them. I found using 'motherese' very helpful. Facial expressions and gestures helped a lot in making the learners understand my instructions. Giving instructions worded in the same or similar ways repeatedly, too, was a great help. Repetitions made the children more familiar to the structures needed to be learnt. In retrospect, I realise that patience goes a long way in the process of teaching and learning young children. It is important to keep in mind that the learners should never be rushed when carrying out any learning activities. Let them take their own time since this is a learning process and not a testing situation.

These learners I had loved to be praised. They were very happy and glad each time I said 'good' or 'well done'. They also loved to be called by their names. Children feel very comfortable when teachers are personal with them. Thus, creating a good rapport with the children is a very good beginning in any lesson.

I found that having shorter exercises for each section was more effective than having longer ones. It would have been a good idea for me to shorten some of the exercises in the modules by breaking them up in different sections. The learners tended to get very excited easily and could not sustain the excitement for long, which meant that if an exercise was too long, they might give up in the middle of doing it. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990) put it: young children have a short attention span. Since full concentration is vital in a listening activity, a lesson will definitely fail once the learners lose their focus.

With the introduction of the 'Kitten' song, I found that the learners learnt more easily when the concept of numbers was taught through singing. With this realisation, I would improve the present modules by having songs or poetry in all of them if I were to do them over again.

With the current modules, the next step I would take is to develop more modules with similar subjects in order to prepare them to move to the next step, which is to read and write. In the present modules, the learners are introduced to objects they find in the classroom, numbers one to ten, six common colours and four widely used prepositions. In the next modules, I shall introduce other objects like things they find at home, fruits, food, occupation, vehicles and animals. As for the colours, I would expose the learners to other colours like orange, pink, purple, gray, light green and dark green. More numbers would be taught and other grammar items would be introduced. Other listening skills like listening to stories, listening to conversations and listening to directions to move about would be taught. I feel that all these should be taught in order to ensure that the learners have a strong foundation and a broad knowledge of vocabulary before moving on to the next step which is learning to read and write.

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<sup>i</sup> Snow (1976) features 'motherese' as: a lower mean length of utterance than that observed in speech to older children and adults; the use of sentences with a limited range of grammatical relations; few subordinate and co-ordinate constructions; and the frequent use of imperatives and simple pseudo-questions.