



Teaching 3 to 6 Year Olds

3rd PET Discussion

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Fielded by Sandie Mourão

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How to get ready to teach this age group:

- First, I got to know the children:

- 🖨️ What activities did they like best?
- 🖨️ What were the moments where I lost them?
- 🖨️ How often would I need to change the activities in order to keep them interested?
- 🖨️ You must memorise the children's names as fast as possible! If you know their names, they will feel important, they will collaborate with you... If you don't, you are just a stranger... and children DO NOT talk or interact with strangers!

NAMEPLATES! (Find it in our Files Section)

Use the song:

Hello, hello, hello what's your name?

Hello, hello, hello what's your name?

My name _____ ;

(Everybody) Hello _____, hello _____, hello!

I ask them to colour the nameplates; the ones that were able, write their names on it, the others I help them! Then, I put a hole on it and made a necklace. They were all very proud of their nameplates. The following session, I had the nameplates and as we sang the song, I gave each child his nameplate (sometimes I would make a mistake and give the wrong nameplate to the child, so we HAD to sing the song again...); and they kept in on their necks the whole class. They were happy because they had a very nice necklace. I was happy because I was able to see their names. I will probably use the nameplates next time I go there, I know most of the names, but it's insurance to me.

Ana Alexandra Silva

Children shine when we remember their names and it's quite something managing to, especially if there are so many of them... And I always find that younger children look more the same than older ones, if you see what I mean, round cheeky faces and big eyes, I'm always muddling them up!

So techniques for remembering their name are really important.

I use name badges. It's exactly the same idea as yours, though with a safety pin at the back. Often something I prepare before I start with them - I try to connect it to their classroom learning. This year I had a group who were called <os frutos>, and everything in their class was related to a fruit... So their English badge was a piece of fruit! I also think about what puppet they have, if it's a cat they have cat shaped badges etc.

Getting them to prepare the badges is a wonderful idea too...
All part of the English experience.

Other techniques for remembering names:

At the beginning of English classes, the puppet goes around saying hello, and if they can say hello back they get a soft furry kiss! Each child replies and says <hello (puppet name)> that's usually a winner and helps me remember their names. This stops after about six lessons, by which time I'm feeling more confident about who's who.

With their badges / nameplates it's easy to constantly reinforce your memory by using their names in all sorts of activities. When ever I ask a child to do anything, I point and say the child's name. I thank them too, and use their name... They soon pick up the thank you and start using it themselves.

This sort of brings me onto something else, and that's being fair... Allowing everyone to have a turn. I'm a great list person. At the end of every class one child comes to the front and sings a goodbye song, often sitting on my lap, but always with the puppet on their hand. They love this, and wait longingly for their turn to come. A list is essential - I make a list of their names, and a mini picture of the puppet they have, which then goes up / down the list so they know whose turn it is to sing with the puppet. This list stays on their classroom wall and can be used for many different activities. Whose turn is it to find the English box? Who will clear away a game etc... You can find little illustrations to represent the activity and make several mini puppet heads to go alongside their names. If you cover everything in sticky backed plastic (papel autocolante transparente) it makes it more durable.

The goodbye song is:

Hello, hello, hello, hello! (wave)

Good bye! Good bye! (hand on chest)

Hello, hello, hello! (wave)

Hello, hello, hello! (wave)

Good bye! Good bye! (hand on chest)

(to the tune of papa Cerelac / Frere Jaques?)

Sandie Mourão

Using stories

Children love stories and there is so much you can do with them in terms of language learning or just for listening.

Sandie Mourão

Sandie Mourão's own book of ideas and activities and projects for exploiting story books is a must for any teacher of young learners: **Ready Steady GO! Using Realbooks in the Primary EFL Classroom (Mary Glasgow/Scholastic)**

I think the importance of stories cannot be overstressed - Kieran Egan goes so far as to say that the story form not only the most powerful instruction tool for this age, but that it is a required for successful learning - it transmits all the ingredients that make up the child's world - polar opposites, moral and emotional aspects (the opportunity to develop and express like or dislike is central to children's learning) and the sense of a beginning, middle and end to things. This quite apart from the other aspects that make the story an efficient language learning tool - the repetition, the visual component, the strong physical nature of most stories making them ideal for acting and role playing.

Not to mention the (comparative) quiet that descends on a group of VYLs when the story book is brought out - it's a comfortable, familiar and enjoyable activity which students respond well to.

Dave Tucker

About picture books, I've used some with 3rd/4th grade students (Ketchup on your cornflakes). Kids loved it and they asked me to create one too. They called it "Scissors on your trees". It was a great experience and a class project that they enjoyed. They put together the vocabulary they wanted to use and created everything themselves!

Cris Bento

Concerning picture books, I've used **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** by Bill Martin (author) and Eric Carle (Illustrator). I used it when children were learning colours and animals and they simply loved it. The book's story is easy to understand; the rhythmic repetition of the story appealed so much to kids that somewhere along the story telling they were participating in it!

Patrícia Soares

Brown bear is a wonderful book for the 3 - 6 age group - it's wonderful for many reasons:

- It combines colours and animals and animals are every small child's favourite.
- It's repetitive, so very easy to remember and pick up in language terms.
- It's visually attractive and each illustration explains exactly what the text is saying
- It allows for fantastic sequencing activities, which are very good for this age group.

I make a mini book based on this story and children have to colour the animals, sequence them, stick them in and then take it home to their family and retell the story. This provides for reinforcement in developmental areas as well as bringing the family into their learning experience.

Thanks for sharing this one Patricia!

If any one is interested there are lots of activities online for using this picture book.

Try the following links:

DLTK website is wonderful for 3 - 6 year old activities
<http://www.dltk-teach.com/books/brownbear/index.htm>

A general teachers' site link with lots of lovely ideas:
http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Brown_Bear_Brown_Bear/index.shtml

Also:
http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/brown_bear_brown_bear.html

And nice B/W outlines of the animal in the story:
<http://www.kizclub.com/storypatterns/brownbear.pdf>

This site is a bloggish in approach, with some great ideas for using the Eric Carle book:
<http://www.thevirtualvine.com/brownbear.html>

A lovely link showing what first year teachers have done with the story in the US and Canada
<http://www.district87.org/oakland/brownbear/default.htm>

The Eric Carle website is wonderful and has ideas for using lots of his books:
<http://www.eric-carle.com/home.html>

Sandie Mourão

I love using picture books! When I do not have them available, I **just make them**. Let me explain... Last year I came upon a story: The princess chant... I thought it was lovely. But I didn't have the book... Flashcards! I've made a book out of flashcards. I did the same with "The family frog" and "Itsy bitsy spider". Right now I started telling "Goldilocks and the three bears". I have a very nice, colourful, book of Goldilocks, but it is in Portuguese. I used the book anyway because I just needed the pictures to show them, and I told the story in English. They loved it! Of course, I can do this

because they can't read, and they are not paying attention to the small words at the end of the picture, but they are looking at me and at the pictures.

In addition, I should say that I do not use as many picture books, as I would like... because in kindergarten (especially) **it is not important how many stories do you tell them, how many picturebooks do you use, but how do you explore that picturebook that you choose.** I can tell you that last year I spend almost two months with the same story: The Princess Chant! Considering that is only once a week, that they need to hear the story lots of times, to do activities and games based on the story, I would not say that is a long time! You have to take advantage of the materials you have!

This year in APPI conference in Évora I bought a set of picturebooks, and I'm planning to use them! "Wait and See" by Sue Heap is a lovely book you can use in Autumn's activities.

There's another one that the children loved: "Say Hello to the Animals" by Ian Whybrow and Tim Warnes. It rhymes, it has lovely pictures and the children can touch the animals! It's great because you can revise animals, colours, the sounds that animals produce, where the animal lives... And, as a bonus, they can say HELLO! to the animals! And when the book ends, they have to say GOODBYE to the animals! You can really interact with the children using this book!

Ana Alexandra Silva

Classroom Routines

“(…) children, especially younger than 4, had no notion of "class" or "group", I felt that they needed all my attention at all times.”

Raquel Coelho

1. Children unused to being in a classroom, and still no class identity.
2. Children are still learning words / concepts in their L1.

Part of any classroom management and organisation is to do with planning for routine within a lesson. This is especially important with very young children who need to feel secure in the knowledge that as soon as the English teacher arrives they know what will happen!

Sit in a circle;
Say hello;
Stand up
Sing a song;
Play a series of games they know and understand;
Listen to a story;
Say goodbye.

Once you have your format of activities children really do noticeably feel comfy! I often reinforce that they know what will happen. They may ask for a game which can only be played when they know a set of words better / at the beginning of the lesson, and I will say ... But English always starts with a song first! Then we can play games! Or I ask how do we finish our English session? Yes! We sing a song!

It's lovely when children request their fav. games... It shows they enjoy certain activities, but we can also explain why we play these games and what they are for, in child friendly language of course! Certain games are there to help children listen and show they understand, others are for them to start using the English they know... At the age of five children are able to reflect on whether they know something or not and therefore which game is going to be successful. Let me try to explain :-)

Pass the card - a game I use at the beginning of sessions, about 4 lessons into a topic. Kids usually feel confident about the words they are learning and most can say most of the words we've been playing with. So we pass a set of the picture flashcards around, and when I say STOP, the child with the flashcard has to hold it up and say what he/ she's got in English. We all clap if they get it right, if they aren't sure, I ask 'Can we help?' (or another child quickly asks instead!!!) and then we all try to say the word together. Children love this game, each child gets a chance to say a word, and everyone is busy passing cards. They often request this game right at the beginning of a thematic unit and I explain how sad it would be if no body could say the words for the pictures - they understand that it's important to know how to say some words for this game!

Slowly over a period of about six months, even children as young as 3 / 4 realise that

certain things happen at certain times - that there is a flow in the lesson. I feel this is the beginning of learning to learn! Though I've not read formally about this aspect of it! (Any one got any refs for me to follow up?)

When doing workshops I emphasis an **EEE model**. It's what I think we should remember when we teach small children. We need to think about them going through three stages : **Encounter - Engage - Exploit.**

1. Children **encounter** the new words and phrases.
Teacher **introduces** the children to the language.
2. Children **engage** in the language often in controlled situations through repetitive games and tasks.
Teacher scaffolds children and provides support.
3. Children **exploit** the language for their own pleasure, using it in freer contexts - pair games and group games.
Teacher **monitors** and continues to scaffold.

If we remember this model it makes our planning a little easier. As you can see it focuses on making children more autonomous in their language learning, and we need to provide contexts for this. I'm also attaching a table which tries to show how the children take more control over their learning, even as young as 3.

What I'm trying to say is that **through routine and rhythm in a lesson, children will find their feet and lessons will be easier to manage.**

The fact that they are still learning words and concepts in their L1 makes our job all the more challenging. I often have 4 year olds who can say their colours in English but still aren't sure what they are in Portuguese... Things soon even out, and it's not a problem, **but we do need to be aware of what they know / not in their L1.** This is why it's so important that we work alongside an educadora or at least follow their classroom project so we can support and extend their learning in general.

Recently I was asked by an educadora to work with words associated with their local town, Batalha. Monastery, shops, café, bank, post office... Etc! I was skeptical... 5 year olds won't want this... But they loved it! Why? They were also looking at all these places in Portuguese. They were making stained glass windows just like in their monastery; they visited markets and shops, post offices and banks. They looked at routes through Batalha and went on walks to post letters, visit the library, get money out of the cash point... It was wonderful, and I learned that you can really teach kids anything as long as you create a context for it :-)

Sandie Mourão

Again, on this matter I emphasise the relevance of routine. It is important to make children understand that during that period they are with us we only interact in English. I kept and keep, in primary level, repeating that. I have some techniques I've been experimenting to avoid L1. To little children I used to say it was a game and that we had to catch those kids who used Portuguese. They played it seriously, not all of them, but there were always kids who were eager to catch a Portuguese speaker. The objective was not to be caught.

When they said a word or answered in Portuguese:

I said and waved with my finger "No Portuguese, please! English!" They picked up these words and even said them when they caught a colleague using Portuguese.

I do this with 1st grader students and older ones. I explain they have to use all the vocabulary they learnt in English. Only the words they didn't learn or don't remember they can say in Portuguese and I help them say in English.

When they wanted to tell personal news, what they did during weekend, their new dog, etc:

I asked them, using L1, to use as most as English as they could and they would go like this "Esta semana fui com a minha mummy e o daddy ver os animals. Tinha elephants e lions!...". But I soon realized I had to avoid allowing this kind of intervention or else everybody wanted to take a turn and got angry if they couldn't. So:

I asked them, using L1, if what they wanted to say was about English. Of course, in the beginning and when they were too small, they didn't know how to evaluate things, they just wanted to tell the news! If it was related to English I would let them say. If it wasn't, I would promise I let them tell their news at the end of the lesson, before saying goodbye. They happily agreed.

Classroom language they got used to:

"May I go to the toilet, please?"

"Let me see!" (making gestures and pointing to an eye when they wanted to look closer to flashcards)

"I need pink!" (when they needed certain colours they didn't have in their tables)

"Help, please!" (when they didn't remember a word, but wanted to say it)

In kindergarten we have to be patient, keep repeating things and allow children to absorb language at their own pace.

In primary school, children use more classroom language. They ask to come in, to stand up and for my help.

Susana Araújo

Lesson layout

I soon realized the importance of classroom routines. I observed the educadoras early in the morning and they had a system they called "Dar as boas-vindas". I learnt how important this was, and still is, to children in kindergarten and it was something I hadn't realized before. Working with older age groups is different regarding this matter, because they understand what school is and they know they are going to see their parents at the end of the day.

(...)

Here's a sort of layout of my classes in kindergarten. Once (rarely twice) a week for 50 to 60 minutes:

• Welcoming

We all sat in a big circle and started singing a song in big group: "Hello my friends, hello! X 2, Hello my friends, hello hello! Hello my friends hello!".

Then, we sang a Good morning or Good afternoon chant, all group to each individual child who hold a soft object (a ball, dice, puppet) for everyone to know it was his/her turn: "Good morning x 2, How are you? X 2" All group asked the child holding the object "How are you Sofia?". She answered " I'm happy/sad/... x 3 Thank you!" always making gestures with her hands, and passed the object to another child of her choice. This may look boring if we have a big class, but it's important that we give everybody an opportunity to say how he/she feels and besides, repetition is very important at this stage. In the welcoming moment everybody had a turn. But that didn't happen in games or else we didn't have time to move to another activity in order to "obey" their short attention span. With time, children learnt that if they didn't play a game in a class, they would play it in the next.

• Game

This provided children an opportunity to stand up, run, jump, touch objects and one another, find things, etc. Several times they played in pairs or in groups of three. For example, I asked them to bring me blue objects and the group who had more blue items was the winner. Of course I had to cope with crying children who didn't want to lose, but this was a fun way to encourage sociability, sharing and concentration.

• Story

To quiet children down and to get them sit again. I didn't have picturebooks, but I used a lot of flashcards with lots of colours to get visual impact. While I told stories I asked children questions and they helped building the story. I can refer to Incy Wincy Spider as an example. I asked "How is Incy Wincy? Happy or sad?" I had an Incy Wincy flashcard for each emotion which made things easier. I had more flashcards of Incy Wincy climbing a water spout, a tree, a flower. They chose what they wanted and we made stories happen.

I didn't told stories every single lesson. I also did little role-plays of some songs such as "In a cottage in a wood". This was their favourite! They asked me to repeat over and over again.

- Colouring activity

There was a colouring worksheet for every lesson according to the theme of each particular lesson. Sometimes, it involved cutting and pasting (and if children were too small I'd prepare some of the work at home), tracing, etc. During this moment, I walked through the tables and asked them questions to make them use English "What this?", pointing to the drawing, and I also made them say in English what colours they were using.

- Song

Songs were very popular among them and we always did a lot of actions and gestures to help them understand the meaning of words without having to use L1.

- "Goodbying"

At the end of the lesson, children stood up in a line. I called it a little train and we even imitated the sound "WU WU! WU WU!". If children were supposed to leave the room, we moved the little train around in circles singing and waving to each other "Goodbye my friends, goodbye! X 2 Goodbye, my friends, goodbye, goodbye! Goodbye my friends, goodbye! If I had to take them outside the room, we would make a little train singing the song along the corridors. Then, I always said goodbye and waved to each one of them, which made them feel important.

We had this routine which helped them to get used to classroom environment, and thus children got used to know what was happening next. This also helped me to prevent them to ask questions (O que é que vamos fazer depois? E a seguir?) and to get anxious and excited for not knowing what they would do next.

My experience in kindergarten changed my way of teaching a foreign language and it really helped me to be prepared to work with first year students in primary schools. Classroom management is my big concern and within this topic I work a lot with classroom routines, especially in the beginning of the year. I believe routines help me to build a successful working environment with youngsters.

Susana Araújo


"I had no idea of the amount of L1 used in classes"


Patrícia Soares


How can we reduce the amount of L1 use in our 3 - 6 year old classrooms? (By L1 I mean Portuguese!)


Well... I've always been a firm believer that we need to use L1 with very little children. I want them to feel they can tell me anything / everything, and in so doing build up a relationship with them. But we also need to ensure that the lessons don't become too L1ish! There are days when I'm tired and I don't use as much English as I should with them, but one thing is for sure, the more you use the more they will eventually pick up, as long as it is all contextualised.

So let's look at some of the opportunities we have of using English in context:

-  Greetings (of course!): Start simply with "Hello" / "goodbye". Then move onto "Good morning" / "good afternoon". Then add "how are you?" And "Have a good weekend / "see you next lesson". Slowly increase the amount of language they use.

-  I work in nine different preschool classrooms this year, children from 3/4 to 5/6 years old. I visit twice a week for 30 minute sessions. I work with the educadora and in some cases they are so enthusiastic about English (not all eds are, but I cherish those that are!) that they push the children to the limits... In one particular classroom, the educadora is wonderful, and she is constantly thinking of extra things she can say in English, which the children will pick up. So, as soon as I'm in the classroom the children say 'Good afternoon Sandie Mourão, where's Teddy?' And they reply for me as well... 'He's in the bag!' These are chunks of language which are contextualised and have been used by the educadora and myself so often that the kids have acquired them and take huge pleasure from using them. At the moment we are working on them asking about the weekend... Which is slower as we can only use it once a week - but by the end of the year the kids will be asking me if I had a good weekend!

-  It's important to decide yourself upon the times when English is used / not.

-  Instructions/ management language like: "stand up" / "sit down" / "legs crossed" (my pre-school children sit on the floor in a circle) 'Be quiet' / 'exchange with João please!' etc. I have a collection of games which I play all the time, the rules are easy and simple and even if they weren't as the games are played again and again the children need no explanation. All I say is... 'Shall we play STOP?' and they know I'm asking if they'd like to play their favourite game. During these games the children use chunks of language naturally: The pair game (jogo de memoria/ pellmanism) is wonderful for things like 'your turn'; 'It's not the same'; 'It's the same' ... The kids won't use these expressions (chunks of language) immediately, but over a period of time, hearing them again and again, they will.

- 🖨 With my year 1s... It's very different. No educadora, and all in sitting at tables in rows. But once again it is the repeated games using the same formats but different lexical items which hold my lessons together.
- 🖨 Using routines as well, where English is essential and provided in chunks with a context to make it understood. I begin my lessons the same way every day. Greetings, checking kids have books, did their home work etc. I finish exactly the same way too.
- 🖨 I have a lovely rhyme which I learned in Mexico this January which has captivated my 6 year olds:

Rollypoly up! *(roll your forearms in front of you and hold your hands above your head)*

Rollypoly down! *(roll your forearms in front of you and hold your hands down in front)*

Rollypoly out! *(roll your forearms in front of you and hold your hands out to the side)*

Rollypoly in! *(roll your forearms in front of you and fold your arms across your chest)*

As you say this rhyme, get quieter and you'll have them sitting with their arms crossed waiting for you to give them further instructions. It's lovely. I go on to look at how they behaved, review what they did today and then say goodbye. The rhyme calms them as well as indicates that English is about to finish.

Sandie Mourão

About Portuguese... I use it a lot! I must admit! Normally I just use the 2 versions, but I always emphasize the English version: "GOOD! Boa!" Do you see what I mean? When giving instructions, I always use Portuguese! I try to explore the English vocabulary individually when they are colouring something or doing some craft, I ask them in English "what colour?" and point and they usually say it in English; when they do say it in Portuguese, I repeat it in English and they repeat it with me...

I think the most important thing with this age group is not really teaching them! It's being with them and interacts with them using a foreign language, which becomes very familiar to them.... The kindergarten teacher always makes a chart (kind of) with them on Fridays: what did they like the most? What they did not like during that week! I was so proud! The thing they like the most last week was listening to Goldilocks in English! I was very happy!

Ana Alexandra Silva

Objectives

Ana is describing very affective objectives, and I'm all for that! In our context - I am presuming Ana also teaches for short periods of time a couple of times a week - we can't expect much, but we can hope that children enjoy being with us and have fun in English. I recently visited Mexico and observed some pre-school classes there.

Children were all sitting at tables, often in rows, learning was very much based on rote learning, objectives were very linguistic. But looking at this in context, they were being taught English from 3 to 10 hours / week! 10 hours is a huge amount!

That's 2 hours a day! Wow, what I'd do with all that time if I had it! They also have a different learning culture, and we need to be aware of this!

Classroom layout and educadora participation.

Great that Ana is also working with the educadora. So important. I also think that all children in a pre-school group should participate in an English learning project, not just a lucky few. It should be a class project, planned with the educadora and including her learning objectives.

When I set up pre-school groups now I insist on the educadora being present and participating, so that she knows what goes on and can continue some of the English we all share. It doesn't always work, I have two educadoras (I work with nine in total) who just sit and take no notice of what's going on, and sadly those are the groups which are least exciting in terms of progress.

Why is it important for the eds to be involved?

- The kids feel that their English learning is important, the educadora thinks it is so they do too!
- Many of the games, songs, rhymes and activities can be continued after the English teacher has gone.
- The Ed picks up language she can use with the kids later.
- Integration is easier to plan once the ed understands how an English lesson progresses and what can be built on.
- The Ed knows the kids and can intervene if necessary.
- It helps build a positive working relationship between English teacher and educadora.
- An educadora can help set up an English corner and encourage children to actively participate in English activities during the day.

An English corner.

A wonderful thing! It's a place where English comes to life in a pre-school classroom. I think most pre-school classrooms work with activity centres / corners (eg house corner/ building corner / book corner) and English corner is just one more option the children have to choose from when they are allowed to play freely in their classrooms.

The idea of it being free play is really important, children use the corner as and when they wish, but one rule exists, they must speak in English... They interact with

the activities that are set up for them there. I leave flashcards of everything we learn in boxes there, so they can play all the games we play together. Sometimes there is a cassette player with ear phones, there are English board games, either I have made or they have made. There are English books and word (represented by images!) folders they have made together ... Sometimes there are masks from a story / story sequencing cards / puppets - Anything that will get them using English and interacting with each other. And it works... And they do it without an adult intervening. It's wonderful! Often I notice that children have picked up new words / become more confident between lessons as they have helped each other in the English corner and taught each other new words.

One of 'my eds' said once: *<In the English corner the children speak lots of English and a bit of Portuguese, everywhere else they speak lots of Portuguese and a bit of English!>* Wonderful! English is part and parcel of their learning environment!

Sadly this works in pre-school, but as soon as we get to primary (1º ano) learning becomes very different and I am unable to set up corners so successfully. Children who continue in primary with English do so with much enthusiasm though!

Sandie Mourão

helping children wait their turn / aggressive behaviour

Working with such small children means we really need to know more about general educational theories and not ones specific to EFL. Each case is different and all I can say is that as teachers we need to be aware that children struggle with understanding those around them and how they should / should not react. It is however our role as EFL teacher to help them understand that they belong to a group of individuals.

Turn taking:

I play a lot of games which involve turn taking / waiting for turns. Some children really struggle with this, but over time they improve. We have to help them in their struggle, explain they will have their turn, ask them to look around and see if anyone else is worried about waiting. Emphasis how many other children still haven't had a turn! Make sure they understand that in English every body always has a turn, and if they don't they will the next time - my lists come in really handy there!

By discussing all these things again and again the child will slowly come round. All children are different some children accept it easily, others take two years to come to terms with turn taking - some children never come to terms with it!

Do I do this in English? Well I ask children to take their turn in English but any discussion to dispel anxiety is done in Portuguese.

Aggression:

Again this depends on individuals. We have to stop any aggression and help a child understand that they shouldn't hurt each other. Some children know, but can't help it, and quickly succumb to feelings of guilt and will apologise and kiss the friend they've hurt. Others refuse. It's often futile insisting and taking time from a class to deal with the latter problem, but working with the educadora will help enormously. She will know how to deal with each individual child and what works best for them.

If you don't work with the educadora I'm not quite sure what to do. I would talk to everyone and ask them what kind of behaviour is good / bad. Ask them whether they think X has done a good thing / bad thing. If they all agree it's bad I would ask them what they think X should do to redeem him/herself. Not necessarily making them do that, but ensuring that if there is a next time the solution agreed could be suggested. However if it were to continue I would try to speak to the child's teacher and find out how they are dealing with the situation.

Collaboration is the key in this case, though not always possible.

Sandie Mourão

Unexpected behavioural problems are part of teaching and with very young learners even most, as they are, by their nature, unpredictable.

When working in kindergarten that happened frequently and I remember two little boys in different kindergartens. One was Zé Miguel. He had such a short attention span and was so bossy and didn't want to collaborate and work like the others participating in games, etc. I talked with the educadora and she said that was normal in Zé Miguel, he was a very difficult child. I couldn't let him sit in a corner and let him be, because he would run through the room and started making noises or even played with the classroom toys. So I managed to convince him to sit by me. One day, during the welcoming moment, he took my hand and never let go. Nobody noticed him so quiet he was. I had conquered him through affection and I felt sooo happy! He would even do things and participated in games.

But then, another problem arose. The other kids also wanted to sit by me as Zé Miguel did every lesson. I explained in L1 why Zé Miguel had always to be next to me and I told them they would take turns to sit on my other side in future lessons. Problem solved.

The other kid, Hugo, was very calm and very sensitive. He didn't want to participate and even asked me to be in a corner just listening. He promised not to trouble, but sometimes he did. Then, he would get tired of being alone and watched all other kids having fun and playing and he came to ask me if he could also participate. Wonderful!

Children aren't all alike and I guess that we have to deal and negotiate with them in order to prevent bad behaviour. I believe that if we are firm, but affectionate they always end up doing what we want them to.

Susana Araújo

The most difficult thing for me was to make them do what I wanted them to.

Ana Paula Oliveira

What I learnt that I didn't know was that you have to tell 3/4 year olds what you are going to do - before you do it-.

Niki Joseph

So you can say to a class of 6 year olds - 'go and sit on the floor' - and they will. I was doing that with the 3 year olds - noone was moving/ or moving off in the wrong directionbut then I read that with 3 year olds to move from floor to tables... you have to tell them that ' we are going to now move to the tables - each is going to have a crayon and we're going to colour - what ever -Anyhow, I've started doing that - and it works!!! Brilliant! (This is all in L1 obviously). I guess it's all about security... anyhow, it really works... they all move when they know what we are going to do!

Also 3 /4 year olds want to please - and so if you say 'estou a ficar muito triste' - they react _ i.e. stop doing whatever is making you upset (pull your hair out) as they want to make you happy!

Don't wait for everyone to be silent /looking at you - it doesn't happen - start a song /chant - and they'll join in-it's works!! Really does!

Niki Joseph

I'd like to add my experience regarding the drawing / colouring moment. That moment when we want them to stand up and go to the tables. This age group is so dependent we really need to explain step by step what we want them to do, or else everything go messy. As Sandie Mourão mentioned, setting up a routine will certainly help things go forward the better way.

When I worked with such little children, I did the following to make them go to the tables and draw/colour:

- I clapped my hands and shouted "Colouring!"

- I called out children two by two and asked them: "Tiago and Carolina stand up and sit on the chairs"...and so on...If I said "Stand up and sit on the chairs" they kept looking at me until a smarter kid stood up and sat on the chairs. Then, the others would look at me searching for approval and stood up in a great mess. Some would sit on the chairs and some would wander around the classroom not knowing what to do. Oh, my! Remembering this it makes me laugh! I learned that if I called out their names they did exactly what I wanted! As this was part of a routine, things got easier for them.

Susana Araújo

Niki has raised several points:

1. The actual **place for the lessons** : their space! I think that small children need to be in their space when learning a FL, a place they know and feel comfy in, one less thing for them to be worried about!

2. The **time for the lessons**. Ouch! 16.30 is a horrid time, they're already had

along day and are too tired to do much else, saturated! Even Educadoras have stopped by 16.30 and children are usually with their helpers. Nothing you can do about that now, but next year do try to convince the school the importance of having English during the day, preferably in the morning and with the educadora so she feels part of the project.

3. Letting them know **what's coming next** :-) Setting up a routine certainly helps with this! If you only go to the tables when it's drawing time, then they should know that what you will be doing if you ask them to move there! As you say it's a time for lots of Portuguese to explain... I'm trying to work on an idea at the moment which involves action / cue cards. Images of activities we do in English which I can hold up and say 'Look we are going to draw and colour' (holding up a picture of children colouring) or 'Look we are going to sing a song' (holding up a picture of children sing) - children have the visual support to help them understand what's being said, and know they have to get up and move to the tables. You can also use these visuals to help them remember what they did at the end of the lesson!

4. Letting them know **their behaviour makes you sad!** Brilliant Niki - loved that one! You can also use the puppet... Hold him up and say that he's sad, the children are being too noisy, he has to go back in your bag, and will only come out when they are quieter again.

5. **Using rhymes / chants** to bring children together - yes wonderful, it really works... Or getting them to do a series of actions with you... Hands up, touch your head, touch your nose, touch your tummy ... keep going for as long as it's necessary to get all children following you, when you've got them say ... fold your arms - shhh! And start with what you want to do next!

Sandie Mourão

Parent's Role

The parents' role is also very important. I noticed that children whose parents were interested in what their little ones were learning and came talk to me were more enthusiastic, very keen on interacting in English, very participative. Their parents thought it was important and so they thought it too. At the end of each thematic unit, I sent a Progress Report to parents and thus they were able to work with children at home and extending the process of learning into their own homes.

Susana Araújo

The parents' role... Oh my goodness, essential, as with any child.

At the beginning of every year I make sure parents know what the learning objectives are for my English classes, so that they are prepared for the kind of things their children will do / say. I love meeting parents in the street and getting feedback about their child's learning. I met a lady today and she said 'At dinner yesterday Beatriz said; "Oh mãe a minha body está cheio!"' (Excuse my written Portuguese!)

But wasn't that wonderful, Beatriz is 4 and uses very little English with me in class, although she is motivated and loves everything we do! It gave me another window to see her through!

I also like to ensure that the children regularly take home evidence of what they are doing, something they can share with their family, which encourages interaction and the use of English. Mini books, with pictures of all the thematic words they know, are excellent. Or mini versions of stories they are listening to, so they can retell the story at home.

Progress reports are a great idea. Making parents feel they have a role in their kid's learning.

Sandie Mourão

Assessment

I'd like to bring us round to looking at progress. No one has mentioned assessment in pre-school contexts. I like to work again with the educadora and together we develop an observation grid for us both to use in two different contexts:

1. During English classes with me as the English teacher
2. During the day with the educadora

We share our thoughts and notes on this formally, three times / year, and send a short report to parents twice a year, with info from both of us... This is important as English is part of the classroom project in the pre-schools I work in... The parents therefore need to see how children are dealing with English outside our English lessons. Our observation guidelines are of course based on our objectives, which are simple.

These are the points which we focus on in our reports
During my sessions:

- Compreende e segue instruções orais simples
- Interioriza a linguagem dos tópicos
- Identifica oralmente a imagem
- Utiliza espontaneamente a Língua Estrangeira no contexto adequado
- Tem prazer nos jogos e actividades
- Concentração e atenção
- Motivação
- Comportamento e atitude

Each educadora has different observation points to look at depending on how she sees English in her classroom, but one example would be:

- Mostra estar motivado
- Brinca com as materiais de Inglês
- Canta ou pede para cantar canções ou dizer rimas de Inglês
- Mostra interesse em saber mais sobre Inglês

Another educadora looks at the following:

- Brinca com as materiais de Inglês
- Canta ou pede para cantar canções / dizer rimas de Inglês
- Traz palavras novas de casa para a escola
- Faz de conta com inglês
- Pede para saber mais sobre Inglês
- Utiliza espontaneamente o Inglês no contexto adequado

I am nowhere near where I want to be with assessment and 3 - 6 year olds. A couple of years ago I found a book by a New Zealand lady called Margaret Carr - it's about an exciting approach to childhood assessment using learning stories. I find it fascinating and would love to be in a suitable context to put the ideas into practice. The following links may be of interest to some of you if you'd like to know a little more about learning stories.

<http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/staff/SueHill/Learningstories.pdf>

<http://www.core-ed.net:8200/features/plonearticle.2006-04-27.2988557569>

I liken the ideas to writing a learning journal - and of course for someone who spends just 30 mins twice a week with a group of children, and I have 225 kids in all, a little difficult to put into practice... But ideally this is what I would really like to be doing :-) But one thing is for sure, whatever we do to provide evidence of progression, we need to remember Carr's words: <<Assessment should be useful to practitioners. Many an assessment is "born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air". Unanalysed and unused observations and running records lie unseen in countless portfolios, record books and cupboards. We want assessments that will be formative: they will inform and form the ongoing teaching and learning processes and be useful to practitioners.>> Margaret Carr (2001: 95)

Sandie Mourão

Regarding assessment, I liked your observation guidelines! In primary, we also have them and they are much alike yours. But in pre-school context, I worked in a different way. As I said in a previous message, I sent a Progress Report at the end of each unit and it went like this:

"Dear Parents,
In this Unit, your child learned about:
1. Colours - blue, red," and so on

"Your child played games and sung lots of songs: Find and touch," and so on
"Your child has also been consolidating her/his knowledge of Numbers, ..." and so on

Well, this Progress Report didn't report progress after all...I think...it just reported parents the contents taught in each unit. In my second year working in kindergarten, I decided to add something to the Report that made parents know how their little ones were progressing. So, in that list part, where I had numbered the content children had learned, I added two circles each one of them saying "Adquirido" and "Em aquisição". Then, I'd colour one of the circles according to the child progression on that specific content.

Susana Araújo

Questions from Ana Alexandra Silva - Sandie Mourão's reply

- How do you think that this experience in kindergarten will affect them in primary???
- Will the teachers be able to correspond to the needs of these children! They already know lots of vocabulary, lots of structures.

I don't think, yet, you should be too worried about how pre-school English will affect primary English. Theoretically they will have had a positive experience in pre-school, and they will be looking forward to English lessons in primary. They will continue their learning, building on what they already know. A teacher obviously needs to be aware of what they've done, but small children forget so very quickly and need constant recycling, which is what they will get - redoing some themes they've already done, but in slightly different ways...

I don't think it's as much of a problem as transition from 4^o to 5^o and starting all over again. This is where the big problem lies and one which needs careful consideration.

- Coursebook in kindergarten! Should we use one? There are some books that are appropriate for this age group: Yo Yo by MacMillan, for example. I do like the freedom that not having a coursebook gives me! But a coursebook would provide lots of material; it would organise their work.

Here are some great course books for pre-school children. Two I like are:

Robbie Rabbit (MacMillan)

Three in a Tree (OUP)

The latter has a wonderful set of stories in it with a character called Cookie the cat.

And they come with Teachers' resources like puppets, posters, flashcards the lot...

Wow! But they are expensive for many parents and do define your programme for you. I like to browse and borrow ideas and enrich my classes with things I find in course books, but I'd be loathe to actually use one, because it would stop me from working with the educadoras and their projects. That's a personal opinion though and many societies believe that if there is no book there is no learning :-)

Thankfully Portugal isn't quite like that yet!

Resources/Materials suggested

Digam com o Noddy'. I think it shows every day around 7pm on channel 2. These are little sketches teaching a single English word. I know how young children love Noddy - I have a little cousin who has just turned five and she is mad about it. Children could either watch it at school or perhaps the teacher could tell the parents to watch it with their children at home.

Vera

One of my favourites is an adaptation of O Coelinho Branco, which is such a success with pre-school children. They act it out and have a great time. I'm attaching the story and some activities. Sorry to those of you who already know it :-)

Sandie Mourão

An excellent book that covers all areas of child development for any professional working with younger children is 'The Developing Child' by Helen Bee. It covers all areas of child development, social, psychological, cognitive, linguistic etc and is very well laid out and easy to read and useful for reference.

In it it she outlines how at the developmental stage you are discussing, children are only just beginning to develop relationships with peers, are still very egocentric and developing an awareness of the perspective and feelings of others. (I know some adults like that!! ;-)) She also mentions that most children go through a limited period of aggression at this stage.

I was wondering how teachers manage and cater for this in class and if there are any specific techniques or activities you use.

Simon Cantle

I think the work you do in teaching them English must be in close contact with the children's environment. You can not assume that English is an extra-curricular activity, but I prefer to see it in a different way. I always work in close contact with the kindergarten teacher. She knows the children far better than myself; so I always plan the activities with her. English becomes part of their classroom, and not a extra-curricular activity!

Ana Alexandra Silva

The spanish magazine 'The Teacher's magazine ' has lots of great stuff in though.. as does Child and Junior and »? nursery education from scholastic - themed activities - eg Clothes in summer/Bears/ etc

Niki Joseph

Publications / magazines - thanks for those tips Niki. I completely forget about the scholastic mag. it is wonderful :-)
<http://www.scholastic.co.uk/magazines/nurseryed.htm> They have regular downloadable stuff so do visit this site as often as you can! There's on eat the moment on <myself> follow the links <Make your favourite themes come to life> on the left hand side of the page.

Ref: Carr, Margaret 2001 Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning Stories. London: Paul Chapman

I've just come across a wonderful article do have a look... <Celebrating Young Learners at Work Valuing READING-LIKE Behavior.> A fabulous description of how children make sense of picturebooks and begin reading.

<http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200503/02Clyde.pdf>

The following link is about the journal it comes from:
<http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/about.asp>

This is about L1 children, but has much to do with how we use picturebooks in what we do in EFL classes too...

<You Got It!" Teaching Social and Emotional Skills>

<http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200611/pdf/BTJFoxLentini.pdf>

Sandie Mourão

Game suggestions:

I just wanted to share a game I use to play and that they love. It's something like Pass the card.

I use realia to play this game. Once, we played with those decorative fruits my mum used to decorate the kitchen table. I took some without her notice and then I would put them back. The problem was with a red apple that looked so real it appeared with small children bites and I couldn't put it back on the kitchen table... Luckily, my mum never noticed that missing apple!

Well, the game goes like this:

- According to each topic, I choose certain objects: decorative fruits, puppet animals, coloured soft balls, etc;
- Children sit in a circle;
- I pass an object and say its name. Then, children pass the object around the circle repeating the word when they get the object;
- I introduce another object and then we have two objects passing round and round. If they get the word wrong, they stop playing (if they say apple and it's a banana for instance). When there are only two children left, they are the winners and the game is over.
- Depending on the level and age group we can introduce more objects. It's so much fun!
- If only playing with two objects at a time, one could go in a direction and the other object in the other way round. It gets so much fun this way!

This game develops coordination and concentration skills, as well as helps children to memorize and revise vocabulary. I like using realia in classes and I really must stop buying those little toys/puppets I find in "Lojas dos 300". Using realia with very young learners is really important, because they enjoy touching and feeling things in their little hands, smelling, even biting! But be aware when they confuse fantasy and reality. Once, and I wasn't using realia, but paper drawings, we were playing sandwich making and they had to say what they wanted in theirs. Some children started biting so hard they made little holes in the paper.

Susana Araújo

What's the max. n° of objects you send around a circle... two? **Sandie Mourão**

When I make the objects go through different sides of the circle, I try not to send more than two objects. I give one object to the child on my right and another to the child on my left and they start passing at the same time. It's so funny because there are two words being said almost at the same time. Children get excited and laugh a lot!

When I play this version (objects to different sides), I always start in a very slow pace or else children might get frustrated for not being able to remember the word or for not having understood the game rules. Starting in a very slow pace gives children an opportunity to get used to the game and thus they have more opportunities to succeed in playing it.

When I send objects to the same side of the circle, things are easier. The number of objects I send depends on the number of players in a circle.

In kindergartens my groups were up to 13 children (well... only excepcionally I once had two groups with 20 to 22!). So, to such a big group (13) I 'd send four to five objects. It was only when they took a long time to say a wrong word I'd send another object.

In groups up to eight children I'd send no more than three. But as I say, if they are playing it well, why not sending another object to change the difficulty level? They love that!

In primary school, I have to join the class in little groups of six to eight kids and they play it in a circle, but standing.

Susana Araújo