

develop. So in the classroom we need to provide scope for both systems to operate. Within our lessons there will therefore need to be times for conscious focus on language forms *and* times for indirect learning with its focus on making meaning. There will be times for both precision *and* for rough and ready work. You may also notice that in your class you have children who are temperamentally more inclined to operate in one way than the other.

This is because each of the processes can easily get in the way of the other. In general terms, however, it is probably true to say that at primary school level the children's capacity for conscious learning of forms and grammatical patterns is still relatively undeveloped. In contrast, all children, whether they prefer to 'sort things out' or 'muddle through', bring with them an enormous instinct for indirect learning. If we are to make the most of that asset we need to build on it quite deliberately and very fully.

For this reason, we can see why it is a good idea to set up real tasks in the language classroom if we can. Real tasks, that is to say worthwhile and interesting things to do which are not just language *exercises*, provide the children with an occasion for real language use, and let their subconscious mind work on the processing of language while their conscious mind is focused on the task. We can also see again why games are more than a fun extra. They too provide an opportunity for the real using and processing of language while the mind is focused on the 'task' of playing the game. In this way, games are a very effective opportunity for indirect learning. They should therefore not be dismissed as a waste of time. Nor should we regard them just as something we can introduce as a filler for the end of the lesson or as a



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“I failed my grammar test. I used the wrong emoticon at the end of a tweet.”

reward for 'real work'. They *are* real work. They are a central part of the process of getting hold of the language. This is perhaps just as well because children have a very strong sense of play and fun.

4. Children's instinct for play and fun

Children have an enormous capacity for finding and making fun. Sometimes, it has to be said, they choose the most inconvenient moments to indulge it! They bring a spark of individuality and of drama to much that they do. When engaged in guessing activities, for example, children nearly always inject their own element of drama into their hiding of the promptcards and their reactions to the guesses of their classmates. They shuffle their cards ostentatiously under the table so that the others can't see. They may utter an increasingly triumphant or smug 'No!' as the others fail to guess. Or when they are doing the 'telepathy' exercise suggested on page 61 they enter into the spirit of the event. They know perfectly well it isn't 'real' but it doesn't stop them putting effort and drama into it. They stare hard at the rest of the class, they frown or they glower. Here, as in the guessing activities, their personalities emerge, woven into the language use. In this way, they make the language their own. That is why it is such a very powerful contribution to learning. Similarly, no matter how well we explain an activity, there is often someone in the class who produces a version of their own! Sometimes it is better than the teacher's original idea. Some of the activities in *Practical Activities 1* have already been changed in this way from their original form by the children who have used them. One example of how children can produce something better than the teacher's own idea comes from a class of nine to ten year olds. They were doing an activity which asked them to follow directions round a map in order to check true/false statements about the location of shops. The cards and maps they were using had been clipped together with a paper clip. One pair proceeded to 'drive' the paper clip round the map each time they traced the route. They made appropriate cornering noises as they turned left or right, and reversed with much vocal squealing of brakes when they went wrong!



“I hacked into the school computer and changed all my grades. Then the school hacked into my computer and deleted all my games!”

The teacher's first reaction was to tell them not to be silly. Second thoughts suggested that by translating understanding into physical reaction they had thought up a much more powerful way of giving meaning to the phrases 'turn left/turn right, take the second turning on the left/right' etc. than the teacher could have created. It was also powerful because they had thought of it for themselves. tasks and activ

In this way, through their sense of fun and play, the children are living the language for real. Yet again we can see why games have such a central role to play. But games are not the only way in which individual personalities surface in the language classroom. There is also the whole area of imaginative thinking.

5. The role of imagination

Children delight in imagination and fantasy. It is more than simply a matter of enjoyment, however. In the primary school, children are very busy making sense of the world about them. They are identifying pattern and also deviation from that pattern. They test out their versions of the world through fantasy and confirm how the world actually is by imagining how it might be different. In the language classroom this capacity for fantasy and imagination has a very constructive part to play.