

Learning a language using sentences - a Cymdeithas approach

Some thoughts on vocabulary

If we reflect on how a child learns its mother tongue, with which kind of words it starts its journey, a few things become quite apparent. First, the child learns words that it has an immediate relation to. If you have a dog it will very soon have a word for dog, maybe at the beginning something like Whoof, but that will soon turn into 'dog'. If it plays with a ball, it'll soon know the word ball. Mama, Daddy, names will follow. And soon thereafter we'll have action words that relate to these words:

The child will start to understand and use expressions like: Catch the ball! Throw the ball! Where is the ball? Does Daddy have the ball? What is the dog doing? Is he barking? Where is your sister?

If we take this fact into account we know what kinds of words to begin with, what kinds of words we ought to put into our sentences. So it has to be vocabulary that has to do with daily life and with things you can relate to. In other words, unless you live in Africa or work in a zoo, there is not so much sense in using words like Lion or Zebra in your sentences, but rather dog and cat, because these you will encounter on a daily basis (depending on where you live, again). Look around ... What are the words you would need to know to navigate your surroundings; make the words relevant!

EXAMPLE English - French

Day 1 & 2

Where is the ball?
Où est le ballon?

Is this Daddy?
Est-ce que c'est Papa?

Catch the ball!
Attrape le ballon!

Who is this?
Qui est-ce?

Day 3 & 4

Is this Mummy's ball?
Est-ce le ballon de Maman?

Do you want to have the ball?
Veux-tu avoir le ballon ?

Can you throw the ball?
Peux-tu lancer le ballon?

Throw it!
Lance-le!

Day 5 & 6

I want to have your apple!
Je veux avoir ta pomme!

Can I have your apple, please?
Puis-je avoir ta pomme, s'il te plaît?

Do you want to have an apple too?
Veux-tu aussi avoir une pomme?

Can I have the green ball?
Puis-je avoir le ballon vert?

... revisit the words by constructing new sentences

... add adjectives to your nouns: blue ball, red ball, nice ball, cold apple, tasty apple