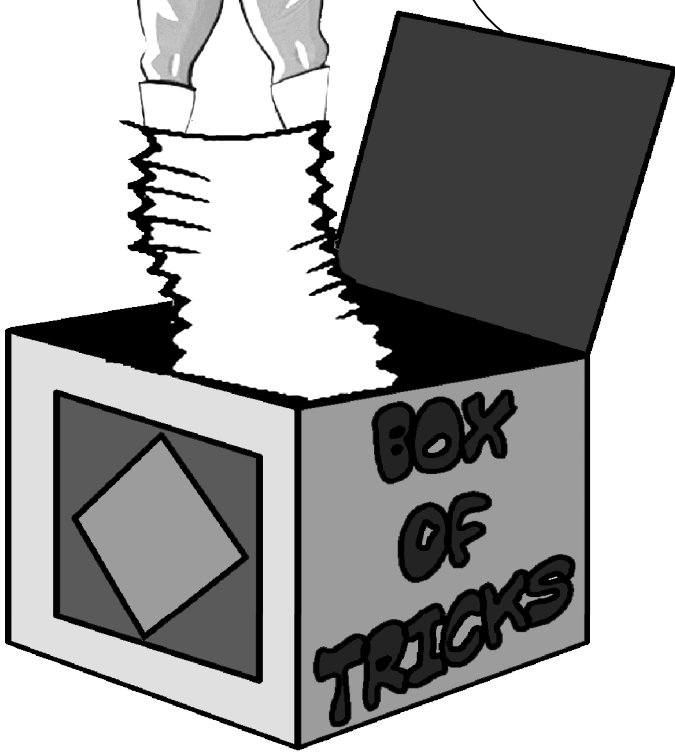


BOX OF TRICKS



A troubleshooting guide to combating restlessness and demotivation in the Primary ELT classroom.

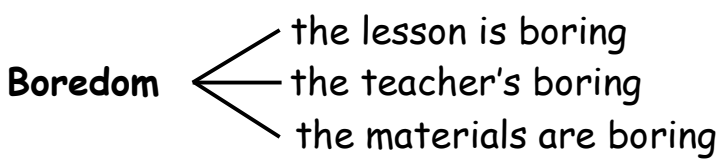
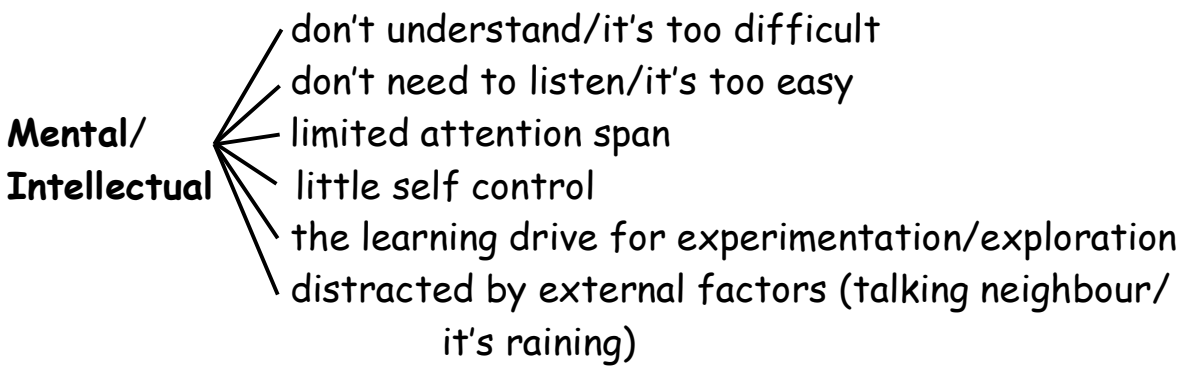
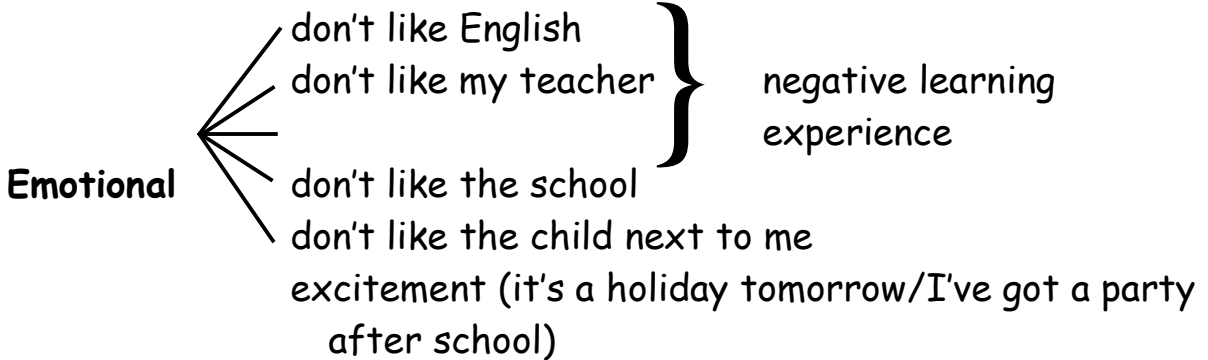
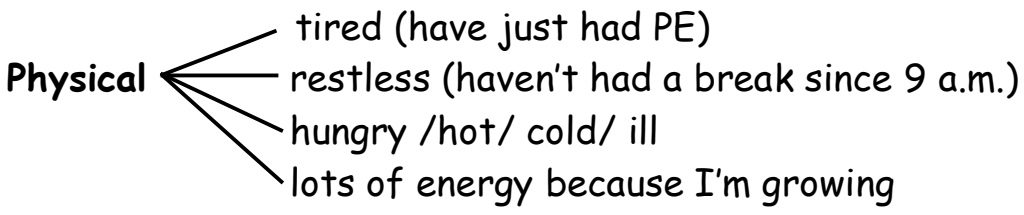


Michael Tomlinson

Kid's Box



Some very good reasons for fidgeting



De-motivation and possible hostility for a combination of the above reasons

Summary

There are some important current external influences that can affect productivity and attitude in the modern classroom.

- Some children spend more hours per week in front of a television than in front of a teacher.
- A lot of children have access to computer games or video consoles which offer 'easy' and exciting entertainment. Children can be kept occupied for long periods of time without making any effort to entertain themselves or to exercise their own imaginations.
- The above factor can also imply an emotional or affective void in children. They don't spend the time interacting socially with other children or grown-ups. There is no longer the time (or inclination) to talk, listen and play with others.
- In developed consumer societies there's a current sociological trend for 'immediate gratification'.
- This could have contributed to the current trend of trying to take mistake-making out of the learning process, thus children are developing a low 'frustration threshold' and greater impatience.

In education we can't change what's happening outside the classroom, but we can offer a dynamic and appealing alternative which engages children's imagination and emotional needs inside.

One of the most challenging aspects of teaching young learners is holding their interest in the classroom. Children have limitless energy combined with an extremely limited attention span. Teachers have to juggle with these factors to try to avoid boredom, restlessness and de-motivation.

Activities that children traditionally find engaging include: moving about, singing, playing games, doing puzzles and colouring in.

Wherever possible, use these as effective teaching tools. In this way young learners can use language to practise English, and work very hard, without being conscious of it, 'We've played all lesson'.

By putting them into a meaningful context, we have seen how diverse disciplines of language-learning such as grammar, reading, pronunciation and communication can be taught with a dynamic and child-friendly approach, thus making them more memorable for the young learner.

- Try to move around the classroom while explaining or doing the activities, circulating among your pupils. In this way you project an air of confidence, of being in command and of being more accessible to pupils. Moving around the classroom also enables you to supervise and monitor more effectively pupils who may need more attention at times. Movement in the classroom tends to hold pupils' attention better and makes the class more lively and dynamic.
- In the same way that it is a good idea for teachers to move around, it is also advisable to move the pupils around occasionally. By periodically changing seating arrangements you can help group dynamics and break up potentially disruptive groups. For example, weaker pupils could be put next to stronger ones, and more hard-working pupils next to disruptive ones. Pupils might benefit from working with children they may not usually associate with.
- Identify the kind of activity types that your pupils most enjoy and try to incorporate these into your lessons. The idea is to channel children's natural energy flow into the learning process; to 'go with it, rather than against it'.
- Use activities that appeal to different learning styles and tastes: maths-based or cognitive puzzles to engage quieter pupils and to access both the left and the right hemispheres of the brain.
- The most important thing with any kind of task is to make sure that the pupils have been well prepared beforehand, that they know all the words they will need and that they understand the

object of the exercise. Equipping your pupils properly with the necessary linguistic tools to enable them to carry out a task successfully will ensure that it is a challenging and enjoyable one for all.

- Change the tempo of the class at frequent intervals. Use different activity types in 'shorts bursts' to hold pupils' attention: now moving about, now listening, now playing, now reading. It is especially effective to follow a stirring activity with a settling one, or vice-versa.
- Encourage pupils to use their own resources to try to solve a task. Try to guide pupils towards finding the right answers rather than supplying them yourself, even if this means allowing them to make mistakes. Making mistakes is a vital part of the learning process.
- An element of competition can make many children try harder. However, while a competition can be a good incentive for an otherwise lazy pupil it can sometimes be de-motivating for a less able but ordinarily hardworking one. Before playing a competitive game it may be useful to explain to children that this is only a means of learning. Although they may not win the game, all pupils are 'winners' if they know more English at the end than they knew at the beginning. Help pupils to see that when they play a game they can practise and learn more English, so they each win a prize, and that prize is knowledge. Nonetheless, it is always a good idea to balance competitions with other activities to be able to reward or praise individuals according to their needs and performances.
- Some activities, especially those that involve pupils speaking and moving around in the classroom, will generate a lot of excitement. When children are excited they tend to be very noisy and may even lapse into their first language to talk about or discuss some aspect of the activity. Although it can be difficult to get used to at first, noise in the classroom is tolerable if it is related directly to the activity and is an expression of interest or enthusiasm for the task in hand. Regardless of which language they use, if

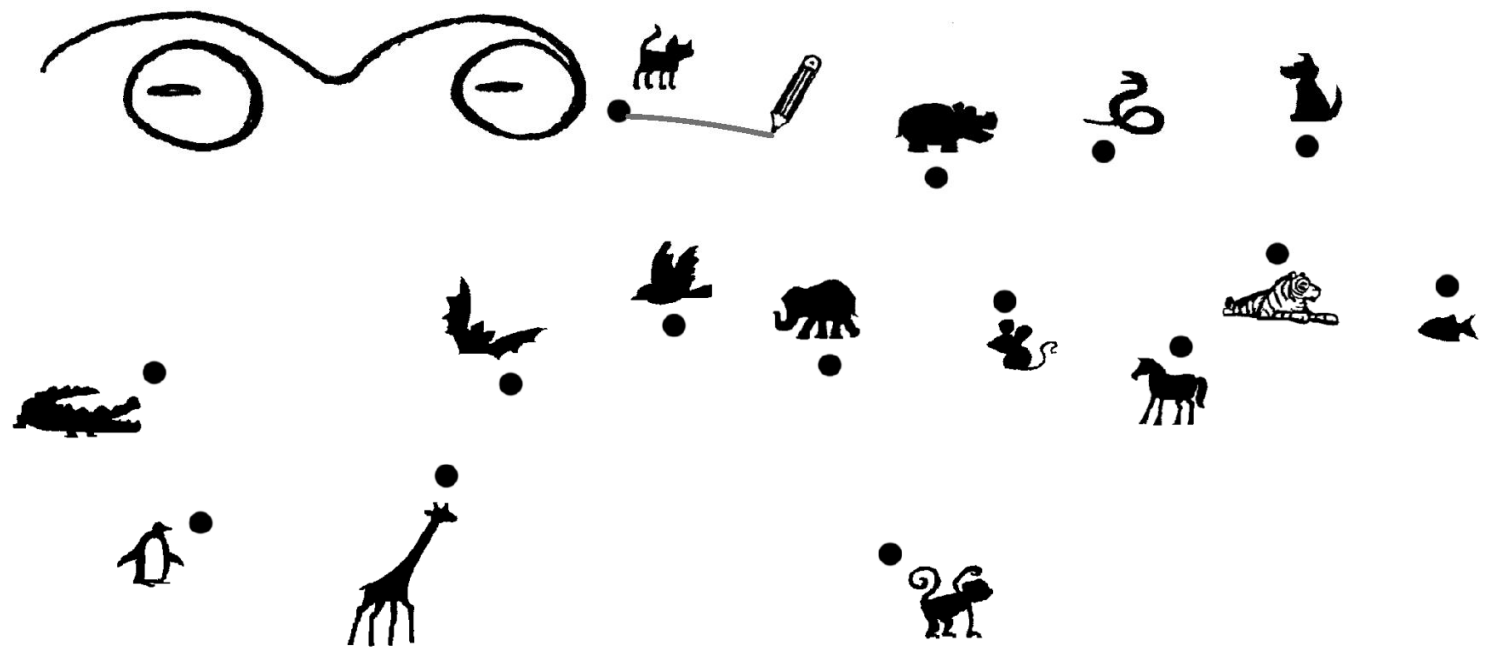
children are sufficiently stimulated by an activity to want to talk about it, then this can only be interpreted as a positive response. You must ensure, however, that only English is used for the completion of specific communication tasks.

- Try to avoid the immediate repetition of an activity simply because it has worked well in class and your pupils have enjoyed it. If you do this, the novelty will quickly wear off and children will become bored. Save it for a later occasion and they will come back to it with fresh enthusiasm.

The ideas and materials included in the workshop were taken from 'Kid's Box' and the **Cambridge Copy Collection 'Primary Box'** titles.



Listen and join the dots.



Photocopiable activity 7

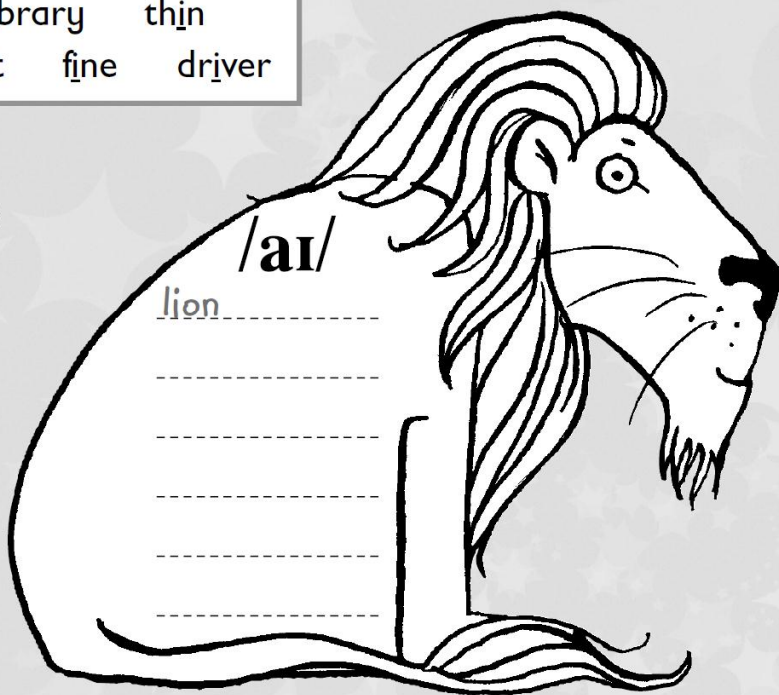
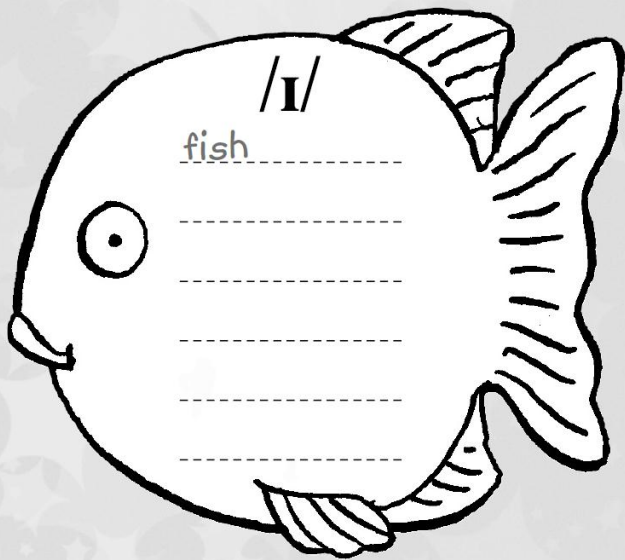
A Hippos and elephants

..... elephants are both
 very heavy. They are,,
 legs and big heads.
 and they can run, but
 lot of
 grass and plants. food in the day,
 to eat at
 day they swim in

There are two different,
 African elephant and the elephants
 are Asian elephants and
 ears. Hippos live in
 than elephants than humans too!

9 Put the words in groups.

~~lion~~ ~~fish~~ island lift library thin
city picnic village quiet fine driver



B Hippos and elephants

Hippos and _____ very big and _____
 _____ both grey, have got four _____
 _____, They can swim _____
 _____, _____ they can't jump.

Hippos and elephants eat a _____
 _____. Elephants eat their _____
 _____, but hippos like _____
 _____ night. In the _____
 rivers and lakes.

_____ kinds of elephant, the
 _____ Asian elephant. African
 _____ bigger than _____
 have got bigger _____
 Africa. They run faster _____ and faster _____
 _____!