

E. Kostyuk, O. Bondarenko, E. Druzhinina, M. Lagutochkina, I. Melnikova



**The Primary English Teacher's**

***Handbook***

**Настольная книга учителя английского языка  
начальной школы**

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО  
**ТИТУЛ**  
PUBLISHERS

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УДК 373.1.016:811.111  
ББК 74.268.19=432.1  
К72

**Kostyuk, E.**

K72 The Primary English Teacher's Handbook = Настольная книга учителя английского языка начальной школы / E. Kostyuk, O. Bondarenko, E. Druzhinina, M. Lagutochkina, I. Melnikova. — Обнинск : Титул, 2019. — 144 с. : ил.

ISBN 978-5-86866-943-9.

Предлагаемое методическое пособие предназначено для учителей, преподающих английский язык в начальной школе. Пособие может быть использовано в процессе подготовки учителей английского языка начальных классов в педагогических колледжах и университетах. В книге изложены основные теоретические положения методики преподавания английского языка на начальном этапе, проиллюстрированы примерами из учебников, учебных пособий и практики преподавания по ним учителей России. Пособие также предлагает дополнительные задания для осмысления собственной педагогической деятельности, обсуждения с коллегами и дальнейшего исследования, поэтому может быть полезно в работе институтов повышения квалификации работников образования (ИПКРО) и методическим объединениям учителей английского языка.

УДК 373.1.016:811.111  
ББК 74.268.19=432.1

ISBN 978-5-86866-943-9

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ЗАО "Издательство „Титул“, 2019, с изменениями

# Contents

## Introduction

4

## Chapter 1 How children learn

6

## Chapter 2 “I can do it myself!” or how children learn to learn

13

## Chapter 3 Being a teacher — being an explorer

23

## Chapter 4 Start with listening!

31

## Chapter 5 Real speaking with young learners? It’s possible!

43

## Chapter 6 Enjoy reading with young learners!

54

## Chapter 7 Writing: tiresome and boring or enjoyable?

64

## Chapter 8 How to teach grammar and vocabulary

70

## Chapter 9 Assess young learners fairly

79

## Chapter 10 Is there a recipe for an effective lesson?

87

## Chapter 11 Create a learner-friendly environment in your classroom

97

## Chapter 12 Parents as our partners

106

## Приложение Особенности преподавания английского языка в начальной школе

111

## Глоссарий методических терминов

136

## Bibliography

140

## Introduction

*It is the first step that costs.*  
Proverb

This handbook was written for primary school English teachers. It may be useful for both those who are starting their teaching career and those who have some experience of teaching English to young learners. We think this book can also help the teachers who have been working with children in secondary and high school but were asked to teach in primary school. Students of Pedagogical Colleges can benefit from reading this book, too.

### Who wrote this handbook

The authors of this handbook are experienced teachers. Despite the fact, that all of us have been specially trained as materials and textbook writers or teacher trainers, we do continue teaching young learners (by young learners we mostly mean children of 6–10 years old) at schools or other educational institutions. The same authors go on working as teacher trainers within young learners' in-service teacher training programmes in different regions of Russia. We are all particularly interested in young learners. We believe in young learners' potential and their ability to learn the foreign language. In this book we are going to try to explain clearly and transparently what we believe in.

The authors tried to integrate both modern Russian and foreign ideas and traditions which we think work well in the young learners classroom. In this handbook you will find aspects of the best Russian developments from primary school teaching. As we are still practising teachers, we are in a good position to know what kind of support you need, what difficulties you face and what solutions can be found. We are interested in your ideas and questions and open to discussions. Please contact us if you would like to learn more or share your ideas with us.

### Why we have English in primary school

Russian education reform is now seen as a necessary part of the modernisation of the Russian economy and requires that every citizen of our country possesses a working knowledge of a foreign language. In order to ensure that every school graduate has strong communication skills in a foreign language, all schools are supposed to start teaching English as the first foreign language no later than the second grade of primary school. Such an early start is viewed as one of the means of fostering and extending language training. In addition, young learners' age has very often been considered a favourable period for acquiring a foreign language.

Unfortunately not all schools are able to offer a foreign language to every child due to the existing shortage of qualified teachers — not just teachers with appropriate university qualifications, but those who have an understanding of how to make good use of this early language learning opportunity. There is a pressing and growing need to help teachers in this developing field. Future changes in educational policy make us think about new ways of teaching English to young learners.

Do we only think of the early start because of the reform taken place nowadays? There are also other reasons that make us enthusiastic about it. Lots of teachers think that young learners are very perceptive to the English language learning due to the psychological features of their age. Parents also have clear understanding that English is a necessary part of their children's education.

## Our beliefs

The overall aim of teaching English is to speak English confidently, correctly, fluently, communicating with other people. We advocate child-centered and activity-based learning and focus on communication and interaction. In this book you will find numerous examples where our principles are illustrated. We want young learners to communicate in the target language in different socio-linguistic contexts and cooperate with peers and adults. To form a positive attitude and raise motivation is one of the main aims of learning foreign languages in the primary classroom. We share the opinion that the teaching / learning process works better if we involve children's experience, provide opportunities for real communication, explore our classrooms and create positive atmosphere. We see the young learners' language classroom as the classroom of success and development and not strict grammar rules drilling.

## What you can find in this handbook

The Handbook includes 12 chapters, each one focused on a specific aspect of teaching methodology, written in English. We also found it reasonable to include a section written in Russian, which may be useful for head teachers or directors of studies at schools. The Russian section contains the summary of our ideas with some practical examples. The book can be read as a whole or you can choose the area of your interest and read it. There is cross referencing in the text so that you can find which chapters also deal with the topic. There is a wide range of practical ideas and activities to be used directly or adapted in your own teaching / learning situation. The examples are taken from our own classroom practice or from teachers we have worked with and whose lessons we observed. In order to illustrate our ideas we also used activities from the young learners' courses "Happy English.ru", "Millie", and additional books.

We want to underline that our book is not a book of recipes. We would like this Handbook to become a jumping point for your own ideas. You, as a teacher, know your learners, your classroom and your teaching style better. That is why we included a section **TAKE IT FURTHER** after each chapter. It contains possible further questions to explore and to discuss with your colleagues. This section can help you think of the ways how to relate the information and ideas from this book to your own practice.

At the end of the handbook there is a bibliography and a list of further reading if you are particularly interested in any area. You can also find useful the English-Russian glossary of methodological terms.

## Chapter 1

### How children learn

*It takes all sorts  
to make a world.*

Proverb

Almost all teachers recognise the fact that teaching a foreign language in primary school is different from that of secondary school. That is why in this chapter we are going to focus on special characteristics of young learners influencing the language learning process. First we will try to find out if learning a foreign language is similar to learning mother tongue and what techniques could be successfully borrowed for our primary classroom practice. Then, we will see how we can take into consideration children's cognitive abilities such as perception, attention, memory, thinking and imagination. Finally, we are going to discuss differences in children's learning styles and intelligence types and possible ways to cater for them.

#### How do children learn the first and the second language?

When children learn their native language at first they only listen. They do not have to say anything for a quite a long period of time, responding non-verbally to the language. This "silent period" can be longer or shorter for different children. Usually our children are given the opportunity to follow their own pace. When the time comes they begin to speak very slowly, producing one word first. They do not have to rush. Then children gradually start to produce phrases and sentences. Learning English, some children also need "silent period" in order to accumulate the new language. Physical activities, e.g. making things, action songs, games, rhymes and drama provide excellent opportunities for non-verbal response and allow learners to be actively learning and participating. Thus, we can allow them not to force themselves to speak or produce language till they are ready.

It is natural that children willingly speak to their parents, who usually try to create positive atmosphere helping their children to feel safe and build confidence. Have you ever observed a young mother talking to her child? Have you noticed how patient she is while her little one is trying to formulate the message? She is so tolerant to the endless mistakes and praises every successful effort of her kid. Even in the case of failure the child is awarded with a warm smile (or laughter) and has always another chance to try.

Мама: Федя, давай кушать.  
Ребенок: Ням-ням.  
Мама: Кушать, будем кушать...

(после обеда)

Мама: Тебе понравилось?  
Ребенок: Дя!  
Мама: Да, Феде понравилось. А что надо сказать?  
Ребенок: Паси-паси.  
Мама: Правильно, спасибо.

Parents promote their child's language development as much as possible by speaking a little more slowly, using repetitions, different intonations, mime and gestures. Parents' language support, which is called scaffolding in literature, builds up children's desire to speak and make hypotheses about the way in which the language works.



Scaffolding is actually an engineering term and identifies a temporary framework of metal poles and wooden boards used by workmen to climb up and stand on while they are constructing and repairing the outside walls of buildings. In language learning scaffolding is seen as a system of support for children and is temporarily built to add to kids' confidence and help them acquire a new language.

So why not try to use this wonderful tool in our classrooms? In English lessons you may support your learners in different ways:

- Use language techniques such as repetition, paraphrasing, extending what a child says, changing intonation, body language.
- Use resources like visuals and real objects.
- Use children's background knowledge.

Scaffolding techniques help you to create a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom and motivate your learners for further second language acquisition (see Chapter 3).

Children learn the first language in the environment where they are exposed to it everywhere: they listen to people talking, watch TV programmes, see labels, read books, etc. The situation with learning a foreign language is quite different. Children do not have many opportunities to hear English outside school. That is why we should try to give our learners the opportunity to hear as much language as possible in the classroom. They may listen to teacher's talk, stories, songs and rhymes. Why not use English to praise children or to give them instructions (see Chapter 11). Creating such a situation where children are "surrounded" by a lot of language is called exposure.

Unit 2 School bag

## Lesson 5

1 Look, listen and say.

### Circus school

1 Can I borrow your pen, please? Sure!

2 Can I borrow your pencil, please? No, I'm sorry.

3 Can I borrow your ruler, please? Sure!

4 What's this?

5

6

Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

21

Childhood is a period of remarkable facility for imitation. Young learners are acquirers and they learn Russian without thinking of the language rules. According to Jayne Moon's point of view (see Moon, J. (2000:3)) children can receive meaningful language input through experience of the language where the main focus is on the meaning but not the form of the language (see Chapter 8). We think that children have a good instinct for interpreting the sense of a situation. They work out the meaning through using their knowledge of everyday life and the clues provided by the situation, or the picture. Have a look at the example from "Millie-2" (Unit 2, Lesson 5, Ex. 1):

The phrase "Can I borrow your (ruler)?" is new for pupils, but this fact does not prevent children from understanding of the situation. Pictures in the Pupil's Book and sounds on the recording provide additional support.

Children are often very creative with the development of their first language. They tend to invent new words and combine parts of different words. That is why it may be a good idea to let your learners "play" with the language. Look at the example of a "crazy chant" created by children in one of the lessons we observed:



**Original chant:**

Lots of meat  
 On a big, big plate  
 With sauce and cheese  
 Meat is great.

**Crazy chant:**

Lots of ice cream  
 On a big, big plate  
 With ketchup and milk  
 Ice cream is great.

Substituting the words learners create a chant with a funny meaning. This activity is very motivating as children are given the opportunity to make choice of words to create a rhyme of their own. Besides vocabulary practice the exercise adds to learners' understanding of how the language works (subconsciously they know that they can not substitute the word "meat" with the word "good") and develops their imagination.

**What are the differences between age groups?**

Psychologists divide young learners into three age groups: 3–5, 6–9 and 10–12 year olds based on their different characteristics. Certainly, these age brackets could be slightly different for every child. Although, as was mentioned in the introduction, the book is concerned with learners of 6–10 years old, it is important to know what children possess by the age they come to school and what they have to develop by the age of 12.

Very young learners (3–5 years old) are not able yet to analyse the language and think about learning the language. That is why we teach them words together as a phrase or a sentence. Such a meaningful "piece" of language is what we call "a chunk" (see Chapter 8). It may be wise to remember that young learners have not got goals and plans to learn English and they will be motivated only if they really enjoy learning. Children of 3–5 years old really enjoy playing repetitive games and need movement, so it is reasonable to use rhymes and songs for teaching chunks to very young learners. You might want to use one of the Mother Goose rhymes:

Rain is falling down,  
 Rain is falling down,  
 Pitter-patter, pitter-patter,  
 Rain is falling down.  
 Many leaves are falling down,  
 Yellow, red and even brown,  
 Falling on the frosty ground,  
 Falling on the frosty ground.

This rhyme includes sentences in the present continuous tense which children produce in speech very easily without paying attention to the grammar structure.

We find it useful to mention the most important features of 6–9 year old learners' cognitive development along with some implications for teachers:

- Learners of 6–9 years old also seem to learn the language holistically, as they are not able to analyse it in full measure yet. However they begin to take interest in the language structure and we can develop their analytical skills using tasks like "find differences", "odd one out", "find missing words", "categorise", and puzzles of different types. Here is one activity for developing young learners' analytical skills, taken from our practice:

## Take note

### Suggested procedure:

- ask your 8–9 year old learners to brainstorm any 6–7 adjectives and write them on the board;
- read a short text aloud and make pauses where children have to fill in these adjectives one by one.

### Sample text:

There lived a ... monster with an ... smile.  
 He liked to scare ... children with his ... face.  
 He had 5 ... eyes and two ... heads.  
 It's my ... dream.

You may ask children to reflect upon the place of adjectives in the sentences and create a new story in pairs or groups filling in other adjectives they have learned. We think it's a good idea to allow your learners to play with the language and give them the opportunity for discovering more.

- Most children of 6–9 years old have a short span of attention (about 5–7 minutes) and experience difficulties in switching it to another subject. Avoiding monotony is one of the ways to overcome these problems. Even if the activity takes a longer time you can build in some variety: make a pause to show an illustration or ask a question, alternate listening with reading, pair work with individual tasks.
- 6–9 year old children are not fully able to control their attention and memory. At first the teacher can direct learners' attention organising their work and involving them emotionally. Another technique is

using attention “grabbers” (coloured print, music and unusual illustrations). The following example shows possible ways of stimulating children's attention and concentration “Millie-2” (Unit 5, Lesson 3, Ex. 1):

The comic strip consists of 11 numbered panels:

- Santa Claus is shown flying through the sky on a sleigh pulled by Rudolph the reindeer. A speech bubble says "presents".
- Children are gathered around a Christmas tree in a living room. A speech bubble says "Well done, Steve! Great, Annie!".
- A child is standing by a bed, looking at a stocking hanging from the headboard. A speech bubble says "a stocking".
- Two children are in bed, looking towards the door. A speech bubble says "Please, Santa Claus...".
- Santa Claus is peering out from a chimney. A speech bubble says "Santa Claus!!! In the chimney!".
- Children are looking up at the chimney with excitement. A speech bubble says "I've got an idea!".
- Children are climbing a ladder to reach the chimney. A speech bubble says "Oh! Oh! Oh!".
- Santa Claus is being pulled up the chimney. A speech bubble says "Oh, dear!".
- Children are cheering and waving from the living room. A speech bubble says "Hooray! Hooray!".
- Santa Claus is sitting on the floor, holding a gift. A speech bubble says "Here's a football and... a computer game...".
- Santa Claus is holding another gift. A speech bubble says "A book, a box of lollipops... a doll...".

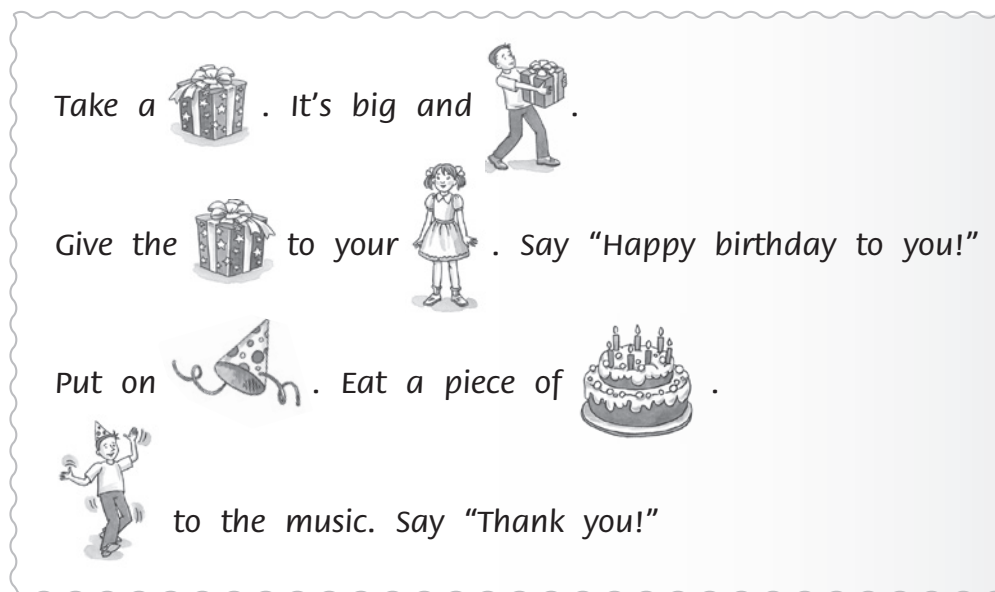
- Ask Pp to listen to the story and point to the corresponding pictures. Tell the story imitating voices of different characters, noises.
- Hand out the pictures of the characters to each P / pair and ask them to raise the cards every time their character is mentioned, acts or speaks. Tell the story again using mime and gesture.

“Millie-2”, Teacher's Book, Unit 5, Lesson 3

“Millie-2”, Pupil's Book, Unit 5, Lesson 3

The teacher tells children a story, which is rather long. In the first bullet point pictures in the textbook are used as a means of helping learners concentrate their attention, in the second part of the activity the authors suggest using photocopiable cards in order to help children focus on the task.

—Young learners tend to have problems retrieving information from memory. In this case it might be necessary to teach children mnemonic strategies. They may use actions and miming as association with the information they need to retrieve. One more way to support children is to provide a plan or a skeleton of the text they are to remember. Here is an example of such skeleton taken from our practice:



By the age of 10–12 learners are usually able to reflect on their learning and develop their own learning strategies (see Chapter 2). They usually work in pairs and groups more easily because they are able to take partners' views into account. In terms of thinking skills children gradually move from acquiring chunks to more analytical language learning.

### How to cater for different learning styles?

From our own learning experience we know that we learn better and more quickly if the teaching methods match our preferred learning style. Children also may have different learning styles and have preference for one sensory channel over another. One commonly accepted classification describes children as visual learners, auditory learners or kinaesthetic learners.

visual learners	auditory learners	kinaesthetic learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• look at the teacher's face intently</li> <li>• less distracted by any noise</li> <li>• like looking at wall displays</li> <li>• often recognise words by sight</li> <li>• recall information by remembering how it was set out on a page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• like the teacher to provide verbal instructions</li> <li>• memorise rhymes and songs easily</li> <li>• are good at grasping the meaning</li> <li>• are easily distracted by noise and sound</li> <li>• like dialogues and discussions</li> <li>• are good at pair and group work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• process new information when moving</li> <li>• find it difficult to sit still for long periods</li> <li>• use writing or drawing as memory aids</li> <li>• have fine motor skills</li> <li>• like activities connected with movement</li> </ul>

We think that it is very hard, almost impossible, to teach everything in three different ways. However, it may be wise to use a multi-sensory approach, which means that you involve different channels of perception. Thus, visual learners will appreciate posters, flash cards, graphic organisers. Audio recordings, videos, storytelling, songs

and rhymes will be useful for auditory learners. Kinaesthetic learners will be happy to play board and card games, participate in movement activities and miming.

We believe that using songs and chants in primary school is very important as they give us the opportunity to get across the same message in different ways. Look at the activity taken from the young learners' course book "Millie-2" (Unit 7, Lesson 2, Ex. 2):

### New language

#### 2 Listen, look and say Rhyme Magic presents (10 min)

🔊 Ask Pp to listen to the rhyme and say what / who it is about (see Teaching tips on page 115).

#### Tapescript Rhyme Magic presents

Look at that! Look at that!  
Here comes a magic cat.  
He's got a lot of presents  
In his funny little hat.  
Fly the kite,  
Kiss the doll,  
Hug the teddy bear,  
Ride the bike,  
Bounce the ball,  
Catch it in the air!

**Answer key:** a cat, a hat, presents, toys

🔊 Ask Pp to listen and say what presents the cat has got.

#### Sample language:

*T: What presents has the cat got in his hat?*

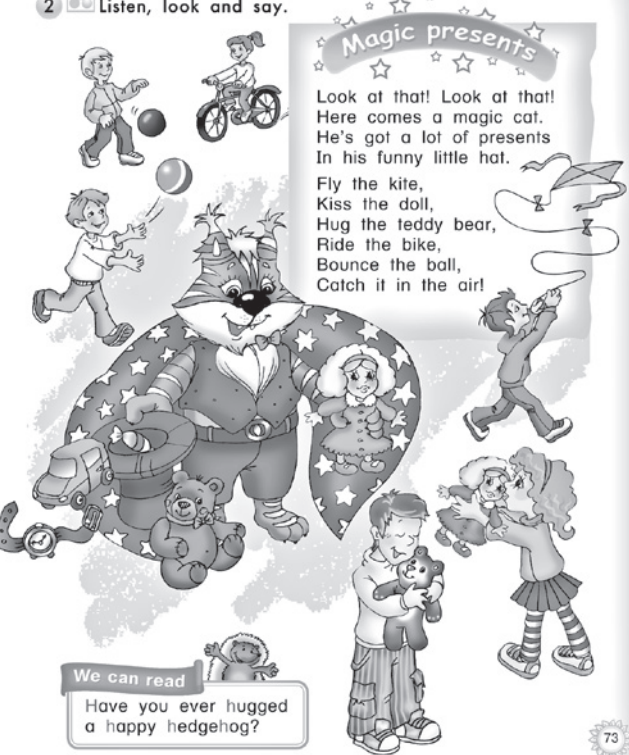
*Pp: A doll, a ball, a teddy bear, a bike, a kite.*

- Tell Pp the rhyme and mime it.
- Say the rhyme and mime it. Ask Pp to join in the miming.
- Tell the rhyme without miming. Ask Pp to mime the actions.
- Ask Pp to mime words and phrases from the rhyme *a hat, bounce the ball, ride the bike, fly the kite, catch the ball*. Pronounce them in random order.
- Ask Pp to listen to the rhyme and point to the corresponding pictures.
- Tell and mime the rhyme. Ask Pp to join in.

"Millie-2", Teacher's Book, Unit 7, Lesson 2

Unit 7 Toyland

2 🔊 Listen, look and say.



**Magic presents**

Look at that! Look at that!  
Here comes a magic cat.  
He's got a lot of presents  
In his funny little hat.  
Fly the kite,  
Kiss the doll,  
Hug the teddy bear,  
Ride the bike,  
Bounce the ball,  
Catch it in the air!

**We can read**

Have you ever hugged a happy hedgehog?

Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

73

The extract taken from the Teacher's Book tells us that this activity involves hearing, seeing and moving. Pupils are given opportunity to perceive and process information through different sensory channels.

In addition to three learning styles you might find interesting Howard Gardner's work "Frames of Mind" (1983) in which he suggests that all individuals have personal intelligence profiles that consist of eight different intelligence types. It means that each child shows strengths in some areas of learning. Originally Howard Gardner defined seven intelligences; later on one more intelligence (naturalistic) was added.

"Millie-2", Pupil's Book, Unit 7, Lesson 2



Intelligence type	Brief characteristic
Logical-mathematical	are good at figuring out logical puzzles, calculating, problem-solving, computers, like classifying, ranking activities
Linguistic	like reading, writing, telling stories, doing crossword puzzles, have rich vocabulary
Visual-spatial	enjoy drawing, completing mind maps, learn well from using pictures, maps, diagrams, charts
Musical	learn well from using chants, songs and rhymes, are good at listening
Bodily-kinaesthetic	like touching, gesturing, learn through moving and manipulating objects, actions
Intrapersonal	like to reflect, to do self-assessment exercises, to learn independently, to do project work, creative writing, are good at planning
Interpersonal	learn well from pair or group work activities, are good organisers
Naturalistic	notice similarities and differences between things, who are good at classifying and organising things into groups

Knowing about children's strengths or weaknesses is a good basis to start the development of their intelligences. It may happen that linguistic intelligence type is not a prevailing one in the group of children you teach. Does it mean that they will not succeed in learning a foreign language? Not at all! They can use their strengths in other intelligences to compensate for this weakness. That is why it can be really useful to incorporate various activities building on different intelligences.



- Take into consideration that you are teaching English to children who have learnt one language already.
- Create a supportive environment encouraging children to acquire the new language.
- Use your knowledge about cognitive development of children (their attention, memory, perception) to meet your learners' needs.
- Remember that children are different and all of them need enough opportunities for learning.

### Take it Further

#### Reflect

Do I provide learners with the opportunities to develop learners' own views about language? Do I allow them to experiment with the new language?

#### Explore

Try to define prevailing intelligences of the children in your group. Observe your learners during the lessons, when they have free time and nobody tells them what to do. Think how you can adapt and balance activities you use to meet your children's need.

#### Discuss

Why not talk to your learners' primary teacher and ask her / him to tell you about their individual features? Compare the information you get with the results of your own observation. The talk might be beneficial for both of you.

Учебное издание

E. Kostyuk  
O. Bondarenko  
E. Druzhinina  
M. Lagutochkina  
I. Melnikova

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**Настольная книга учителя  
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Редактор А.Е. Казеичева  
Корректоры Г.А. Киселева, Г.П. Мартыненко  
Дизайн макета В. КиН  
Верстка Е.А. Шаповаловой  
Художник Т.С. Богомягих  
Художественный редактор Е.А. Валяева

ЗАО "Издательство „Титул“ 249035, Калужская обл., г. Обнинск, а/я 5055.  
Тел. +7 (484) 399-10-09. E-mail: [umk@titul.ru](mailto:umk@titul.ru). [www.titul.ru](http://www.titul.ru)



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ISBN 978-5-86866-537-0



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