Unit 1

Classifying

Classifying is a basic cognitive function that children normally learn early in life. Once a child attaches an attribute label to an object, he develops the ability to attach meaning to the label. Function is often the first attribute a child learns about an object. Shoes are for wearing on his feet, food is for eating, etc. The child quickly learns additional critical attributes of words and his internal definitions for them become more adult-like. Although parents may be confused and amused when their toddler calls a cow "doggie," to the linguist, this toddler is demonstrating his knowledge of primitive class-naming. He is simply over-generalizing *doggie* to all four-legged animals.

As the child masters critical attributes, he begins to develop classification skills. He learns that all hot things can hurt and that not all red things are apples. As the child continues to gain experience and knowledge, he refines his sorting abilities. He begins by recognizing things that are the same and, therefore, things that are different. Then he begins to match and sort objects by attribute, function, or name. These receptive skills soon become expressive language as the child tells his mom, "A dog is a pet but a cow is a farm animal." Over time, the child applies the same types of object classifying to thoughts and abstract concepts, such as characters' emotions or intentions in stories. The more organized the child's vocabulary is, the more easily he can retrieve the precise words he needs.

Ultimately, classifying skills enable children and adults to organize ideas, sequence them, and think about them logically. For all of the numerous and diverse cognitive tasks required in daily life, flexibility in classifying and the corresponding language is essential. Children must be able to prioritize classifications to select salient attributes for given situations. For example, when a child hears "Watch out for cars," he must be able to focus upon attributes of the cars' sizes and dangers, rather than upon attributes of the cars' parts, colors, or composition. The child's experiences and his language flexibility allow him to identify the most salient features of *car* at the time the warning is given.

Imagine how the world looks to a student who doesn't classify and make logical connections between words or ideas. Learning new vocabulary must be overwhelming and frustrating. This student is unable to differentiate or attach importance to the attributes of words. He cannot differentiate critical from unimportant attributes of a word. He does not have a mental grouping system to organize incoming information into logical chunks. This student's vocabulary does not grow rapidly as he is exposed to new objects and experiences. Recalling words from memory is labor-intensive for this student. His receptive and expressive communication skills are, consequently, delayed.

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Task 3

Answering True/False Questions

Goals: To identify whether a statement is true or false
To explain why a statement is false

Read these statements to your students. Ask them to listen to the entire statement and tell you if it is true or false. If it is false, ask them to make it true or explain why it is false. Remind them that words like *all*, *none*, *everyone*, and *always* are clues that a statement might be false.

True or False at School

1. A school is a place to learn. (T)
2. Children go to kindergarten as soon as they are born. (F; when they reach the legal age for kindergarten)
3. All schools have gyms and playgrounds. (F; most schools have gyms and playgrounds.)
4. Schools have teachers and students. (T)
5. Everyone goes to school each day. (F; adults and young children don't all go to school; most students don't go to school over the weekend.)
6. Students learn math and science at school. (T)
7. School buses take all students to school and home. (F; not all students take a bus.)
8. Some students walk to school. (T)
9. Every elementary school has a principal. (T)
10. In math class, you learn about numbers. (T)
11. Some books help you learn. (T)
12. Schools have practice fire drills. (T)
13. All students put their coats and books in lockers. (F; not all students have lockers.)
14. The English alphabet has 26 letters. (T)
15. All students eat lunch at school. (F; some go home for lunch.)

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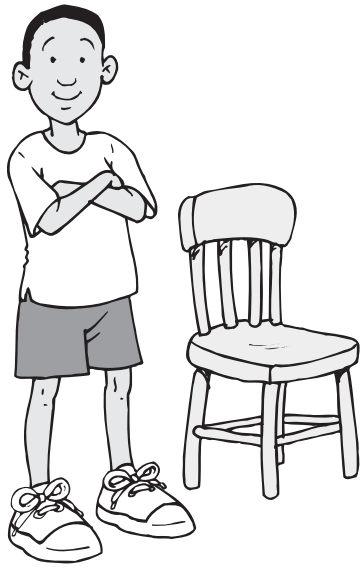
Task 14

Predicting Outcomes

Goal: To compare the outcome for two or more events or situations

Raoul and Gail use chairs in different ways. Tell how they each use their chairs. How well does each child get around? Write your answers on the lines next to each picture.



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Task 2

Stating Opinions

Goal: To identify pros and cons of issues in order to form opinions

- Have your students list the pros and cons to support a given opinion about an issue.
- Divide the group into those in favor (pros) and those against (cons) an opinion.
- Have each group work together to support their opinions logically.
- Give each group up to three minutes to explain their position on the issue.
- Have the groups take opposite sides of the issue and support their new (reversed) opinions logically.
- Ask students if their original opinions have changed because of this exercise. If so, ask them what changed their minds.

Here are some issues to use for this task. Encourage your students to add to this list.

1. All students in your school should wear uniforms.
2. Your city/town should have a curfew of 8:00 p.m. on school nights.
3. Teachers should not give homework over weekends.
4. Friends should be loyal to each other.
5. Tests are a good way to find out what you have learned.
6. Report cards are a good idea.
7. It's okay to drop out of school before you graduate.
8. A 16-year-old can be a good parent.
9. People should have a doctor's prescription for all drugs.
10. Smoking is a personal choice.
11. Good music should be loud.
12. A parent should not search a child's room without permission.

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