

# Teaching Hebrew using active fun

By Hagit Tal

[Hagit@tal.bz](mailto:Hagit@tal.bz) 07973264737

## Teaching a second language in early years

Various research studies undertaken between the 70's and now show that children who have an early start in learning a second language develop and maintain better skills such as, listening, comprehension and pronunciation.

## Learning a language requires four skills:

Listening

Speaking (Vocabulary, Phonology and Syllabuses)

Reading

Writing

Following from these four skills grammar is added.

(In language teaching terms, the development of words, their meanings and the link between them, will be covered under the term Vocabulary)

When aiming to teach a second language, we need to think about how the children seek out meanings for themselves from the language and to focus on the interaction of the words. Please remember that children can only make sense in terms of their familiar environment. Children use their first language to learn a second language. Therefore, I use both English and Hebrew during the lesson.

When trying to teach children we need to remember that:

- They are often enthusiastic and lively as learners.
- Most children want to please the teacher.
- They will have a go at an activity even when they do not quite understand why or how.
- Children often seem less embarrassed than adults in speaking a new language.

But we also need to know that:

- Children lose interest quickly.
- They are less able to keep themselves motivated on tasks they find difficult.
- Some children will have very little experience of the language outside the classroom compared to children in the same group with lots of experience outside the classroom, for example home.
- When working within a group, we will find differences from the linguistic, psychological and social development of the children.

As a result, we need to adjust the activities we use in the lesson.

## Why teaching Hebrew in early years?

1. To maintain the language as a key to continuity in all domains of Jewish and community life.
2. To develop a learning process which, from the beginning, will create positive attitudes, a fondness for and sympathy towards the Hebrew language, its culture and its speakers, now and in the future.

## The Hebrew language-Facts:

- Hebrew is a language around 4000 years old.
- It comes from the area known today as the Middle East.
- It's a sister language to Arabic.
- In Hebrew each letter has one sound only. Compared to the English language, letters often have more than one sound to them: for example the "S" letter in "soup" and in "sugar".
- Hebrew is the first official language of the state of Israel, which has become the centre of Jewish life today.

- Hebrew is the language of the bible and so it's part of the Jewish heritage.
- Hebrew enables Jews all over the world to communicate with each other.

### Total Physical Response

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1749-6632.1981.tb42019.x/abstract>

Asher, J.C. (1979).

#### **Learning Another Language Through Actions.**

San Jose, California, USA

James J. Asher defines the Total Physical Response (TPR) method as one that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. This combination of skills allows the student to integrate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation.

#### My basic concept:

Understanding the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking. The children do the connection between action, Image and the Hebrew Word.

The Hebrew language sounds are less smooth than English therefore, it takes the children time to feel comfortable and confident enough to begin to speak spontaneously, producing the sounds and words we learn. Forcing the children, in my experience, will cause rejection.

#### **How to:**

##### Step 1:

I say the word, perform the action and/or show the image.

##### Step 2:

We, both the children and I, are breaking the word into sounds.

Then saying the word and clapping it according to the way the word breaks.

##### Step 3:

I say the word but only children perform the action.

##### Step 4:

I ask one child at a time to say the word with its action or alternatively

I ask a child to translate from Hebrew to English.

#### **Working with Class teachers:**

At the beginning of the week, I ask the class teacher what is the learning topic for the coming week. When creating a session I add words related to the learning topic. It gives the children the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in circle time and build their self-esteem.

Another question I ask is to know who is the target child for this week to be able to provide observation material if needed.