



The Montessori OBSERVER

Reflective
Language

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- 4. No Negative Attention to Misbehavior
- 5. Don't Correct Child
- 6. Basis of Interest (ask, touch/look)
- 7. Model Good Behavior
- 8. Eye contact before Talking
- 9. Don't Interrupt Concentration
- 10. Be Friendly - Get Acquainted
- 11. - Isolate Variable
- 14. Child Watching
- 15. Same Routines all the Time
- 16. Take out Everything
- 17. From the Shelf
- 18. Lay out Random
- 19. Simplify Comp
- 20. Confirm Accur
- Clarify/Es

Award ceremony at the Disney Kidz Playschool in Chennai, India. On wall in background is list of IMS technology "protocols."

Disney Kidz in Chennai, India

Ishita Bhagat, education leader in south India, recently announced plans to expand outreach and awareness for the 'new education' in her region. An initial step in this plan has been to establish *Disney Kidz School* in Chennai, which in March, 2013, became recognized as a Montessori school by IMS.

Ishita is now also working to organize the recognized Montessori schools in her state of Tamil Nadu. Her basic idea is to provide mutual support and cooperation among the schools, such as by improving the quality of teacher education. She says there are approximately 100 Montessori schools in Tamil Nadu which could be contacted and involved in this effort.

Lee Havis, IMS director, confirmed the presence of a growing number of IMS recognized schools in south India, which he sees as a promising basis for advancing the 'new education' there. He says, "With the leadership of Ishita B. and other recognized school directors in the area, I'm quite confident we can schedule an IMS workshop training in Chennai in the near future. This workshop could then also help develop our plans for the 'Character Teaching' project which is designed to apply Montessori teaching to resolve the basic problem of long-term poverty."

For further information, contact: Ishita B., Disney Kidz, #3, Ponniamman Koil, IInd Cross St., Rajakilpakkam, Chennai, 600073, TN, India, 91-9962672-766, discneykidz@yahoo.com.

Experiences with IMS Technology

Cheryl McGowen
(IMS student, Morgan Hill, CA)

I am a teacher at a Montessori school in Morgan Hill, CA .. and have been taking the IMS course for some time now. I find the techniques, protocols, as well as safe words very beneficial to the environment where I work. I am able to stand back, observe the class and notice the adult personality while not focusing on a hub child and intervening in situations that arise.

By applying the tools that I have learned through the course, problem scenarios such as gathering the children for a short circle or dismissal is not chaotic when I use techniques such as *eye contact* and *patient waiting*. Its wonderful to have practical and

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Noreen's Montessori in Karachi, Pakistan

Noreen's Montessori Villa was established in 2006 as a non-profit educational center to promote the dynamic teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori. **Noreen Nusrat**, the principal founder, views the school as an extension of home, providing a natural learning environment in a family style setting of children aged 2 to 6 ½ years of age.

Noreen says her passion for teaching arose from childhood in a warm and well-educated family. She especially credits her father for his loyal support and encouragement to start the school.

The Villa School is located in a populated mixed residential and commercial district of Karachi, with peaceful surroundings and well-educated families in the neighborhood. Noreen states that "The building is very well designed...with a terrace for outdoor activities. I really had to work very hard to make it a complete prepared environment with a full range of Montessori apparatus."

Noreen points to a number of positive aspects of her school operation. She says, "the very informative literature from IMS which I receive is very helpful to introduce the new techniques of education, and I feel pleasure to work with children personally along with my three other trained directresses. The biggest satisfaction is the parents' appreciation which I received from time to time." She also recognizes with pride the many graduating students who have been accepted into well-respected schools in the city and even out of the country.

Noreen's desire is to spread Montessori education as widely as possible. She has therefore been active with others to bring an IMS workshop training to Pakistan. For further information, contact, Noreen Nusrat, Noreen's Montessori Villa, Rashid Minhas Rd., Karachi, Pakistan, noreensvilla@yahoo.com. 00-92-21-34985304



Cheryl McGowen, IMS student, observing child working with dressing frame, Morgan Hill, CA



Reflective Language

by Lee Havis

Definition: "Technique involving the teacher repeating back the same language initiated by the child; e.g., (child) 'Where is my book?' (teacher) 'Where is your book?' – Glossary of Montessori Terms (GMT) – Lee Havis

The IMS Montessori technology includes the technique *reflective language* to help control your verbal expression with children. In Montessori teaching, this is especially necessary to overcome the ordinary tendency to 'explain,' 'answer,' or 'teach' children in an excessive and unnecessary manner. Using this technique therefore helps reduce dependency and attachment to the adult personality by re-directing the child's attention to the perfect guidance of the teacher within himself.

Teacher Within

"...the child...has a teacher within himself...this inner teacher also follows a program and technique of education..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.46

Conventional teaching is inherently imperfect since it limits experience to meaning and understanding to the adult's sense of truth and reality. By contrast, Montessori teaching helps children learn naturally by following their perfect inner teacher of nature. In this collaboration with nature, the *reflective language* technique is especially important to use whenever a child comes asking you for help.

Asking for Help

"Some children...ask an adult for help... What seems to be an eager curiosity is in reality a means of keeping a person whom they need for support near at hand."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.161-62

In Montessori teaching, a central function is to help children work out their own solutions to problems. So, for example, when a child asks you "Is this the right answer?" don't say "Yes" or "No" but rather reflect back, "Is that the right answer?" Notice how this reflective response complies so well with the Montessori protocol *enhance independence*.

Enhance Independence

"...adults are also a part of a child's environment...They should not be an obstacle to a child's independent activities, nor should they carry out for him those activities by means of which a child reaches maturity."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.140

Montessori teaching follows the protocol *enhance independence* to help children learn on their own through materials rather than through your spoken words of instruction. However, since new children often first look to adults for help, you must learn how to use reflective language to gently turn their attention from listening to

your words to solving their own problems with the help of each other and the materials in the environment designed for this purpose.

Listening to Words

"Education is not what the teacher gives, education is a natural process carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education for a New World*, p.3

Before the age of six, children have a uniquely absorbent mind that allows them to learn instinctively and effortlessly from experiences in the environment. Montessori teaching uses this faculty to return children to true normal development by creating the right conditions for this normalization to occur.

Conventional teaching, however, works against this normalization by forcing children to listen to words of adult instruction. By contrast, Montessori teaching helps children concentrate on objects, which is the natural way to bring about the new state of normalized development in children.

Concentrating on Objects

"Children find it very hard to concentrate on spoken words, but they have no difficulty concentrating on objects."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Reconstruction in Ed.*, p.10

Dr. Montessori observed that young children concentrate on objects much more easily than the words we speak. However, this deep concentration doesn't occur immediately, but only after a long period of time working with the self-teaching objects you provide. During this time, Montessori teaching must therefore help children in this process of ordering what knowledge they have already acquired from prior experience.

Ordering Knowledge

"The mind of a little child is certainly not a blank...but his concepts are confused. The chaos of his mind has greater need of ordering what it already knows than of gaining more knowledge."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.172

Montessori teaching helps children order their inner knowledge by handling physical objects that reflect the perfect order of nature. Interacting with these materials then finally leads to a moment of profound concentration and the event of normalization. In this way, the Montessori environment represents a vital response to the child's perfect unfolding true natural development.

Vital Response

"The environment itself...is in reality an active and vital response to the new patterns manifested in the life of a grown child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.140

Montessori teaching creates the right precise conditions for normalization to occur by removing obstacles around each child in a

scientific experimental manner. The ten techniques of the IMS technology are essential tools for conducting this scientific approach in a precise, yet variable manner, from heavy to light, as required in each situation. For example, if reflective language is not practical, proper, or adequate in some situation, another technique, *patient waiting* might function quite well by exercising the great power of silence.

Power of Silence

"...a new type of mistress has been evolved; instead of facility in speech, she has to acquire the power of silence."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.128

Since talking to children can easily interfere with their self-directed learning, any verbal technique you use must follow the

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Look for the September, 2013 Observer featuring Questioning

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Dependency vs. Interest

Three-year-old Alex begins a continuing misbehavior pattern by bothering fellow classmate Sarah while they are seated together. (See *Observer*, March, 2013) The teacher's response has been to remove Alex from the situation to show him a new piece of work somewhere else. Unfortunately, he takes no interest in handling the material on his own, but only seeks to have the teacher with him in a dependency relationship.

Analysis: In this *moment of peril*, your main mistake is at the very beginning when you physically remove Alex from the social conflict situation. Since Alex was interested in this social interaction, removing him violated the protocol *basis of interest*. The new work for Alex doesn't solve the problem, because as soon as you leave, he returns back to Sarah, and the whole pattern begins again.

Practical Advice: While you must not allow Alex to hurt or abuse materials or other children, you must still honor his interest in relation to Sarah. So, when you initially approach the conflict with Sarah, don't use the *distraction* technique to remove Alex from Sarah. Rather, use it to focus Alex on the activity that he and Sarah are involved with together at that time.

For example, point to some object, and, using the technique *questioning*, ask "Where does this go?" If Sarah complains about what Alex is doing, use *reflective language* by repeating the complaint back to Sarah, so she can then speak up more forcibly to Alex on that issue.

Since the Sarah-Alex conflict is likely to take some time to work out, stay close by so you can quickly intervene to protect Sarah or the materials from physical harm, if necessary. While doing this, you can still frequently look up and around the room as well, following the key protocol *well-being of the total environment*.

Gradually, your close observation and occasional interactions with Sarah and Alex will bring about their peaceful cooperation together. Then, you can safely move away, hopefully to passively observe the whole environment from a place completely outside the children's activity area.

Making a Mess

2 ½ year old Mark seems to get frustrated very easily with any activity. The teacher says he quickly either gives up or fantasizes with the activity, usually involving making a mess. For example, in a pouring exercise, he'll chuck the contents of the bowl round the room. The teacher says, "I try to show him a few times but if I let him continue with his own thing, he just makes a mess with his own activity. I only gently suggest showing him some exercises, since I don't want to push him into anything he doesn't want to do. However, I can't think of anything he does with an attention space of more than 5 seconds." What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, September, 2013.

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guidance of various protocols that carefully restrict its use. For example, following the protocol *eye contact before talking*, don't use any verbal technique if the child is not looking at you at the time. Other protocols, such as *model good behavior*, *least amount of adult involvement*, and *well-being of the total environment* also control and regulate your verbal interaction as well.

When *reflective language* is too heavy or unsuitable for any reason, consider using the technique *patient waiting*. With this technique, you are just standing and watching in a quiet, alert manner, perhaps waiting for eye contact to use some verbal technique. Even then, however, deciding which verbal technique to use can be most challenging, especially in situations of social conflict.

Social Conflict

"When adults interfere, they nearly always make mistakes...(the teacher's) solution differs from that of the children and this disturbs the harmony of the group. Apart from exceptional cases, we ought to leave such problems to the children."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.224

In social conflict, children typically interact verbally with each other in an angry, emotional manner. However, since these scenarios don't usually escalate into physical violence, follow such protocols as *least amount of adult involvement* and *enhance independence* by staying far away from the situation as much as possible. When you must intervene, however, such as to protect children from possible physical harm, *reflective language* is a good first verbal technique to try.

Reflective language is a low-risk initial technique to resolve social conflict since it involves no new words or knowledge for children to understand. However, when this light type of interaction is not enough, such as in your dealing with children who are very young or extremely shy, you may need to use the heavier technique *questioning* to help clarify and interpret a child's needs and interests in the situation.

Questioning

"If there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him...Often a question will serve, such as 'How are you Johnny? Come with me, I have something to show you to do.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.254

The technique *questioning* is NOT reflective in nature, since it interrupts children by initiating some new idea or subject matter in the situation. For example, with a group of children in fantasy, questioning might be to ask, "What are you doing?" From there, hopefully, you can use reflective language later along with other light forms of interaction.

Sometimes, verbal expression comes outside the form of one of the verbal techniques, *reflective language*, *questioning*, or *clear direction*. For example, in a nomenclature lesson, what you say aims to identify or describe some aspect of reality, such as "This is blue" or "This is 'c'" You may also need to use words to help a child express himself when he is too upset or immature to do it for himself.

Suppose, for example, two year old Mary approaches you in tears, pointing to another child who has just grabbed her pencil. Here, you might get eye contact with the other child and say, "Mary would

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Experiences with Technology

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peaceful tools to apply to everyday scenarios that arise in the classroom.

Citlalli Bustamante

(IMS student, Ontario, Canada)

I own a home daycare and have applied the technology that I have learned from the IMS course education. The techniques that have worked best with my group are *eye contact*, *patient waiting* and *distraction*.

When *eye contact* has been used (without showing disapproval) misbehavior has stopped. For example, one day an 18 month old girl was putting her foot on the table during lunch time. She looked at me and I looked back at her and she just put her feet down. A few days ago two young toddlers were pulling a toy back and forth. I just watched to see what would happen. An older toddler approached and started to use the toy properly. .. Right afterwards, the younger ones started to imitate what the older toddler was doing. Since the toy is long enough, the three of them were able to work simultaneously on different parts of it.

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Citlalli Bustamante, IMS student in Thornhill, Ont. Canada

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like that pencil." In all these verbal interactions, however, you must carefully follow the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior* by keeping your words completely positive, objective, and friendly at all times.

Negative Language

"Beware of the tendency to say 'Don't do this,' 'You mustn't do that.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World.*, p.36-37

Speaking with children while resolving misbehavior often comes with stress and impatience that can easily lead to using such words as "No" and "Don't." To control this negative language, closely follow the *no negative* protocol whenever you speak to children.

Sometimes, children themselves invite this negative language, such as when they urge you to punish or condemn misbehavior in others. Here, reflective language helps direct this issue back to the complaining child by saying, for example, "You would like me to tell Robert not to bother you any more?" Hopefully, the child then gets the idea to settle the matter on his own.

Since negative words are so common in society, reflective language is often the best action to take when complete silence is not an option. Ultimately, however, what you do or say in any situation is a matter of balance and judgment.

Balance and Judgment

"Our concept of education of children thus differs not only from those who do everything for a child themselves but also from those who think they can have the child in a purely passive environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.198

Montessori teaching now has an elegant set of ten techniques for resolving a wide diversity of problem situations with children. Even so, you must employ these tools with balance and judgment by moderating their use according to the twenty protocols that are also part of the technology. In this context, the technique *reflective language* is a very effective tool for Montessori teaching, especially well-suited to resolve the issue of dependency and attachment in the adult-child relationship.

Experiences in Technology

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Patricia Brophy
(IMS student, Lynchburg, VA)

I am beginning to feel my personality change as I am using the technology. ... (In one scene of loud, fast moving activity) I felt I must go up and warn the adults of possible impending disaster from my grandson's behavior... On my way walking home, I thought to myself, 'I totally was not living it the moment. I allowed myself to get upset and behave in unnecessary ways. Next time I am going to think longer before I act.' This is where I felt a change... I have begun to see the normal child in my grandson coming out. For example, one night, after he had been reading the *Hobbit* in his room, he came into my room and performed the little song within the text. It was then I saw his normal child...



Child working with math number rods at Noreen's Montessori in Karachi, Pakistan