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TESOL Arabia Special Interest Group

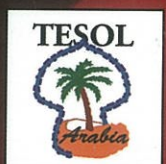
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Once upon time... the story will begin

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Spending just 20 minutes with a child before they go to bed is enough to create a close bond between parents and children – this precious time not only strengthens the parent-child relationship, it also creates lifelong memories. It can also improve a child's ability to analyze and innovate, it sharpens their sense of perception, and it expands their horizons. This is true even of infants, who might appear too young to understand, but can benefit from the colours, sounds and expressions associated with reading.

As parents, the most rewarding moments we experience are those that we share with our children; for example, reading them a bedtime story that they love before they fall asleep. It can be even more exciting to watch the expressions on their faces, see their reactions to events in the story, and listen to their comments on the sounds and movements we make during our storytelling as we attempt to create a lively, fun atmosphere. Our children's reactions while we are reading – and their desire to ask questions and express their comments and opinions – are signs of intelligence, maturity, innovation, and a vivid imagination. These are precisely the attributes that we need to enhance, stimulate and nurture. With that in mind, I would like to share some of my most memorable experiences with my own children as an example of how to enhance the special moments that you spend with your children.

When my son was an infant, he did not have the patience to

sit and listen for more than five minutes. So, I decided to make this brief period – only five minutes – interesting and amusing. I started purchasing large plastic books that were filled with colour, but no text, and which featured voices, lights and other audio-visual attractions. I wanted to create an interaction with my infant son, via sounds and expressions, that would attract and maintain his attention. While five minutes was enough during the first few months of his life, I slowly started to extend this period as he got older and his attention span increased.

Ahmed is now two and a half years old. He enjoys new and interesting books, and he likes drawing, colouring and making things. I am keen to share these activities with him, so we will write a story together about, for example, the things he loves. We will put his photo on the cover, as well as filling the inside pages with pictures of the things he likes most, including people, places, games and activities, foods, structures, songs and other positive images! We even decorated his room once with shining stars and a moon to illustrate one of his favourite stories.

My daughter, Mariam, is six years old and is of a more independent nature than Ahmed. She likes to select books and stories by herself. While some of these books are not quite to my taste, I know that her likes and dislikes will change over time, sometimes quite suddenly (what appeals to a child one day may lose its allure after two or three months).