

**BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS IN
UZBEKISTAN**

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Annotation: This article contains some serviceable ideas to incorporate into the Teaching English to young learners classroom in Uzbekistan. Some useful methods that provide the enhancement of young learners' language obtaining process are thoroughly learned in the article.

Key words: Different ways of motivation, adopting materials, teaching abilities, learning process, using songs, stories, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and A1-A2 levels.

Teaching English to Young Learners is a rapidly growing field around the world, and English education is increasingly found at the primary levels. It is widely believed that starting the study of English as a Foreign Language before the critical period—7 or 12 years old—will build more skilful speakers of English. However, there is no empirical proof supporting the idea that an early start in English language learning in foreign language contexts produces better English speakers. Levels of capability seem to be dependent on other factors— type of program and curriculum, number of hours spent in English class, and techniques and activities used. If an early start alone, is not the solution, then what can English foreign language teachers of young learners do to take advantage of the flexibility of young minds and the malleability of young tongues to grow better speakers of English? As the age for English education lowers in classrooms across the globe, EFL teachers of young learners strive to keep up with this trend and seek effective ways of teaching.

Young learners tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy. One thing that springs to my mind is that character is something that

possesses a great importance for the education of English to 7-12 years old learners. Characteristics which belong to young learners could be loud, hyperactive, too talkative, easily distracted or fun, social, curious, energetic and spontaneous. Children are strenuous learners and thinkers. They usually try to learn through social interaction and learn effectually through scaffolding by adults. We can help children to learn English language when what we ask them to do is delightful, meaningful, enjoyable, supported, social, purposeful and full of practice. In addition, children are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in the physical and the tangible. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990, 2) describe, "Their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times."

The first way to capture learners' attention and keep them engaged in activities is to addendum the activities with lots of brightly colored visuals, toys, puppets, or objects to match the ones used in the stories that you tell or songs that you sing. If there is one thing we know about kids, it is that they have short attention spans and prefer now to later. This is especially true at the beginning of the year. Teachers, more than any district or school wide programs, have the most power to know *how to motivate students* because they are on the front lines. They can influence students in a way that kids can actually understand: here, now, today, in this room. These can also help make the language input comprehensible and can be used for follow-up activities, such as re-telling stories or speculating games. Although it may take a lot of preparation time to make colorful pictures and puppets or to collect toys and objects, it is worth the effort if you can re-use them in future classes. Try to make the visuals on thick paper or laminate them whenever possible for future use. Sometimes you can acquire donations for toys and objects from the people in your community, such as parents or other teachers.

Secondly, you may often be teaching a class, which has students who are clearly of different levels. They may have different starting levels of English or

they may learn at very different rapidities - for any number of reasons. It is easy for students to get frustrated in a class of *mixed ability*. Stronger students may feel held back, weaker students may feel forced. The teacher may feel stressed. The best solution to this is to have an open-class discussion about the classroom situation - to assure the best for everyone it is better to acknowledge the situation and for everyone to agree how to deal with it. It is probably best to stage and form the discussion. Use a needs analysis to prod the students to reflect upon their learning style, learning strategies, language needs, learning enjoyment, motivation, language strengths and weaknesses. Dividing the learners into pair work or group work can also show good results. Pair work- you can pair strong with strong, weak with weak or strong with weak. Perhaps in a very controlled activity, the strong with weak will work well. In a freer activity, perhaps strong with strong will be of profit. Variety in the pairings is the key here - and you should also be susceptible to the general relationships between different students, and learn to note who works well with whom. Group work- these groups could be of mixed levels or similar ones. The hope is that in a smaller group, the weaker student will feel more able to contribute. Also, if the group is working with a set of information, subdivide the information between the students, obligating them to work together.

As it is mentioned that one of the big problems we all face, whether teaching English to children or adults, is maintaining learners' interest throughout our lessons. Consequently, we often have to be very creative in the techniques we use. What makes *music and stories* such a great teaching tool is its universal appeal, connecting all cultures and languages. This makes it one of the best and most motivating resources in the classroom, regardless of the age or background of the learner.

Listening is the language skill which learners usually find the most difficult. This often is because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word. To achieve the aims related to this skill, the teacher plays an important role that is defined in the following steps. Firstly it is

important to help pupils *prepare* for the listening task well before they hear the text itself. First of all the teacher must ensure that the pupils understand the language they need to accomplish the task and are fully aware of exactly what is expected of them. Secondly, the most important step is to encourage pupils to *anticipate* what they are going to hear. Thirdly, during the listening the pupils should be able to *concentrate* on understanding the message so make sure they are not trying to read, draw, and write at the same time. Always give a second chance to listen to the text to provide a new chance to those who were not able to do the task. Finally, when pupils have completed the activity, invite answers from the whole class. Try not to put individual pupils under undue force.

In primary schools, we can use two main types of *speaking* activities. The first type, *songs, chants, and poems*, encourages pupils to mimic the model they hear on the cassette. This helps pupils to master the sounds, rhythms, and intonation of the English language through simple reproduction. The *games and pair work activities* on the other hand, although always based on a given model, encourage the pupils to begin to manipulate the language by presenting them with a certain amount of selection, albeit within a fairly controlled situation.

In order to make *reading* an interesting challenge as opposed to a tedious chore, it is important that pupils do not labor over every word, whether they are skimming the text for general meaning or scanning it to pick out definite information. Other things to keep in mind are: when choosing texts consider not only their difficulty level, but also their *interest* or their humor so that children will want to read for the same reasons they read in their own language: to be entertained or to find out something they do not already know. While the children are reading the text, move around the class providing *support* if pupils need it.

Since many learners are not yet capable at *writing* either linguistically or intellectually of creating a piece of written text from scratch, it is important that time is spent building up the language they will need and providing a model on which they can then base their own efforts. The writing activities should therefore be based on a parallel text and guide the pupils, using simple cues. These writing activities generally appear towards the end of a unit so that pupils have had plenty of exposure to the language and practice of the main structures and vocabulary they need.

Teaching English to Young Learners is a dynamic field that is sure to change in the years to come as Ministries of Education around the world keep lowering the age of compulsory English education, as established Teaching English to Young Learners programs become better developed, and as teachers of English to young learners become better trained. Therefore, we must continue this dialogue through our professional communities to find ideas that are more helpful for Teaching English to Young Learners. If all of the ideas given above help the young hearts, I will be so happy that I never stop my pencil from writing such kind of important and useful articles.

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