

Strategies for Engaging Young Learners

American English Webinar Series

Pre-Webinar Poll Questions

- 1. Do you have trouble keeping your students engaged during lessons?**
- 2. The Young Learner classroom should be _____.**
- 3. Visuals, hands-on activities, and a strong community help young students learn.**



How many of you work with young learners?



**How are young learners
different from secondary
or older learners?**

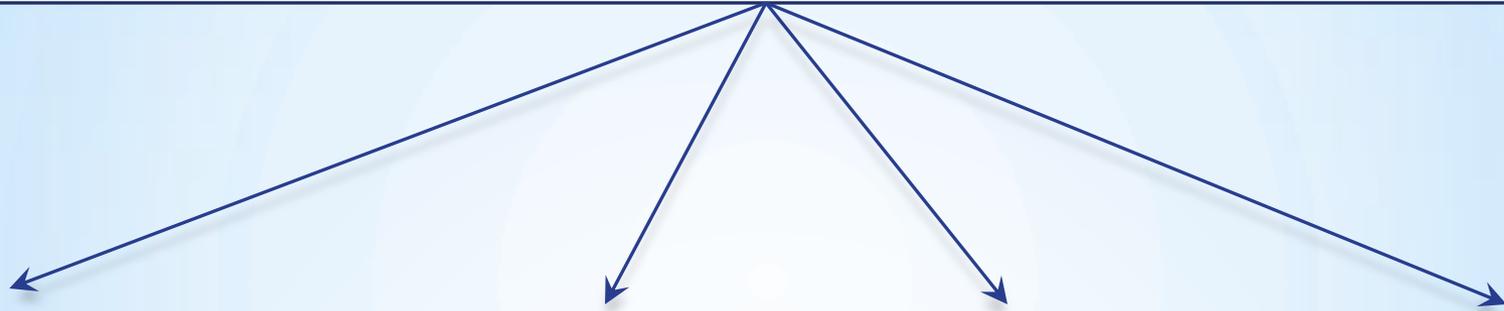
Goals

- **Gain a better understanding of the Young Learner (YL)**
- **Describe four strategies designed to engage and challenge YLs**
- **Provide examples for implementing these strategies in the language classroom**



**Have you heard of Jean Piaget?
Raise your hand if you have!**

Piaget's Cognitive Development Stages



Sensorimotor

(Birth - 2 Years Old)



Preoperational

(2 - 7 Years Old)



Concrete Operational

(7 - 11 Years Old)



Formal Operational

(12 - Adulthood)



The Young Learner (YL)

Social
Imagination **Physical**
Excited Active
Talkative **Curious**
High-Energy
Hands-On
Spontaneous

5 – 12 Years Old





What types of activities do you think would engage young learners?

Classroom instruction should be . . .

- **Enjoyable**
- **Interesting**
- **Active**
- **Hands-on**
- **Supported**
- **Meaningful**
- **Culturally appropriate and relevant**



Strategy Focus:

- **Building classroom community**
- **Making choices and taking risks**
- **Shaping individual learning**
- **Providing structure through classroom routines**



Goal Directed Learning

Set a clear goal for the activity

Create opportunities for working toward goals and making choices

Identify activities and materials that will be of interest to learners

Create a rich and supportive environment



**Raise your hand if you
have tried community
building activities in your
classroom.**

Creating a Community



Community through Portraiture

Step One: Explanation

Create a self-portrait that demonstrates personal facts

- Favorite Food
- Hobbies
- Family
- Favorite sports/activities

Step Two: Model Activity

Perform a “think aloud” model of the activity while creating an example self-portrait



Community through Portraiture

Step Three: Model Language Structures

After portraits are created, model target language structures to give students an example of how to talk about themselves/their partner's picture.

Step Four: Partner Up

Assign each learner a partner. Partners present their portraits to each other using the modeled structures.



Community through Portraiture

Step Five: Partner Presentation

Each partner introduces their classmate to the whole group. The portrait is displayed and the student stands next to it as they are being introduced.



Making Choices and Taking Risks





Raise your hand if you frequently use images in your classroom.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

A strategy in which the teacher leads the students in a discussion of a picture or photograph



The Benefits

- **Supports comprehension**
- **Activates prior knowledge**
- **Promotes meaningful collaboration**
- **Stimulates language use**
- **Allows students to make meaning through individual choices**
- **Brings life and realism to lessons**



“A human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences.”

(Debes, 1969, 27)



What makes a photo engaging?

- **Shows something strange**

- **Includes people**

- **Depicts movement**



- **Contains common objects**



Helpful Resources

1. New York Times Learning Network *What's Going On In This Picture? (WGOITP)*



2. Americanenglish.state.gov

- Picture US
- "Winter Scenes"
- "Fall Photos"
- "Summer Time Photos"
- "Pictures for Classroom Activities"



3. Students' photographs or drawings



4. Local newspapers/magazines

The Three Open-Ended Questions

What is going on in this picture?	What do you see that makes you say that?	What more can you assume?

**Step One:
First Impression
Discussion**

**Step Two:
Close Observation**

**Step Three:
Making Inferences**

Step One: First Impression Discussion



What's going on in this picture?

Step Two: Close Observation



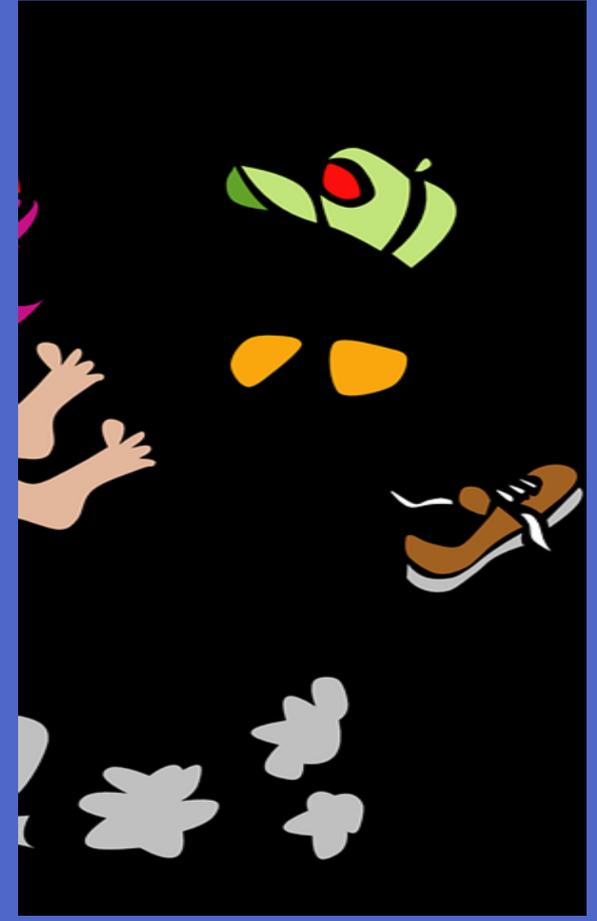
 What do you see that makes you think that?

Step Three: Making Inferences



**What more can you assume?
What do you think will happen next?**

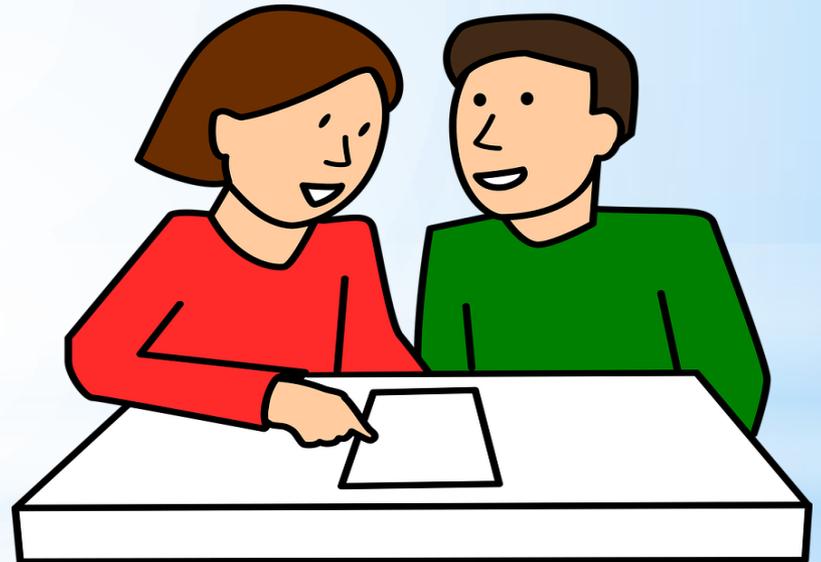
Making Inferences: Picture Stories



Making Inferences: Picture Stories

Step One:

Students get into groups of 3-4, and each learner chooses one section to observe closely.



Step Two:

Students use the three-column chart to list people, things, and actions they see in their section of the picture. Challenge them to list as many items as they can.

People	Things	Actions



What do you see in this picture?

Type your list in the chat box!



People	Things	Actions



People	Things	Actions
Two men	Car Sunglasses	Pointing Driving Smiling

Step Three:

Sections are put together to form a whole, and students share the items on their list.



Step Four:

Teacher gives each group the first sentence of a story.

After school, the boys went to the beach.

Step Five:

The students each contribute one sentence to the story based on their observations and creativity.



Step Six:

Each group then presents their picture and story to the class.

Shaping Individual Learning



Student Generated Materials



“Children learn by doing, therefore, YLs will benefit most from activities which are hands-on and require them to interact with and manipulate realia.”

(Shin, 2014, p. 558)



558)

Student Generated Materials

- **Promote learner autonomy**
- **Creativity encourages learners to make connections and take risks**
- **Students brainstorm, plan, and make choices**
- **Students engage in peer learning**
- **Learners create and shape learning at their own pace**



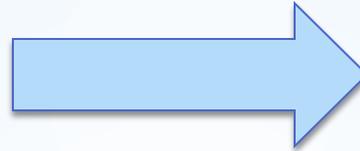
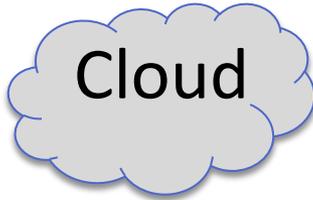
Principles for Incorporating Student Generated Materials

- **Believe in students' creativity**
- **Set a clear goal for each activity**
- **Refer students to something familiar**
- **Provide examples**
- **Have students share their work**

Creating Classroom Visuals

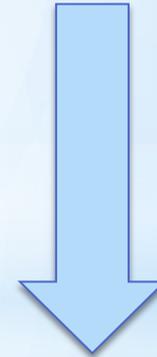
Step One:

Provide an example



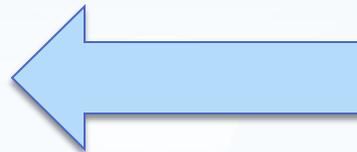
Step Two:

Divide Learners into pairs
and provide supplies



Step Three:

Give learners time to
make posters, and
provide support as
needed



Step Four:

Learners check spelling
and grammar, and then
posters are hung on the
walls

Sun



The sun is bright and hot!

DREAM



Low! Sands!
Witez
I hold the waves up
I hold the waves up
I hold a dog bark,



Mortigue
by Simon
I love the water
in Mortigue it's so fun
I could eat ice cream



Fall leaves
By Michelle
I really
love with a field of
belonging



fish in the
By Dina
I love the water
I love the water
I love the water

musician

imagination

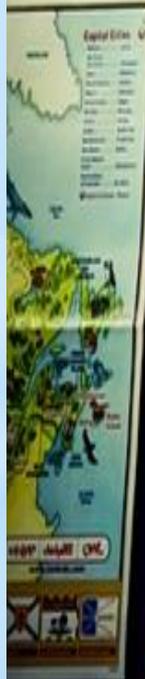
ocean

occasion

shun

motion

Special Helpet





**Raise your hand if you
would have students help
make materials.**

Classroom Routines





Do you have any classroom routines?

If yes, what types of routines do you use?

Why use routines?

- **Security and confidence**
- **Sense of community**
- **Cooperation and shared purposes**
- **Opportunities for natural language acquisition**
- **Learner autonomy**



Successful routines have . . .

Plan

**Reward
System**

Demonstration

**Movement or
Action**

Before class . . .

Date and Weather

Friday 26th September 2014



cloudy
+
rainy

During class . . .

Signals



After class . . .

Exit Ticket

Write one complete sentence about your family.

**I HAVE ONE
BROTHER AND ONE
SISTER.**

Write one word that we learned today. Draw a picture that will remind you of the word.

APPLE



Now it's your turn!

**One strategy I would like to
try from the webinar is**

_____.

Putting It Together

Young Learners . . .

- are spontaneous and eager to learn.
- perform best with activities which are social, active, purposeful, and creative.
- benefit from a strong classroom community where they have input.
- need visual support.
- need to interact with content in meaningful and purposeful ways.
- benefit from a structured and organized learning environment.

Resources

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Resources

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“Fall Photos,” *English Teaching Forum*, 2012, Volume 50, Number 4

“Winter Scenes,” *English Teaching Forum*, 2012, Volume 50, Number 1