



Module 12

Younger Learners (K-5)

Focus on the Learner

Video Length: Approximately 15 Minutes **Notes to the Trainer**

For best results, have participants go through the readings for this module prior to viewing the video. As you work through this module, use pairs or groups whenever you think it might be effective. After each group activity, debrief the answers and use them for further discussion of various points. Refer back to the main points when appropriate. The primary goal is for participants to begin thinking positively and creatively about ways to structure language learning opportunities for younger learners (primary school grades kindergarten through 5, or approximately 5-10 years of age).

See Appendix A for additional handouts that can be used for general observation and discussion tasks with any of the modules.

Before Viewing

Tell participants to close their eyes. Say, "You are a child. You are playing with your friends. See the whole picture in your mind." (Or, you could instead ask participants to imagine watching a child, with appropriate question changes.) While the participants have their eyes shut, ask the following questions. Elicit several answers.

1. What are you and your friends doing?
2. Are you having a good time?
3. What is it about your activity that makes it fun?
4. Are you learning anything while you play? What?

Debrief

Children play. They are social beings and their young bodies like to be active. School has been considered the opposite of play, as a time to learn, to be serious. However, children are different from adults; they are still developing. They learn as they play. Why not use this ability of children to learn through play, the strengths of their cognitive levels, and their need for physical activity in the classroom to help them learn faster and more easily.

Extension Ideas

This is an icebreaker activity that works well for all ages. Pick a theme (in this case "when I was a child") and create a set of about 10 non-abstract, open-ended questions that start with *Find someone who...*; e.g., *Find someone who loved to play outside, ...who disliked reading, ...who rarely took naps.* Participants walk around ask each other these questions, writing down each other's names. Then, they compare results! What connection do their answers have to how they teach children now?

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Preview Vocabulary

Terms	Definitions
Attention span	Amount of time learners are able to pay attention.
Authentic materials	Materials used in the target culture for actual communicative needs.
Bins	Storage boxes that contain materials for classroom use.
Chant	Words or phrases that are repeated again and again, in a rhythm.
Classroom library	An area of the classroom where students can find books and resource material for self or group study.
Classroom management	The way in which the teacher manages the students and content of classroom learning. It includes use of time, physical arrangement of the room, direction of students, choice of activities, etc.
Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD)	Instructional approach for grades K-8 for low and intermediate language level learners that provides authentic opportunities for use of academic language, maintains highest standards and expectations for all students, and fosters voice and identity. Primary language is provided by trained, bilingual teachers, trained bilingual aides, trained parents, or cross-age / peer tutoring. Emphasizes teacher collaboration. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated among all content areas with an emphasis on science, social studies, and literature.
Holistic language	Language treated as a whole, with integration of skills.
Individualized learning; differentiated instruction	Opportunities for students to interact with material at their own rate and level of proficiency.
Language Experience Approach (LEA)	Uses learners' own experiences as a basis for classroom speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities. Learners dictate to the teacher or assistant, who writes down what they say.
Phonics	A reading approach that teaches the written symbols which represent the sounds of a language.
Skit	A short dramatization or play.
Sound-symbol correspondence	The relationship between the sounds of a language and the written forms of those sounds.
Total Physical Response (TPR); TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S)	A language teaching approach that combines language learning with physical movement, initially based on commands. TPR-Storytelling (TPR-S) adds the additional component of oral performance.
Transition techniques	Techniques for changing from one activity to another.
Learning centers; stations	Areas of a classroom that are set up for specific purposes, such reading or working with objects.

Now start the video. Listen to the introduction. Complete the guided observation and reflection tasks for each of the video segments. The next part of the manual is for trainees and is available on separate pages for ease of copying.

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Module 12, Younger Learners (Grades Kindergarten through 5)

Introduction, Expanded Narrative

Younger learners are those from about 5-10 years of age or from Kindergarten to Grade 5. Teaching younger learners is different from teaching adults. Younger learners are social, active, and creative.

Younger learners need to have opportunities to physically move during class and to play. As they play, they learn and practice social skills, including communication and language skills. They are curious and usually willing to learn another language. Because their cognitive abilities are still developing, they deal better with language as a whole, rather than with rules about language. Since they are still in the stage of developing their native language rules, they are able to generalize and create their own rules about a second language as they use it. Given that their cognitive and motor skills are still developing, they have stronger oral skills than literate skills, so this strength can be used in teaching a second language. To do so requires a lot of repetition and clear directions.

Younger learners also have a shorter attention span than adults, which suggests that a variety of short activities during a class would be better than one long activity. However, as they get older, children's attention span becomes longer, their motor skills develop, and they are able to do more reading and writing.

Module Focus

Some teaching techniques and strategies to use with younger learners:

- Create a warm, friendly, and comfortable classroom. Be sure that desks, chairs, tables, and blackboards are suitable for the children's size. Materials posted on the walls or bulletin boards should be at their reading level.
- When giving directions and explanations, be clear and simple. Set up predictable classroom routines and put children in charge of them (according to their age). Be sure that the transitions between activities help children understand what they are to do.
- Use lots of different types of activities that require different types of participation and different skills.
- Include much oral repetition during activities.
- Use language as a whole, integrating different language skills in each activity.
- Set up the classroom space and create activities that give children the chance to move around and allow for different activities to go on at the same time.
- Set up activities to enable children to work together in groups, which allows for practice of communication and negotiating skills, and to balance serious work with work or learning play that is fun.

Video Segment #1, Younger Learners: Observation Guide [Read before viewing.]

Look for answers to the following as you watch the video.

1. What is the purpose of this activity?
2. List the steps that the teacher goes through to enable students to do this activity.
3. Look for behaviors that tell you whether students are enjoying this activity and whether they are meeting the learning goals (purpose).

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Reflection

[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. The students are learning vocabulary for parts of the body. What are the two techniques that are being used to help them learn? Do you think they are effective? Why, or why not?
2. Look at your list of the steps that the teacher goes through to do this activity. Compare them with someone else in your group. Not all of the steps are pictured in the video. What additional steps do you think are necessary to do this activity successfully?
3. Do the students look as if they are enjoying this activity? Have they learned the vocabulary? What behaviors tell you that?

Video Segment #2, Example Activities A: Observation Guide

[Read before viewing.]

1. Look at the activity and decide what its purpose for it is.
2. Notice the verb form the teacher is using in her directions. Can you understand the directions? Pay attention to the teacher's voice and how she uses language.
3. List the different movements the students are doing. Notice whether or not they are doing them correctly.
4. What technique do you think the teacher is using? If you're not sure of its name, write down any characteristics about it that you observe.

Reflection

[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. What kind of activity is this? What is the language purpose for this activity? Can you think of another possible purpose?
2. What form of the verb is the teacher using? Are her directions clear? What makes them clear?
3. Compare your lists of student movements with someone else's. How many different ones were there? What happened when a student did not follow directions correctly?
4. What approach do you think this technique is from? Does it seem to be effective? Is this something you have done in your class? Was it effective?

Video Segment #3, Example Activities B: Observation Guide

[Read before viewing.]

1. List the stations in the room and the different types of activities going on in them.
2. Notice how chairs, tables, and rugs are arranged in the room. Look at how each station is set up and list some of the resources available at each station. Draw a quick sketch of how the room is arranged.
3. Look at the size and height of the chairs and tables, and where materials are posted on the walls.
4. Look for the teacher and describe what you see her doing.

Reflection

[Read and answer after viewing.]

1. Compare your list of stations and activities with a partner. How many stations are there? What activities did each of you notice, and what functions do they serve?
2. Describe how some of the stations are arranged in the room. Why do you think they are arranged like this? What are some of the possibilities for arrangement in your classroom (you may need

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to start with a modified plan or smaller scale)? What stations do you think might be useful for your students? How might a teacher encourage students to be responsible for their behavior and actions at the stations?

3. What effect does the low placement of materials and resources have on the classroom atmosphere and learner productivity?

4. What do you think the teacher was doing? What do you think her purpose was? Would the teacher's techniques be different for a larger class? If so, in what way(s)?

Summary Discussion

1. Revisit the teaching techniques and strategies suggested for younger learners at the beginning of module, relating them to the video demonstrations. What examples of the techniques did you see in Video segment #1? Video segment #2? Video segment #3?

2. List characteristics of younger learners, using both the introduction to this module, your visualization of yourself as a child, and your own experience.

- Did you see any of those characteristics in the video segments? Which ones?
- Are there any of these characteristics you consider to be more important than others?
- Which of these characteristics are you most aware of in your classes? What techniques do you use to channel those characteristics into productive directions?

3. After viewing this module, which of these techniques and activities might you experiment with in your class, and why?

Now You Try It—An Action Plan

Step 1

You can read some of the articles on the topic of contextualizing language (see Module 12 Readings plus the List of Additional Readings and Resources in *Shaping the Way We Teach English: Readings and Resources*). Using the video, you have seen a few examples and ideas from other teachers' classes. Now, think about your own classes and how you could use some of the techniques listed to further. Talk about your ideas with others in your group.

- Create a comfortable classroom, suitable for the children's age group.
- Provide opportunities for language use and build confidence in ability to use the language.
- Enable practice and repetition.
- Provide opportunities for physical movement, both during and between activities.
- Make sure students understand both the content of an activity and what they are to do.
- Provide opportunities for different levels of cognitive and physical development.
- Provide opportunities for socialization and learning through play.

Step 2

Design a lesson or prepare a classroom change that includes the use of some of the techniques and activities you listed.

Step 3

Share your plan with others. Explain what activities would come before and after your segment. Get their ideas and feedback.

Step 4

Change your design, as needed. Try it with your class. If you are not teaching, ask the trainer or another experienced teacher for feedback.

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Answer Key to Module 12, Younger Learners

Here are some suggested directions for answers to the questions for this module. Actual answers may vary depending on local context and the kinds of experience that viewers bring to the task of interpreting and applying video and text concepts.

Module 12, Video Segment #1, Younger Learners

1. As students practice the song “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes,” they are using both repetition and physical movement to help them learn and remember the vocabulary. Both are effective techniques for younger learners. Repetition is a natural learning technique for younger learners and one that they enjoy. Physical movement is used both to help learners understand the meaning of the words and to reinforce the effects of the repetition.

2. Suggested steps for using a song as a learning technique:

- Choose a song with a theme or topic that matches your lesson.
- Model the song and movements together while students watch and listen only.
- Sing the song and have students do the movements only.
- Sing the song part-by-part and have students repeat the song and movements together.
- Sing it all together! (If students have trouble learning the tune, have them hum it for practice.)

As a fun variation, sing it at different speeds (slowly, quickly), at different volumes (quietly, loudly), and with different kinds of emotions or characters (like a bear, like a chicken, angrily, happily, etc.). As students learn a variety of songs, you can let them choose use them a warm-up activity at various times during the year as a reminder and reinforcement for the vocabulary.

Some ideas for related reading and writing activities are:

- Games and puzzles on similar topics (existing games, or games that students create).
- Students draw illustrations for the song.
- Students create a class sing-along book and put it in the class library.
- Students use the same tune and write different lyrics (words) for it.
- Students create a model about the song using paper, playdough*, or other available materials.

* The following recipe for playdough is inexpensive and very quick to make. It makes a great addition to classroom activities or learning centers and can help provide some of the kinesthetic or “physical” activity that younger learners need.

Make-it-Yourself Playdough Recipe

Combine dry ingredients together in a bowl:

- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- Food coloring or unsweetened Kool-Aid powder (optional)

Add liquid ingredients.

- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 1 cup very hot water

Stir and knead until done. Store in plastic container.

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3. Yes, students seem to be enjoying the activity. Some are laughing; many are smiling. They are all participating with different degrees of enthusiasm. They appear to have learned the vocabulary because they follow the teacher easily. One way to check is to have groups of five students do the song for the rest of the class.

Module 12, Video Segment #2: Example Activities A

1. The language purpose of this activity is to learn three verbs. Other purposes could be listening practice and giving students the opportunity to move physically during the class period.

2. The teacher is using an imperative or “command” form of the verb. Her directions are clear because she keeps them simple with few words, using only commands. Her pronunciation is clear; her voice is firm and loud enough for all students to hear easily.

3. The students do six movements: walk, drink, eat, turn around, and then move to the right / left.

4. For this activity, the teacher uses a technique from the Total Physical Response language teaching method (TPR). TPR can be an effective technique to use with younger learners because of its combination of language and movement. Characteristics of TPR are:

- a. The teacher uses the command form to teach language.
- b. Commands are combined with physical movements that help convey the meaning of the language focus and aid memory.
- c. Learners understand the language being taught through aural practice and repetition before they are asked to produce it.
- d. Correction is given as a natural part of the activity.
- e. The element of fun is a deliberate part of the teaching method.

For more information on TPR and on TPR-Storytelling, see:

TPRS Materials and Method, by Blaine Ray.
Web site: <http://www.blaineraytprs.com/>

TPRS Lessons and Rubrics, by Susan Gross.
Web site: <http://www.susangrosstprs.com/>

TPRS: A Communicative Approach to Language Learning, by Valerie Marsh.
Web site: <http://www.tprstorytelling.com/story.htm>

Module 12, Video Segment #3: Example Activities B

1. There are six stations in the room. In the video, you saw ones for reading, writing, imagination (arts and crafts), painting, and things that can be manipulated (games, puzzles, building blocks, etc.). There were other stations as well, for science and other content areas. The children were building with blocks, finding animals that started with letters of the alphabet, making paper chains, painting, and reading from a book that the class had made (the “Pink Book”).

2. Rugs are on the floor, surrounded by shelves with materials on them. Tables are pushed together to give more work space and allow students to work in groups. Soft chairs are at the reading station. Students cleaned up their stations and put materials away when they finished with them. The teacher trained them to do this.

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3. The chairs and tables are made for the size of the children, including the low soft “bean-bag” chairs. Also, the materials on the walls are posted at the children’s eye level. Materials are on shelves that children can reach. Orienting the classroom to the size of the children rather than the teacher gives learners a feeling of ownership, that this is their space. It adds to the comfort level, which, in turn, aids learning.

4. The teacher is managing the time at stations and the transition back to whole class activity. She has established a routine for making the transition by having certain students be “clean-up monitors,” by having all students return to the rug (or carpet), and by counting down until they do so. Notice that the teacher has a background role; she is facilitating the activities, but not directing them. During the time the students are working at their stations, she could be checking that learners are on task, redirecting activity if needed, and working with students individually.

The teacher’s role is to be a master planner, a guide, and a timekeeper. She:

- Enables learners to self-monitor
- Takes charge during transition times
- Redirects activity as needed
- Works quietly and individually with some students while others are working at their stations

For work or learning stations to be effective, the teacher must plan carefully in advance and take some time to train students in procedures.

Summary Discussion

1. All three segments showed friendly and comfortable classrooms. In all three, the directions were simple and clear, students moved from one activity to another easily, and there was an element of fun, of learning through play.

Segments #1 and #2 included lots of repetition, clear purpose, and the opportunity for students to move.

Segment #3 showed the use of predictable classroom routines, students taking responsibility for part of the classroom routine, different activities going on at the same time, a classroom organized for both group and individual activity, language used holistically, and the potential for learning through play.

2. Some characteristics of young learners:

- They are social. They are learning to socialize as well as learning through socializing.
- They need to be physically active.
- They learn through play.
- They need lots of repetition and clear directions.
- They are “me” focused and respond emotionally to learning activities.
- They are naturally curious and usually willing to learn.
- Their cognitive and motor skills are still developing.
- The rate of development is different in individual children.
- Their oral skills are more advanced than their literate skills.
- They have a short attention span, which becomes longer as they get older.
- They are able to formulate their own language rules from comprehensible language input.