Teaching Young Learners Online

This worksheet accompanies the Teaching Online video, filmed in Shanghai.

0:00 – 0:47	Entry routine
0:47 – 1:06	Stating lesson objectives
01:06 – 04:38	Review of furniture vocabulary and prepositions
04:38 – 09:29	Review rooms in a house and related lexis
09:29 – 13:45	True-False statements
13:45 – end	Board game

Before watching the video

Q1. How can a teacher keep young learners engaged?
- Smile, praise & encouragement
- Varied, motivating and fun activities
- Giving rewards for both good behavior and appropriate contributions

Q2. Now, let's transfer this to the online classroom. What do you think are some of the challenges to engage young learners?
- The teacher and the learner are not in the same room together. There is an online barrier.
- Young learners may get fidgety and want to leave their seat.
- Difficult to engage learners through games that require moving around.

During the video

Starting the class and building rapport

Before you watch

Q3. How do you expect the teacher to overcome the online barrier at the start of the class?
- By being friendly, smiling a lot, asking easy-to understand questions about the learner's day

Now watch 0:00 – 0:47 minutes

Q4. Describe the teacher's entry routine.

- The teacher greets the learner with a warm smile. She asks about her day and responds enthusiastically. She tries to ask as many follow-up questions as possible.

Q5. Write down three questions the teacher asks to keep the conversation going. Can you think of any other ones she could have asked?
1. "Did you do anything fun today?"
2. "What did you do?"
3. "What else did you do? "Did you go to school?"
4. "What did you learn at school?"

Other suggestions: Did you play with your friends? What did you do after school? What are you doing after this class? I had a very good day today. How was your day?

Q6. What do you know notice about the time between the teacher finishing a question and the learner's response?
There is at least 1 second but often 2-3 seconds between the question and the learner's response. An online teacher has to be very patient when dealing with silence and needs to refrain from stepping in too quickly. The reason is that there is a slight time lag and if the teacher chips in too quickly there is a chance that teacher and learner will talk over each other.

Stating the lesson objectives

Q7. Do you usually state your lesson objectives at the start of the lesson? Why/why not?
It is generally considered to be good practice to make learners aware of the objectives at the start of the lesson. However, some teachers may prefer more flexibility and leave more options to respond to the learner's specific needs, especially in a one-to-one setting.

Now watch 0:47 - 0:51

Q8. What do you notice about the way the teacher is stating the objectives?
- The objectives appear in the chat box and are divided into categories. The categories are in a different color.
- The teacher gives additional information. She is not just reading off the screen (e.g. she mentions making sentences using prepositions of place).
- The teacher signals the transition to the next stage by asking "Are you ready to get started?"

Elicitation techniques

Now continue the video, but before you watch, consider the following:

Q9. What are different ways to elicit language?
- Questions
- Prompts (visuals, first letters, …)
- Gestures and facial expressions

Now watch from 01:07 – 04:38

Q10. What does the teacher do to elicit language?
- Questions (e.g. "What can you see in this picture?" What's over here?"). The teacher repeats the question if necessary.
- The teacher often points with the cursor. She also makes circling movements with the cursor to draw the learner's attention to an item or to encourage repetition.
- The teacher uses exaggerated facial expressions and gestures. (e.g. an open mouth to indicate she is waiting for a reply)
- The teacher uses an answer as a starting point (i.e. desk) to elicit the answer she is after (i.e. table).
- The teacher prompts by starting the sentence (i.e. "The duck is…").
- The teacher uses gestures (e.g. two hands to indicate 'between', waving backwards to indicate 'behind').
- The teacher starts writing the word ('between') or the start of the sentence (i.e. "The duck is…")

Now watch from 04:39 - 09:29

Q11. Just focus on the use of body language by the teacher. What do you notice?
The teacher uses exaggerated facial expressions and makes sure that gestures are within the frame of the camera.
Examples:
- The teacher has her hand under the chin and furrows her eye brows to indicate she is expecting an answer.
- Correct answers are acknowledged through 'hmm', nodding and a thumbs up.
- The teacher counts on her fingers, nods and moves eye brows to indicate correct answers.
- The teacher holds up her hands to indicate 'What else?'
- The teacher elicits 'shower' and 'sink' through gestures/mime.

Now watch from 09:29 – 13:45 minutes

Q12. Now let's focus on the learner. Is she engaged in this consolidation exercise? How do you know?
The learner is clearly thinking as is shown by having her thumbs up or down or by leaning in. She also smiles a bit when she gets a reward. When she realizes she has an answer incorrect, she changes her mind. She seems okay with having made a mistake probably because the teacher makes light of mistakes.

Now watch from 13:45 to the end of the video

> Q13. Let's focus on the error correction done by the teacher. The teacher leaves some errors uncorrected. Why do you think that is?
> - It may be discouraging to correct every error. The teacher may also interrupt the learner's train-of-thought.
> - Some errors may be less relevant for the target language. For example, the learner has been struggling with 'in between' throughout the lesson, so the teacher wants her to repeat the sentence using the word 'computer'. The learner leaves out 'is' and 'the' though got the basics structure right so this is probably why the teacher leaves it uncorrected.
> - The teacher may also give the learner some leeway as the picture used in this game has its limitations. For example, making a sentence with the preposition 'behind' turns out to be difficult ("The computer is behind the wall.") Grammatically the sentence is correct, but it is not a plausible one. The teacher realizes this and decides to move on. Another example of the picture's limitations is that making a sentence with 'in front of' turns out to be a bit hard. The teacher therefore decides to draw a ball. ("Say that again for me. The ball is...")

After the video

Discussion points

Q14. How can the teacher extend the lesson beyond this video?

So far the exercises have been fairly controlled without an explicit reference to the real world. The teacher could establish a context by adding a communicative purpose. For example, the teacher could pretend she lost something like her keys or a toy and ask the learner to help them locate this. This also may lead to a slightly more spontaneous conversation (i.e. Do you sometimes lose things? What have you lost before? What do you do if you lose something?)

Q15. Can you spot any missed opportunities?

Answers will vary. One suggestion is that the teacher possibly could have done more explicit work on pronunciation e.g. through more drills.

Q16. The teacher uses a reward system. Do you think it is a good idea to give learners rewards?

Many teachers of young learners use a reward system though learners may just focus on getting rewards without developing an interest in learning. Having said that, the teacher in the video is consistent with the rewards and gives them only for correct answers.

Q17. Do you feel inspired now to teach online? Why/why not?

4

Further reading

If you want to learn more about teaching online, look at these resources:

Conrad, R.M., & Donaldson J.A. (2004). *Engaging the online learner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley.

Hockley, N. (May 2015). 'Five things you always wanted to know about teaching online (but were afraid to ask)'. *English Teaching Professional*, Issue 98, p. 61.

If you want to know more about classroom management, look at these resources:

Anderson, J. (July 2016). 'Intentions and signposts'. *English Teaching Professional*, Issue 105, pp. 4-6.

Fay, J. & Funk, D. (2016). *Teaching with love and logic* (*2nd ed).* Golden (Colorado): Love & Logic.

Moorhouse, B. (September 2017). 'Reaping the rewards of good behavior.' *Modern English Teacher*, Issue 112, pp. 21-23.