



“Children know something that most people have forgotten.”

– Keith Haring\*

## Innervoice and teaching young learners

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Teaching kids is different. We might amend Keith Haring’s quote to say, “...and children’s teachers know something that most of other teachers don’t.” Many of the innervoice activities we’ve been doing – those that consciously encourage imagination, the use of various sensory modalities, movement/TPR, etc. – are things that are part of nearly any kids class.

What goes on in kids’ classes is different than with older learners. What goes on in kids’ minds is different, too. With older learners (say, JHS on up), we are attaching language to already existing (in Japanese) ideas. Part of innervoice is giving the learners time to develop those ideas and express them. With younger learners, the distinctions are less clear. The content they are learning in English may or may not be known in the L1. Vygotskian theory says people (children) use their inner speech as a way of mediating/ creating understanding of language.

Although my undergrad majors were Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education (which may explain why I have a toy box in my university *kenkyushitsu*), I haven’t worked with kids in years (the last kids I taught have long since graduated from university). You are the experts in teaching kids. I am offering these ideas more based on my knowledge of innervoice and task planning. You’ll be able to see what ideas you think connect to your students and classes.

### Ideas:

- **Use multiple intelligences.** Your classes probably already include VAK (visual/auditor/kinesthetic) tasks. Expand to that include activities across the range of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences. Here are a couple links you might find useful:  
<http://eltnotebook.blogspot.com/2007/04/making-esl-learning-fun-for-preschool.html>  
[http://www.eltnews.com/features/kids/019\\_hf\\_1.shtml](http://www.eltnews.com/features/kids/019_hf_1.shtml)  
(Or just google: multiple intelligences esl efl elt)  
The TC library has books on multiple intelligences.
- **Wait a second.** When you ask a question, delay students answering for a few seconds. That way, everyone has time to think of their answer. So it increases mental practice (and gives weaker students a chance).

If you are a Keith Haring fan, there are lesson plans that make use of his images at <http://www.haringkids.com>. They aren’t specifically ESL/EFL plans but, with the Early Childhood plans, that is probably less important.

- **TPR Plus.** Modify TPR activities to make it possible for learners to add their ideas (like we did with the “They came from the sea” activity).
- **Sounds and Sound Sequences.** Have students figure out what unknown sounds might be (for separate sounds, see side A of *Sounds Interesting*).
- **Imagination questions.** After a story – or during the story -- ask questions that don’t have fixed answers (.e.g. “What kind of clothes is she wearing? What color are his shoes.”). Encourage various answers.
- **Picture flash.** Instead of showing a picture, put it on something hard (like a textbook). Hold it so students can see the picture. Flash it so they see it for a very, very short time. Ss try to figure out what it is.
- **Twisted tales.** Tell a known story. Make some “mistakes”. Students catch the mistakes. (Banana Boy, Little Blue Ridinghood, Snow White and the seven pumpkins). Depending on the level of your students, they might come up with their own “mistakes”).
- **Stories across the senses.** Tell a story. The first time, they remember and say everything they saw. Tell it again, this time, they say everything they heard. The third time, everything action in the story. Do smell and taste if appropriate.
- **Hello, Red Fox** by Eric Carle is a wonderful way to deal with color, senses, and imagination. Good follow-up is art activities with colored paper, crayons or paint. By the way, [www.theflyingpig.com](http://www.theflyingpig.com) has construction paper cheaper than most stationery stores.
- **Nonsense syllables.** Practice target phrases in nonsense syllables to focus on stress and rhythm. Then, you say the nonsense syllables and they guess what you meant. One way would be to do review a story you’ve read (probably several times) before. (Nonsense syllables = LAla LAlala)
- **Lipreading.** Like nonsense syllables, but with no sound. Students watch your mouth.
- **Balloons.** Review questions the students know (Where do you live? How old are you? What \_ do you like?). Students stand in a circle. One throws a balloon into the air, ask a question – including a classmate’s name). The classmate tries to answer before the balloon reaches him/her.
- **Balloons- body parts** – Students stand in a circle. They hold hands. Toss a balloon in the middle. Students see how long they can keep it in the air. They can not touch it with their hands. Each time they hit it, they have to say: (name’s) (body part) [the body part they are hitting it with]. E.g., Marc’s head. Ai’s shoulder. Ken’s foot.)
- **Hide the smile.** Get a smiley face magnet (many 100 yen shops sell them). Hide it. Give student hints where to find it (It is next to something green. Etc.). If they are at a high enough level, have them think of the questions.
- **Simon says, “You’re not out.”** When playing Simon Says, don’t have the person who makes a mistake go out. Instead, s/he becomes the next Simon. (this seems obvious but I once include it in an article on cooperative learning and several people comments on this “new idea”)