

Task: Watch the following excerpts of two recorded interviews (Karagianni and Nikolaki) given by two English language teachers of VYL's. Note down comments they make with respect to (a) characteristics of very young learners, (b) potential problems in dealing with this age group. Add any characteristics of VYL's or problems you have faced in your own classrooms.

Suggested Answer

Both teachers mention that children learn through a variety of ways, for example by listening, watching, doing things and by imitating. They are like sponges, ready to absorb anything that attracts their attention and is presented in an enjoyable way. They love playing with language sounds, repeating eagerly and making funny noises. Even children who do not appear to participate in class overtly, when involved in chorus repetition, produce words and phrases, thus extending both their linguistic competence as well as their social literacy.

Very young learners show their feelings spontaneously and are naturally curious. They take risks with using the language and experiment with words and structures in their effort to make meaning. In this way, they develop awareness of how language works. It's a process of developing their Interlanguage by making assumptions about its grammar and syntax.

Teachers, highlight the fact that, in their multicultural young learner classes, children from other than Greek background, who do not speak Greek fluently, seem to find no difficulty in participating in the ELT class. On the contrary, they develop language and what is more they understand Greek better and become socially integrated.

The ELT teacher in the very young learners' classroom meets problems which are connected with children's characteristics and their age. Children under seven and particularly those who start their school life for the first year, have not developed socially and bring to the classroom attitudes and behaviour known to them from their home environment. They cannot obey to rules or understand regulations, so keeping discipline becomes a problem for the teacher. On the other hand, they cannot stay still or concentrate for a long time and their curiosity intrigues them to ask questions all the time. Very young learners get bored and tired easily and need motivation, encouragement and engagement in order to adjust to school life. Some children cannot cooperate easily and some others have not developed their motor skills, which makes it demanding for the ELT teacher.