



## Teaching English To Very Young Learners

By Audrey McIlvain

In this paper, we shall explore some of the key characteristics, needs and strengths of the very young English learner (hereafter referred to as VYL). We shall then go on to examine the practical implications as these relate to our planning and teaching methodologies.

### a) AMAZING!!

Yes - the VYL certainly is amazing!! Every day brings surprises and delight.

#### Reflection:

Why do you think the VYL is so amazing, so unique and so rewarding to teach? Even if you haven't taught this age range, just draw on your general knowledge of the 3 - 5 year olds you know. Think of them as **learners, as first language learners and then as learners of English**

Your ideas may have included:

- They learn very quickly
- They have so much fun with learning
- They have incredible energy
- Everything is new to them
- They are such **active** learners, processing new experiences, asking questions, trying things out, experimenting, practising over and over until they master new skills (just watch them learning to ride a bicycle) (Donaldson. 1978. Tizard and Hughes, 1984, Montessori, 1983)
- They acquire their first language so easily ( The average British child knows 2000 English words at 4 and an amazing 4 – 5,000 at 5.)
- They are active language learners too (We see evidence for this in the virtuous errors they make. Garvey (1982) provides some lovely examples such as: "I am blocking" [*building a tower with block*]; "Look! A sweep!" [*a toy broom*] page 62)
- They do not merely **repeat** what they hear; rather, they are actively involved in formulating rules and trying out their hypotheses to 'puzzle it out' for themselves (Wells, 1999)
- They have **fun with language** (Those of you who are parents will probably recall your child playing with the sounds words make and vocalising before going to sleep.) As Weir (1972), Garvey (1982), Chukovsky (1963) and others have pointed out, these solitary vocalizations

may be viewed as 'practice play' and are enjoyed by the child for the inherent play potential of sounds, rhythms, rhymes, word structures and meanings.

For example, "Now it's done un un

Done un un un un", and.

"Let bono bink. Bink ben bink. Blue ink." (Garvey, pages 64,67)

With their friends this often manifests as 'talking funny', and, as Garvey says, this can be a real source of hilarity, but it serves a more serious function too as they try out different combinations of sounds, rhymes, structures and rules.

- They ask questions all the time (Tizard and Hughes, 1984, discovered that the number of questions the pre-schoolers asked at home far exceeded the number asked at Nursery, a point we will return to later)
- When conditions are optimal (and we shall examine this in detail), they can acquire a second language easily too
- If they learn when they are very young they can become bilingual with ease (again only in certain contexts)
- Most lack self consciousness when they speak a new language

*What other ideas did you have?*

## **b) VERY YOUNG MINDS**

### **Reflection:**

What do you think are some of the general characteristics and needs of the VYL (in an holistic sense) that we need to consider?

You may think:

- They are still settling into nursery or kindergarten: therefore, they need to feel safe and secure
- They have a short concentration span
- They need hands-on, concrete experiences in order to learn effectively (Donaldson, 1978, Hughes, 1986)
- They also need practical contexts and concrete references in order to understand new learning as the following extract from Hughes' research (1986) illustrates:



Hughes: How many is two and one more?

Patrick aged 4: Four

H: Well, how many is two lollipops and one more?

P: Three

H: How many is two elephants and one more?

P: Three

H: And two giraffes and one more?

P: Three

H: So, how many is two and one more?

P: (Looking Hughes straight in the eye) Six (page 47)

- They need multi-sensory experiences (see ALPS, 1999)
- Their first language is still developing rapidly
- Little boys tend to be somewhat less advanced in linguistic skills, fine motor skills and concentration (Indeed, some studies suggest that they may lag behind by up to one year in these specific aspects: Khan, 1998; Biddulph, 1998; McIlvain, 2003)
- Most are in the first stages of learning to read and write (We refer to this stage as 'Emerging Literacy' in the U.K.)
- They may not be ready for co-operative play or pair/group work, preferring to engage in 'parallel play' or side-by-side activity
- They find it difficult to sit still (Boys, especially, find this problematic. Biddulph (1998) points out, that this is partly because of a massive upsurge in testosterone levels around the age of four which lasts for approximately one year, resulting in high energy, sometimes aggressive behaviour and a real need to 'career around'.)
- They need and enjoy lots of repetition (We see this particularly at story time, song time and when they are in the process of mastering new skills.)
- Much language development in both first and second languages is inner (i.e. they understand more than they say)
- They may not be ready for certain structures and complexities in either first or second language; the folly of trying to 'force the pace' before they are ready is illustrated below:

Child:	Want other one spoon daddy
Father:	You mean you want the other spoon
C:	Yes, I want the other one spoon
F:	Can you say, the other spoon
C:	Other - one - spoon
F:	Say 'the' (now becoming slightly exasperated!)
C:	the
F:	"other"
C:	other
F:	'spoon'
C:	spoon- now give me other one spoon daddy

Which other points do you think are important?

Now we need to consider the IMPLICATIONS which follow on from a) and b).

### c) WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

#### Reflection:

Using the word, IMPLICATIONS as an 'acrostic' framework, this paper will look at some of the key issues and details we need to consider when we plan our lessons and activities with the VYL? How will we ensure that our teaching matches their needs and strengths?

### I INTERESTS

- We usually find that very young children are interested in themselves, their families, food, pets, toys and the immediate environment. These interests can help us to plan topics to motivate and engage them. An example is provided to demonstrate how an interest in food emerged from the well-loved story, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1970). I seized the opportunity to create a 'Fruit Shop' that resulted in 'hands-on' experiences and activities within which my class of 5 year olds could see, feel, touch, smell and taste key language in an immediate way. (fig. 1)

## Talking

- Role play
- Question making games
- New vocabulary – fruit
- 'Chunks' of language (e.g. Hello, how are you? What would you like? Please. Thank you. I would like, etc)
- Kim's Game (WHAT IS MISSING?)
- Sorting into sets (VEGETABLES, FRUIT, RED, YELLOW, etc)
- Surveys

## Reading

- Signs
- Open/closed
- Times of opening
- 'Special offers'
- Labels to match to fruit
- A map (how to get there)
- Songs
- Stories together
- Big Books
- Games (e.g. BINGO)
- 'Recipes' (e.g. Fruit salad)

## A Fruit Shop (for 4/5 year olds)

## Listening

- Games (what's in the bag?) (I went shopping...)
- Rhymes, stories, songs
- Spot the mistake

## Writing

- Emerging writing
- Shopping 'list'
- Making posters & advertisements
- Puzzles
- Making Big Books' together
- Notepaper to 'add up' costs

Be warned, however - VYL's interests may be short-lived. Therefore, topics need to be planned flexibly. Take your cue from the class: if interest wanes, move on.

Try to consult them and involve them about where to go next. It may be that you have to follow a prescribed curriculum. However, even then, one can ask the class about how to start off the new topic and elicit their ideas and questions regarding how to explore it.

## I IDEAS

- (i.e. the children's)

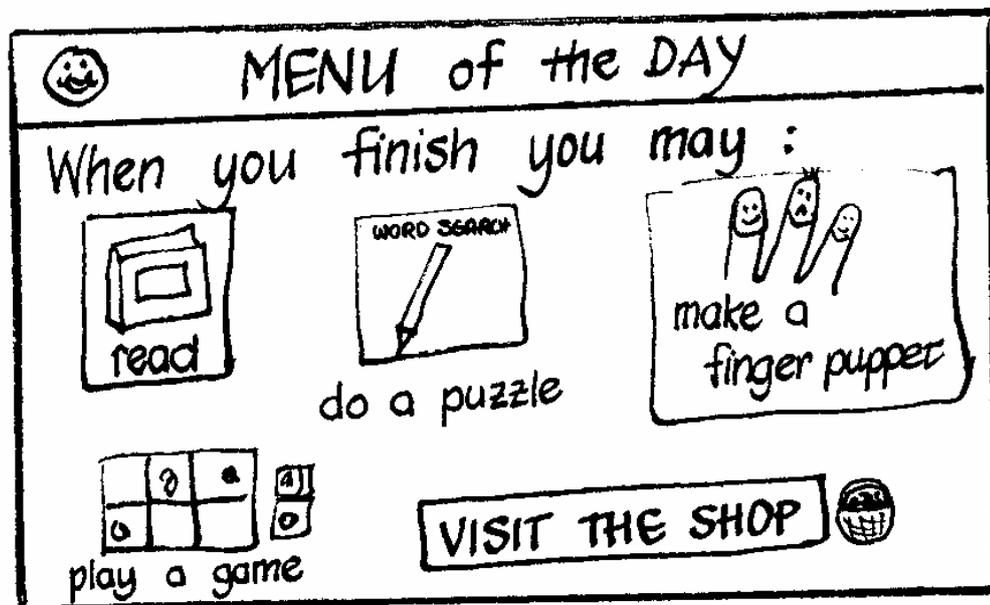
*Hot tip: Leave a web of your topic planner up during the lesson. Invite the class to 'write' or draw **their** ideas of what they are interested in. Let's harness the natural curiosity of the VYL, let's encourage their questions, and in this way we foster a feeling of 'ownership' and self-value which is more likely to develop what Feuerstein (1980) identifies as personal responsibility in learning.*

## M MEMORIES

- Let's ensure that the VYL's memories of their early encounters with English are positive. Thanks to Daniel Goleman (1996) and other writers in the field of Emotional Intelligence, we are all much more aware of the enduring nature of our early experiences. How vividly we can recall those experiences, both positive and negative. Just reflect for a minute on the subjects you perhaps avoid as a direct result of off-putting encounters when you were very young. (In my case a total aversion to sport as a result of a sadistic P.E. teacher. Even now when I recall those lessons, my stomach churns!!)

## M MENU

- All classes tend to finish tasks at different times, and usually we keep some extra activities for the 'early finishers'. For our VYL we need to have an appropriate set of tasks or choices which they can carry out fairly independently. It can be useful to have a board similar to the one in fig. 2.



Many teachers of VYL's find it invaluable to encourage children to plan what they will do, carry out their plans, then review the outcomes at the end of the lesson. (For more information, see McIlvain, 1990) The PLAN-DO-REVIEW which has been carefully researched (Hohmann et al 1979) enables the VYL to become an active participant rather than passive recipient in the classroom. Certainly my own research confirms the benefits in terms of increased motivation to complete tasks, pride in their achievements and awareness of self-control.

The 3/4 year olds can plan their activities on a graphic planner using pictures or symbols. The 5 year olds can be encouraged to write key words copied from the MENU. This also contributes to our reading programme (fig. 3)

My Plan - Do - Review		
 read	✓	
 puppet	✓	
 shop	X	

Organising in this way undoubtedly helps us to –

#### **M MANAGE the CLASSROOM**

- Working with this age group is demanding because we need to plan lots of resources, ideas and changes of activity to match their short attention span.

However, when we plan accordingly and MANAGE our time and resources well, they will be actively engaged which is the key to success.

#### **M 'MASCOT'**

- I have a Spanish teddy called Julio. Like my VYL, he, too, is learning English and the children love him. Not only does he provide continuity between lessons, he also helps the children to feel powerful and knowledgeable as they coach him, correct his mistakes and teach him new words. I love to make books with the children about him and find this is a successful way in which to introduce and reinforce key language items. (See also Seasons, 2001)

#### **P PLAY**

- Janet Moyles (1990) says, It is vital to ensure ... that the links between play and the basic curriculum are made explicit. (Page 161)

Let us not think of play as frivolous or as 'relief from work'. Instead, we need to remember that play is the young child's natural way to learn. Think of the relaxed but focused state we enter into when we are engrossed in play. As Gardner and Goleman (1996) point out this state of what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined as 'flow', is the healthiest way to teach children (i.e. by motivating them from within).

Think of the implications: how can we use play to motivate and engage the VYL?

This brings us to –

## **P PLAY WITH LANGUAGE**

- Moyles (1990) points out; All children enjoy the humour of funny and unusual words, (page 48). Very often this important aspect of the young learner is forgotten. Yet we saw in section a) how important this is to the VYL. Garvey (1982) reminds us that the VYL is fascinated by the resources of language and is especially sensitive to its play potential. Chukovsky (1963) writes of the 2 to 5's delight of distortion, absurdity and exaggeration.

Let's capitalise on this by including 'funny' poems such as those by Spike Milligan (1963). My 4 year olds in Chile loved his NingNangNong poem. Make up funny words together (for example, cut up a banana, put it with half an apple and add the end of a pear - hey presto!! a whole new fruit- what shall we call it?), make monster puppets, give them absurd names, make machines with 'junk', cut up pictures of animals they know the names of and invent some new ones (have you ever seen a kangdogcow before?).

Have fun with songs such Wiggley Woo and enter into the fun with them. All the researchers in this field seem to agree that play with words is associated with pleasurable states in the child, so if we want early experiences in using English to be linked with positive memories, it is logical to build on this predisposition to experiment with language. When we plan our topics let's deliberately include opportunities to play with words.

## **P PARENTS**

- Parents of the VYL may be excited about their child learning English at such an early age. However, they may also be confused if their experiences of TEFL were of boring textbook exercises and formal grammar. They may be wondering how we can teach English to a 4 year old. Also, if they don't speak English very well they may feel nervous about how to support their child in case (as one parent said to me "I get it wrong").

It is up to us to take the lead, and warmly welcome parents to talks, workshops and opportunities to see how we do things. If you are brave, invite them in small groups to watch you in action. Alternatively video some lessons and show them at a parents evening.

If we are clear about our methods and rationale, and we explain them clearly, parents will feel reassured and secure. If we go one step further and offer guidance on how they can offer support at home, they will feel much more involved and valued. We need to convince them that, even if they don't speak English perfectly, they can help. Think of the evidence we have worldwide from Suzuki methods of violin teaching. The parent sits in on the lessons so that s/he can learn how to support and encourage the pupil.

For many years now I have shared my topic plans with parents to keep them informed and to make suggestions on how they can be involved. I send these home at the beginning of every term as a newsletter, and parents really value this gesture to keep them informed and to help them to feel valued.

## **P PHYSICAL**

-We can't expect the VYL to sit still for very long. As we saw in section b) little boys, especially, have a hard time in a 'sedentary classroom'. Biddulph (1998) and Khan (1998) remind us that the typically



female dominated methodology that we find in early years education tends to favour oral language, sitting quietly during story time, fine motor skills – in fact all the things that little boys find most difficult.

We will make life much easier for them and for ourselves by tuning into the VYL's need to move around. Ensure that you build in 'brain breaks'- opportunities to stretch, do some Tai Chi or just have a good wiggle. (See my research into getting children into a good state for learning In 'A stretch in time helps children learn', 2003)

Songs and rhymes such as the following can be used whenever we notice the class getting a little restless. As Goleman (1996) says, when we feel that others are attuned to us it helps us to feel valued and accepted. This, in turn, helps us to attune to others. So instead of scolding the YVL for being restless all we need to say is, "OH, let's have a good wiggle around and sing..."

I wiggle my fingers,  
I wiggle my nose,  
I wiggle my tummy,  
I wiggle my toes.  
Now no more wiggles are left in me  
And I can be still, as still as can be."

For those of you wishing to read more about practical application of research in this area I thoroughly recommend Smith and Call (1999)

## **L LINKS WITH HOME**

-As we discussed in b), the VYL, entering kindergarten, nursery or Infants for the first time may be feeling a bit 'lost' or nervous. For some children, hearing a new language on top of everything else may be quite overwhelming. Therefore, in the first few sessions it can be useful to have some 'show and tell' or circle times where we sit on a rug together and show a favourite toy or teddy from home to each other. These links with home can provide an important bridge which bring comfort and reassurance.

Sometimes the young child will enjoy cuddling a favourite teddy during story time. Let's empathise with their needs. When we do they will learn much better because they will be more relaxed and secure.

## **L LEARNING to LEARN**

-Even at such an early age we can begin to introduce the idea of looking at their own progress. As we have discussed, the plan-do-review process can be a useful starting point. We can extend this by asking the child to draw a 'smiling' face if s/he is happy with her/his work that day. We can then begin to discuss with them how they remember new words in (e.g.) our fruit shop.

Sharing strategies in an informal way helps the VYL to learn from and with others. It also makes them realise that learning is not all down to 'luck'. By the time the child is 5 (approximately), we can introduce other strategies. For example, give the class a red and a green card which they retain in a safe place. When we introduce something new (e.g. a new game or procedure) if they really understand what they have to do they hold up the green card, if not the red. This can provide good and useful feedback for us and, at the same time, encourage the child to be aware of his/her 'grasp' of the material. (In the ALPS project (1999) you can find many other excellent ideas which can be readily adapted to different contexts.)

## **L LITERACY**

- Few of the VYL group will be reading fluently in first language. Most, however, will read some key words and phrases, even in English. Indeed, a fun starting point is to show them words in English which they probably recognise (think Coca Cola and McDonald's!!)



We have seen how easy it is for us to integrate within the context of a shop opportunities to read for a variety of purposes (e.g. signs, labels, open and closed, special offers, shopping lists, games, maps, etc.) Creating other role play tables or corners such as: Post Office; Hospital; Vets' surgery; cafe, etc. is quick and easy. All we need is a few props- the rest is left to the child's rich imagination. (Appendix1)

Elsewhere in the forum, Annie Hughes will be discussing the role of story as starting points for TEYL. Many of the points she will be making are relevant to the VYL too.

## L LISTENING

-Do we really listen well to children? Or as Wells (1999), Tizard and Hughes (1984) and other researchers including myself (McIlvain, 1993) have discovered, do we listen only for what we want to hear (i.e. our pre-set agenda)?

When we listen to the VYL, let's remember that s/he is still developing first language skills and confidence so we need to be supportive by modelling the correct form, extending their utterances and try to understand the content of what they are trying to express (as well as the structure). Fisher (1995) also points out the importance of giving them time to think and to grapple with the demands of expressing themselves. Indeed, Fisher says that, on average, teachers wait for only one second for an answer before intervening or asking another pupil!

This brings us nicely to-

## I INPUT

-When we observe effective parent-child interaction we see that their input is just a little more complex than the child's. For example:

Child (2½ years): Up-up-me up

Parent: You want to get up?

C: Up-me up

P: You want to get up on the stool?

C: Me up

P: O.K. Up you come- up on the stool

C: Me on tool up

P: Yes Andrew's on the stool now

C: Doo on tool

P: Yes- Andrew's on the stool

Which strategies are being used here by the parent to support the child's attempts to express himself?

These are some of the most effective strategies we can use when we are interacting with our VYL group. Most importantly, beware of long-winded, abstract, complex sentences. If they do not understand these in their first language, they will be totally bewildered in English.

As Gordon Wells often says when interviewed: "Just listen and be a courteous conversationalist."

### **C CHANGES of ACTIVITY + CONCENTRATION SPAN**

-As we have identified, the VYL attention span is very short. Therefore if we have, say, 40 minutes with them, we will need lots of different activities, brain breaks and a variety of tasks to keep them engaged. (YES- this is demanding! Keep munching your vitamins for the stamina you will require!)

We also need-

### **C CLASSROOM ROUTINES**

- As any parent knows, young children thrive within the security of routine and predictable structures. Try to incorporate a pattern into your lessons. Make these visible (as we have mentioned) by using a planning board, incorporate little rituals (such as a 'Hello' song to start the lesson, a story to 'set the scene', plan-do-review, show and tell, a goodbye song, etc.). Also, use English within everyday procedures such as lining up, raise your hand, go to the story corner, etc.. Keep these simple and use the same language daily.

### **A ACTIVITY! ACTIVITY! ACTIVITY!**

- But these need to be planned carefully if the learning outcomes are to be worthwhile. The key question is: What will the VYL learn from this?

### **A ARTS**

- Let's not forget the wonderful role that the Arts can play in introducing the VYL to English. I recall a little Japanese girl I taught in Barcelona. For the first few months she said nothing in English. Then, one day, I played a tape of *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky as I showed the class pictures from the storybook version by Storr (1987). Suddenly, she called out in great excitement. "I know it, I know it!!!" Through the universal language of music we had connected (and she never looked back).

Many of the materials for the VYL are bright, jolly and fun, and there's nothing wrong with that. But the Arts (music, dance, painting, drawing, drama) all have a role in helping us to communicate with the child in a very special way. When we work through and with the Arts, we reach the sensitive, aesthetic and spiritual aspects of the child and turn our lessons into something special which stays with the child for the rest of his/her life.

### **A AFFECTIVE**

-In other words, as Goleman (1996) reminds us, "Learning doesn't take place in isolation from kids' feelings." (page 262)

When we create a special atmosphere and work with the child's feelings, we are building up powerful neural associations between English and pleasure which, undoubtedly, can have a lasting effect on how the child relates to the subject.

### **T TEACHER**

-That's us. The most important person in the VYL's life after the immediate family. Our influence is profound which makes teaching the very young child both a privilege and an awesome responsibility. If we 'get it wrong', if these early encounters with English are boring, badly matched or inappropriate



just imagine the lasting damage we could inflict. On the other hand, if we provide special times and exciting, worthwhile experiences we could set the scene for a lifelong love affair with language learning. Now, that's worth something!!

## **I INTERACTIVE**

-It has been said of the Early Years classroom, "Nothing never happens". For teachers accustomed to the Secondary classroom, this can come as a shock. The VYL has not yet acquired independence from you and his concentration span is short so you find yourself constantly interacting to set new activities, redirect them, reassure them, etc..

Nevertheless, even the VYL can begin to learn a little bit of independence if we provide adequate support. For example, when I am training (and this is the key to success) my class to work on their own for a short period (5-10 minutes to start with) I use the OPEN/CLOSED sign from the shop as a fun way to teach them that when I am working with a small group and the CLOSED sign is displayed they must seek help from a friend or choose an activity from THE MENU until they see that I am again 'OPEN for BUSINESS'. (McIlvain, 1992)

If we are to achieve sustained, quality interaction with children, it is vital that we invest time in training them to be a little bit self-reliant. Otherwise you find yourself caught up low-key, flitting encounters with few opportunities to extend and enrich dialogue (as researchers such as Tizard and Hughes, 1984 have discovered).

## **O OXYGEN**

-The VYL will benefit enormously from outdoor activities which are well-planned and part of the curriculum. Think of the potential for teaching English through circle songs, playground games, treasure hunts, visits to local shops, parks, teddy bears' picnics, nature study etc.. They love it!! By tuning into the VYL's need for physical activity we can harness and channel their energy and provide an exciting start to English which really motivates them.

## **N NEEDS**

-When we are teaching the VYL, a good motto to remember is, "We are teaching young children, not English." This has far-reaching implications for differentiation, groupwork and matching our lessons appropriately. Get to know the child as a person, liaise with other teachers to build an holistic profile and use the time together to reach the whole child (i.e. cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually)

## **S SPIRAL CURRICULUM**

-Much revising and recycling will take place if our VYL is to learn English effectively. Here we see the value of planning topics which enable us to do so in an interesting and meaningful way. Clever planning is the secret: think of a spiral model rather than a linear framework. For example, following a topic based around a Fruit Shop, we could explore a more general topic on 'food' or set up a 'cafe'. In this way, we can build on and extend the previous foci, while integrating plenty of opportunities to revisit familiar items. Try to plan topics and themes which have obvious links from the child's point of view. Share your planning with them on a graphic chart. Remember that the VYL needs concrete experience in order to make sense of her world.

## **S SURPRISES**

-These are what you keep in your 'magic box or bag' (i.e. your contingency plan!) If you find they complete what you had planned for the whole lesson early (and this often happens) or interest and concentration are waning at some point in the lesson, gather them round you in a circle, play some special music, and, with some ceremony, engage them in guessing what is in the bag or box today.

### **S SCAFFOLD their questions.**

- As Wood et al (1976) discovered, marking 'critical features' reduces frustration and ambiguity, so we need to model suitable questions such as: "You could ask me-What colour is it? Is it big? Is it a fruit? Is it soft?" etc..

Use this opportunity as a special time to play with question-making together. As Tizard and Hughes (1984) point out, teachers tend to monopolise question-making in the classroom. Yet, at home, the VYL asks questions all the time. Remember how naturally curious the VYL is and let's encourage them to ask questions in school too.

### **S SOUL**

-The magic box, the atmosphere we create and the special music we play can also enable us to connect with the soul of the child. If we reveal some special things about ourselves to them (for example a photo of you when you were little, a special art postcard , a lovely pebble you found on the beach, a perfect flower) we open up the possibility of lifting English lessons out of the ordinary and reaching a different dimension entirely. That's when we reach the wonder of the young child.

### **d) TEACHING VERY YOUNG LEARNERS**

#### **Reflection:**

Now, make a list of some of the key teaching strategies we have discussed in the paper which we need to utilise in order to teach the VYL effectively.

Add some of your own.

Think about some of the modifications you would have to make in your current teaching strategies to work successfully with this age group.

You may have thought of these teaching strategies:

Model the correct form; extend what the VYL says; play alongside the VYL and input in the context of play and activity; scaffold; listen to what the VYL is trying to say; observe; consult the VYL; elicit their ideas; demonstrate and explain with the help of concrete materials; attune to their needs (especially for security, brain breaks and physical activity); plan flexibly and have contingency activities; delegate some responsibility to the VYL to plan some activities and make choices within a given structure; give them time to think; share something special about yourself; assess their learning in concrete contexts which make "human sense to the VYL"; revisit and recycle language in interesting, meaningful contexts; create opportunities for children's questions; have fun with them; communicate well with parents and other colleagues; differentiate and match tasks well.

### **e) CONCLUSION**

The best way to sum up all that we have discussed is:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.</b></p>
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The VYL needs to do in order to learn effectively. Teaching them is challenging, fascinating, exhausting, exciting and FUN.

**YES-you can!!!**



## **Appendix 1: EMERGING LITERACY and the VYL** **- creating special 'places to talk, listen, read and write together in English**

### **CAFE**

What you need: table cover, cups, plates, etc., till, money, MENU, note pad for "orders", SPECIALS board, OPEN and CLOSED sign. table number

### **BANK**

What you need: money bags, money, till, OPEN/CLOSED SIGN, "CASH CARD", Clock, today's date, PLEASE WAIT SIGN, old cheque book, bank book, LEAFLETS and POSTERS (from the bank- ask for some during your visit), paying in/out slips, etc.

### **POST OFFICE**

What you need: pretend stamps made by the child, envelopes, till, money, money bags, OPEN/CLOSED SIGN. clock. DATE (calendar, blocks, etc.), Birthday cards (etc.), magazines, newspapers, stamp and ink set, leaflets and POSTERS (from local P.O.- get some while you are here !), slips to sign name on, make a post box from a cereal box with slit, add collection times, paper for letters.

### **TRAVEL AGENT'S**

What you need: travel brochures, pictures and posters of locations (local agents will gladly give you some), pretend passport, pretend tickets you can make together, money, money bags, date, weather, pictures and captions of different transport, telephone, "cheques"

### **FRUIT SHOP**

What you need: fruit, posters, leaflets (from local shops), cards to match to fruit, OPEN sign, times of opening, till, scales, SPECIAL OFFERS, notebooks for shopping lists, paper to add up cost

### **VETS' SURGERY**

What you need: toy animals, posters, leaflets (from local vet), toy medical instruments, telephone, OPEN sign, notebook to write symptoms, prescriptions, phone message pad, appointments pad, label some boxes: "plasters", "bandages", some little bottles for "medicine"

**JOIN IN** and have fun extending the VYL'S language and his/her growing awareness of WHY we read and write in English in real life settings.

**BUILD** on her interests by reading related stories and singing songs.

**CHANGE** the themes when interest wanes.

**LOOK OUT** for ideas and "PROPS" when you are in town. HAVE FUN!!

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