

**UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**HUMANISTIC TECHNIQUES  
AND  
HUMANISTIC LANGUAGE  
WITH CHILDREN**

*By*  
***Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra***

Talk cum workshop delivered in the 7th TESOL-Greece Conference.  
and published in TESOL-Greece Newsletter Vol. 13, December, 1986.

**Abstract:**  
 In this short paper the intrinsic learning potential of humanistic techniques with children EFL learners is discussed. Then humanistic language and practices in EFL are defined and their relevance to the humanistic approach to language teaching/learning is pointed out.

1.0 A *humanistic approach* to language learning presupposes the involvement of learners as whole persons in sharing activities where emphasis falls on interpersonal communication, learner-centredness, learner feelings and emotions as well as sense appeal. In accord with humanistic ideology, a learning technique or task should satisfy certain criteria in order to be eligible for use in a young learners' class. These criteria derive from children's basic human needs and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Children's basic human needs
1. Physical security
2. Love and attention
3. Creative experiences to promote new ways of expressing themselves as members of their learning group
4. Basic competency in the four skills smoothly intergrated
5. Self-worth experiences where strengths are stressed and weaknesses are played down

In a class atmosphere of caring and sharing young learners are expected to share among themselves and care about each other's:

- a. feelings
- b. experiences
- c. interests
- d. day-dreams
- e. fantasies

among other basic human needs.

Subsequently, in accordance with the humanistic orientation to language learning and teaching, techniques or tasks for young learners should be enjoyable, thought-provoking, reinforcing and non-threatening. Consequently, a humanistic approach to language learning should be characterized by a) learner and teacher awareness of learner learning needs (see Table 2), b) learner psychobiological involvement in order to increase motivation and accelerate language learning (see Table 3) and c) a learner motivating environment (see Table 4).

In the context of the humanistic approach learners are expected to fully understand the learning goals set by administrators and know about the structure and demands of the syllabus and the timing presupposed by institutional learning. Through discussion and evaluation learners are expected to supplement and implement institutional learning with their own understanding of collaborative learning and self-

