

Boris Alexandrovich Artemenko, Elena Borisovna Bystray, Elena Vladimirovna Chelpanova, Irina Yurevna Ivanova, Irina Viktorovna Kolosova, Natalia Alexandrovna Dildina. (2021). Foreign Language Teaching in a Preschool Educational Institution as a Condition of Children's Social Communicative Development: Specific Features and Methods. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 13(2): 831-836. DOI: 10.9756/INT-JECSE/V13I2.211125

Received: 25.05.2021 Accepted: 28.08.2021

Boris Alexandrovich Artemenko¹
Elena Borisovna Bystray²
Elena Vladimirovna Chelpanova³
Irina Yurevna Ivanova⁴
Irina Viktorovna Kolosova⁵
Natalia Alexandrovna Dildina⁶

Foreign Language Teaching in a Preschool Educational Institution as a Condition of Children's Social Communicative Development: Specific Features and Methods

Abstract

The article dwells upon specific features and peculiar methods of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers which will contribute to their social communicative development. The authors emphasize a stage character of this process distinguishing the initial phonetic stage, the second lexical stage and the final evaluative and reflective stage. The enhancement of phonetic, lexical and speech skills stipulates such forms of classwork arrangements as individual, paired and choral, each with its advantages and functions. For this age group, an analytico-imitative method has been recognized as the most effective one: cognitive imitation and reproduction are the basic forms of learning. In this respect, the content of the material intended for cognitive imitation has to be valuable, informative and thought-provoking. Special genres have to be found and applied to motivate children to learn and take part in activities: songs, counting rhymes, poems, fairy-tales and games. Children should be constantly involved into the emotionally appealing canvas of the lesson. The results of the research show that emotional impact, exciting forms of presentation and the informative content of the material increase preschoolers' self-consciousness about their progress, create positive motivation and push forward their cognitive, communicative and social development.

Keywords: Foreign Language Teaching, Preschool Education, Specific Features of Teaching Preschoolers, Preschoolers' Psychological and Physiological Characteristics, Preschool Educational Institution, Preschoolers' Social Communicative Development.

Introduction

The present situation in the system of preschool education is determined by the process in the society characterized by the

greater openness, growth of international cooperation in the spheres of science, culture, art and education. Due to this fact relevancy of foreign languages as a means of communication

Boris Alexandrovich Artemenko¹, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

Elena Borisovna Bystray², South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

Elena Vladimirovna Chelpanova³, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

Irina Yurevna Ivanova⁴, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

Irina Viktorovna Kolosova⁵, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

Natalia Alexandrovna Dildina⁶, South Ural State Humanitarian Pedagogical University, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

currently increases. It is against this background that many parents being conscious of the need for their children to master foreign languages face the problem of the most suitable age from which to start learning. There are several points of view in that regard. Some scholars believe the age of five to be the most favorable for that matter because by that time preschoolers' native speech skills have already been formed fairly well, they possess enlarged mother-tongue vocabulary (Saunders Semonsky C., Spielberger M.A. (2004), Thompson L. (1999), Woods P., Boyle M., Hubbard N. (1999), Negnevitskaya E.I. (1986; 1987), Protasova E.U. (2010), Sholpo I.L. (1999)). Other educators and researchers claim that a learner must be able to concentrate on the subject for a fairly long time, control his/hers actions and consciously exercise the process of cognition. Such qualities of psychological development are attributed to the age of 10-11 years old (Kuzovlev V.P. and others). In opposition to both previous points of view Masaru Ibuka persuades us that after the age of three years old it is too late to implement any programs of children's purposeful development as the brain cells develop the fastest during the first three years of an infant's life, and this progress has been completed by 70-80% within this period. According to Masaru I., babies' education is possible since the first days of their life (Masaru, 2015).

Parents and teachers may choose one of the discussed above options depending on the objectives they have in mind. Following many experts, we support the first opinion according to which the preschool age is the most favourable for mastering a foreign language due to some particular psychological and physiological characteristics of this age group.

Taking into account these characteristics the purpose of the research is to consider specific features and peculiar methods of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers which will contribute to their social communicative development. To achieve this purpose the following tasks have been solved: foreign and domestic experience of the organization of the social communicative development in the system of preschool education was analyzed; theoretical analysis of the problem was implemented; ways and methods foreign languages are taught at kindergartens in the Russian Federation were studied; specific features of teaching a foreign language to preschoolers were determined and fulfilled in the environment of a preschool educational institution, monitoring of children's social communicative development was carried out and the results were described. Within this frame the researchers proved that teaching a

foreign language to 6 year old children pushed forward their communicative development.

The following methods were relied upon: theoretical (related literature analysis, synthesis, summary of pedagogical experience); empirical (expert assessment, interview, conversation, qualitative and quantitative analysis, mathematical processing of data). Besides, a modified variant of a scale of personal qualities assessment by T.B. Dembo (1962), complemented by S.Y. Rubinshtein (1970) was used in the research (Prikhozhan, 1988).

Methodology

The methodological background of the research includes the works of the scholars, who 1) studied the problem of production and reception of oral speech in terms of learning foreign languages (Littlewood W. (1981), Rivers W., Zimnaya I.A. (2000), Brown H.D.H. (1993), Galskova N.D., Vinogradov V.A., Alkhazhshvili A.A. (1998)); 2) laid high emphasis on the problem of communicative skills formation (Passov E.I. (1991), Artiomov V.A., Shatilov S.F. (1977)); 3) had highest regard for early education in general (Masaru, 2015), its psychological basis (Vygotsky L.S. (1935; 1966), Rubinshtein S.L., Leontev A.N. (1983)), teaching preschoolers foreign languages (Negnevitskaya E.I. (1986; 1987), Protasova E.U. (2010), Rodina N.M., Sholpo I.L. (1999) and others).

Summing up Russian scholars' point of view on the problem of developing communicative and social skills as a part of a foreign language communicative competence, communicative speech skills in a foreign language may be defined as ability to perform certain vocal acts within language activity which becomes more automated and faultless as a result of training. To be more exact, automatism, accuracy, steadiness, optimal speed of performance are the criteria of speech skills formation named by the mentioned above scholars (Azimov, 2009).

I.L. Bim distinguishes three phases in speech skill formation, each of which has its purpose (Bim, 2001). During the first phase realization and recognition of speech acts which are to be automated on later phases is implemented. The second phase provides steadiness and stability in performing speech acts for the phenomenon being trained. It is here that stereotypical situational and contextual links are created in the process of substitutional training and repeating. The third phase is varied and situation-based. Skill flexible and dynamic character is formed here. To sum up, in teaching foreign languages communicative speech skills must be paid great attention to as they ensure solving verbal and cogitative tasks in

communication and facilitate active interrelationship with the surrounding world.

To help raise the effectiveness of speech skills formation and their integration into preschoolers' communicative activity as a condition of children's social communicative development specific features of teaching preschoolers foreign languages have to be made allowance for.

Discussion

The whole process of preschool teaching foreign languages has been divided into three stages with a different dominant component at each stage: 1) Phonetic aspect is prevailing; 2) Lexical aspect is domineering; 3) Reflexive and evaluative aspects are leading.

At the initial stage the major necessity is to place focus on phonemic awareness and pronunciation though phonetic skills should be formed alongside with lexical and grammatical skills. Phonetic skills are considered to be automated auditory and speech-motor acts providing both perception and production of the units of different levels of phonological component of the language in accordance with its system and norm (Liubimova, 1985). To understand foreign speech and to be understood is the main purpose to which communicators are striving. So, a foreign language learner must, on the one hand, have certain phonemic awareness to be able to interpret the received speech signal correctly, and, on the other hand, have definite articulation skills to be able to adequately code his/her own speech into a foreign language (Solovova, 2006). In short, well-developed phonetic skills are an important condition of understanding an utterance precisely and of expressing one's own thoughts rightly.

The most effective approach to mastering phonetic skills is in the frames of speech patterns or models which are demonstrated by the teacher and then imitated by the learner. Acquaintance with a phonetic phenomenon takes place through exaggerated and overemphasized demonstration of its peculiarities in a complete oral statement. The order in which phonetic material is presented is dictated by the needs of communication which results in the necessity to sometimes introduce at the very beginning the most difficult sounds not having comparable counterparts in native speech, for example, at the first lesson children come across such a phrase as "This is a..." and its interrogative form "Is this a ...?". To teach children to pronounce it, the teacher articulates the model distinctly exaggerating the sounds [ð], [z] and [s]. But repeating unfamiliar sounds after the teacher in a mechanical unconscious way is useless. Learners' awareness of what they are

doing and why is significant. The teacher makes play with the phrase or just translates it into the native language. Then the teacher points out the key word in the model ("this") and after that the isolated sound or sounds. Thus the teacher follows the order "context-word-sound", whereas preschoolers repeat /follow the reverse order: "sound- word-context".

Another specific feature of teaching preschoolers foreign languages is the use of analytico-imitative method. At this age children often can't write or read even in the native language, so transcription and sound-letter correlation can't be relied on and observation of the rules of articulation has approximate character. These rules should prompt learners which organs of speech participate in the articulation of a certain sound and should preferably be presented in a play form. For example, teaching the English sound [r] we may set off with the Russian sound [ж]. Children are asked to show how the bee buzzes. Then they are offered to move the tip of the tongue back behind the alveolar ridge going on to buzz as though the bee hides in its beehive. Another example is teaching how to pronounce the sound [w] comparing it with the elephant's trunk and asking learners to protrude the labialized lips and then release them energetically. Explanation how to pronounce is intermitted with the demonstration of the model either by the teacher or by the recording which in its turn is followed by training.

Intensive training includes two types of exercises: 1) Active listening and sound recognition; 2) Cognitive imitation (Solovova, 2006). Attentive active listening stimulates ability to single out a certain sound from sound flow and, consequently, from word flow. A child signals the teacher that he/she recognized the sound by holding up his/her hand or card or another thing. Attentive active listening is a significant part of the process of developing phonetic skills: it enhances phonemic awareness and paves the way for imitation exercises.

The second type of exercises aimed at developing preschoolers' phonetic skills includes cognitive imitation of a model, a master standard; they direct learners' every effort at the qualitative simulation of a new sound. These exercises if done regularly help overcome cross linguistic and intra linguistic interference, namely substitution of a foreign sound by a mother-tongue one. Training separate sounds and sound combinations gradually passes over to longer units, such as syllables-words-phrases-sentences-texts. Thus, stages of pronunciation enhancement start with listening to a text pronounced by the teacher and go to a text created by the preschooler.

Formation of articulatory skills stipulates such forms of classwork arrangements as individual, paired and choral. Each has its advantages. Choral reproduction of a sound desensitizes and weakens awkwardness. It also emphasizes characteristic features of sounds as children pronounce them all' unisono. The effect of choral work increases if it is balanced with individual and paired activities which heighten every child's sense of responsibility. While practicing in pairs preschoolers learn to address a partner, to appeal to a particular listener.

Choral work: [w w w], [wɔ], [wɔt], [ð ð ð], [z z z], [s s s], [wɔt ɪzz ððɪss] [ððɪss ɪzz ə dɔg]

Individual work: [w w w], [wɔ], [wɔt], [ð ð ð], [z z z], [s s s], [wɔt ɪzz ððɪss] [ððɪss ɪzz ə kæt]

Paired work:

- [wɔt ɪzz ððɪss]
- [ððɪss ɪzz ə dɔg] [wɔt ɪzz ððɪss]
- [ððɪss ɪzz ə kæt]

At the second stage of the process of teaching foreign languages in a preschool educational establishment lexical component should be domineering. As at this age preschoolers still can't read or write in a foreign language cognitive imitation and reproduction remains the basic form of learning. In this respect the content of the material intended for cognitive imitation has to be valuable, informative and thought provoking. Special genres have to be found and applied to motivate children to learn and take part in activities: songs, counting rhymes, poems, fairy-tales and games. For example, children can learn the following song: "Are you tired? – Have a rest. Are you lazy? – Do your best. Are you sad? – Have a walk. Are you lonely? – Have a talk. Are you hungry? – Have a meal. See a doctor if you are ill. Are you thirsty? – Have a drink. Are you angry? –Calm down and think". The correct pronunciation of this song must be thoroughly trained; memorization can only be encouraged when faultless sound articulation is achieved.

A distinct psychological characteristic of this age group is preschoolers' inability to concentrate their attention on something which is not interesting. It calls for organizing the process of teaching in such a way that children are constantly involved into the emotionally appealing canvas of the lesson. Emotional impact is directly connected to positive motivation.

Motivation is an "ignition mechanism" of any human activity (I.A. Zimnaya): labor, communication or learning (cognition). Success feeds and supports motivation; lack of success makes it wither and influences further activity in a negative way. The issue of forming learners' positive motivation while studying foreign languages was discussed in the works of Biboletova M.Z., Bim I.L., Vereshchagina I.N.,

Zimnaya I.A., Rogova G.V. and others (Bim, 19; Zimnaya, 2000). The term "motivation" was first used by Arthur Schopenhauer. In pedagogics motivation is looked upon as a means of encouraging learners to productive cognitive activity, to acquisition of educational content (Podlasyi, 1999). Motivation is a result of a person's internal needs, emotions and interests, purposes and tasks. In psychology a motive is the central term of the theory of activity the authors of which are Leontev A.N. and Rubinshtein S.L. They define the motive as a "subjectified need" (Leontev, 1983).

What forms of work can boost motivation for learning a foreign language?

The use of songs, poems, and games secures a significant condition of preschoolers' success in learning foreign languages – their personal emotional involvement in the educational process. This involvement also becomes a meaningful factor in activating the mechanisms of speech production through strengthening positive motivation and cognitive capabilities, logic and imagination. It enables to broaden their outlook and general awareness of the environment.

Analyzing educational advantages of songs the following points should be noticed:

- Songs help forward learners' phonemic awareness, their audiolingual skills, and sense of pitch. In songs certain phrases and intonation patterns are repeated many times which makes them easy to remember and reproduce.
- While singing vocabulary and grammar are sooner understood and memorized.
- Songs often contain realia, culture-bound terms, culture-specific concepts of a foreign language, proper nouns, geographical names; all of them provide a deeper insight into a foreign culture and broaden preschoolers' outlook.
- Songs are often looked upon as a team-building activity forming a sense of community and fellowship. At an early stage teachers are strongly advised to encourage children to accompany songs with movements, to make preschoolers follow the rhythm with gestures, changing body positions and word articulation.
- Favourable psychological climate and comfortable atmosphere at the lesson can be created through singing. Songs remove psychological stress, heighten emotional tone, and perform a relaxation function.

All these aspects develop preschoolers' positive motivation in learning foreign languages and should be taken into account when teaching

process is organized in a preschool educational institution.

To find themselves in a situation close to foreign language real communication learners can participate in a role playing game or RPG. Its benefits for preschool age category are obvious: learners have to express themselves in a foreign language, ask questions, find out details, persuade a partner and so on. So RPG helps smooth a language barrier and activates preschoolers' contact with each other and with the teacher. Role playing games defeat lack of self-confidence, they cultivate personality in a team and through a team. They create a foreign language model of real interpersonal communication which a child has already observed many times in his native language, as in the example with the game "Going shopping" which can be played at the very beginning of learning. A role playing game gives preschoolers evidence that the foreign language can be used as a means of communication.

The third stage of teaching preschoolers a foreign language is the one where reflection and evaluation take place. Throughout all the research monitoring of children's social communicative development was carried out with the help of a modified variant of a scale of personal qualities assessment by T.B. Dembo (1962), complemented by S.Y. Rubinshtein (1970). Preschoolers are asked to draw a

staircase of five stairs and to imagine that their favourite fairy-tale characters (e.g. Snow-white, Winnie-the-Pooh and Karlsson-on-the-Roof) are climbing the stairs: the best student is already at the top of the stairs whereas the worst – at the bottom. Children put ticks or crosses on the stairs. Then they choose near which character they should put themselves, on which stair. The number of the points is equal to the number of the stair the child chooses. The received results are compared to the expert assessment (teachers' marks) to see how self-conscious about their progress and how motivated the children are.

Sticking to the identified specific features and methods of foreign language teaching helped to get the results of the research demonstrating positive trends in the process of children's social communicative development in a preschool educational institution. Learners' communicative skills were assessed through their performance in three tasks in English: participating in a dialogue ("In a toy shop"), making up a monologue about their family or an animal (aided by a photo), reciting their favourite English poem or singing their favourite song in English. So, these three tasks helped us check the level of phonetic, lexical and speech skills in English in the group of 30 Russian preschoolers. The results are shown in Figure 1.

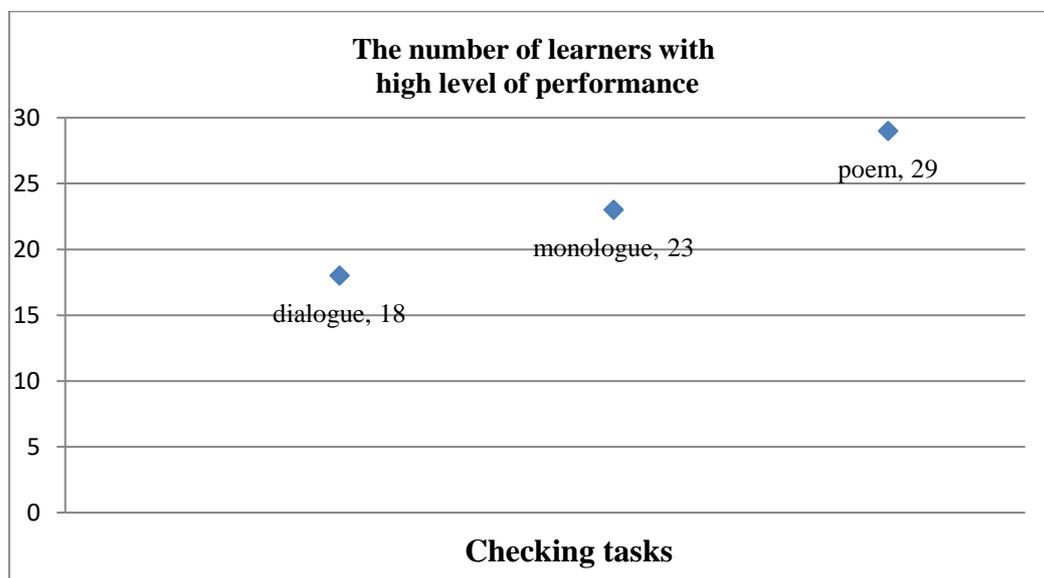


Figure 1.

The number of learners with high level of performance

Conclusion

Taking into consideration everything stated above in relation to various aspects of early foreign-language education in a preschool educational establishment, we came to the

following conclusions. Pedagogical conditions and organizational methods of effective language learning by pre-school children have been evaluated in the research by focusing on specific features of the educational process of this target group. The form of presentation and

the content of learning materials are directly related to motivation, interests and cognitive abilities of pre-school learners. Children should be excited about the content of the emotionally tinged, informative and thought provoking material presented in the most favorable forms of songs, counting rhymes, poems, fairy-tales and games.

While teaching preschoolers foreign languages at the initial stage, development of their phonetic skills is of primary importance though it should take place alongside with lexical and grammatical skills. At this age an analytical-imitative method has been recognized the most effective one for the enhancement of all kinds of skills and has been exemplified by its use for the formation of phonemic awareness and pronunciation. At the second stage lexical aspect of the language is in focus. Grammar is not taught separately due to age limitations. The third stage is evaluative and reflective.

Acknowledgments

The research was funded by Federal State Budget Educational Establishment of Higher Education "Mordovskiy State Pedagogical Institute named in honor of M.E. Evseviev", project No. MK-006-21, Registration Date 21.04.2021, Field of Research: 07 Humanities and Social sciences, ГПТИИ Codes: 14.23.05, 14.23.09. Grant title: "Organizational-pedagogical conditions of social-communicative development of children at a preschool educational establishment"

References

- Semonsky, C.M.S., & Spielberger, M.A. (2004). *Early language learning: a model for success*. Georgia, p. 177.
- Thompson, L. (1999). *Young bilingual learners in nursery school*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, p. 230.
- Woods, P., Boyle, M., & Hubbard, N. (1999). *Multicultural children in the early years*. Clevedon, UK: London, p. 238.
- Negnevitskaya, E.I. (1987). *Foreign language for the youngest: yesterday, today, tomorrow*. In: *Foreign languages at school*, 6, 20-26.
- Negnevitskaya, E.I. (1986). *Psychological conditions of the formation of speech skills and skills in preschool children in the second language: PhD thesis*. Moscow, p. 159.
- Protasova, E.U. (2010). *Methods of teaching preschoolers a foreign language: a study guide for students of higher education*. Moscow: VLADOS, p. 210.
- Sholpo, I.L. (1999). *How to teach your preschooler to say in English, textbook on teaching English for pedagogical universities, colleges and schools in the specialty Foreign language teachers in the kindergarten*. Saint Petersburg, p. 345.
- Masaru, I. (2015). *After three years is too late*. M.: Alpina non-fiction, p. 224.
- Prikhozhan, A.M. (1988). *The use of methods of direct assessment in the work of a school psychologist / Scientific methodological basis of using certain psychodiagnostic methods in a school psychological service: A collection of research articles*. Moscow, p. 110-128.
- Littlewood, W., & Swan, M. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press, p. 108.
- Brown, H.D.H. (1993). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs (NJ). (Fifth Edition). Pearson Education, p. 347.
- Alhazishvili, A.A. (1988). *Foundations of mastering foreign oral speech*. Moscow: Prosveshenie, p. 127.
- Passov, E.I. (1991). *A Communicative method of teaching foreign language speech*. Moscow: Prosveshenie, p. 223.
- Shatilov, S.F. (1977). *Teaching oral foreign speech at school and university*. A collection of research articles. Leningrad, p. 135.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1935). *Revisiting polylingualism in the childhood age / in the book: Children's mental development in the process of learning*. Moscow, Leningrad, p. 136.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1966). *Questions of psychology*, 6, 62-76.
- Leontev, A.N. (1983). *Psychological basis of pre-school game*. M.: Pedagogika, p. 153.
- Azimov, E.G. (2009). *A new dictionary of terms and notions on methods of teaching (theory and practice of teaching languages) / E.G. Azimov, A.N. Shchukin*. Moscow, p. 448.
- Bim, I.L. (2001). Some of the current problems of teaching foreign languages. *Inostrannyie yazyki v shkole*, 4, 5-11.
- Liubimova, N.A. (1985). *Phonetic interference*. L: LGU, p. 56.
- Solovova, S.N. (2006). *Methods of teaching foreign languages*. M.: Prosveshchenie, p. 239.
- Zimnaya, I.A. (2000). *Pedagogical psychology*. M.: Logos, p. 384.
- Podlasyi, I.P. (1999). *Pedagogy. New course: Textbook for students of pedagogical universities: 2 books*. V.1. M.: VLADOS, p. 576.
- Ünlü, E., & Vuran, S. (2012). Case study: Training a mother of child with autism on how to provide discrete trial teaching. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 4(2), 95-103.