

English Language Teaching for Children: Teaching Methods and Practices in Kindergarten

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Abstract: *The article raises the issue of the necessity and possibility of teaching English to preschool children, taking into account their age characteristics, the practice of organizing such classes in preschool educational institutions, and various methodological approaches that can be used in working with preschoolers in early foreign language teaching.*

Keywords: *language, foreign language, preschool, teaching, book, film, English, child, children, education, creativity, thinking.*

Introduction.

Knowledge of a foreign language is becoming increasingly popular both in professional activities and in everyday life. People increasingly travel abroad, participate in international events, read books and watch films in a foreign language, use Internet resources, and simply communicate with each other. One of the common languages of international communication is English. In this regard, there is an increasing tendency to study English early, so now it is taught in many public and commercial educational schools and even in preschool organizations.

The preschool childhood stage is a period characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, and linguistic development of the child. This period is considered sensitive to begin learning a foreign language, so this is not uncommon in the context of modern reality, which is due to the existing social demand. Teaching a foreign language at preschool age has a number of advantages since it provides opportunities to awaken the child's interest in the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world.

The famous linguist L.V. Shcherba believed that the importance of studying foreign languages is in the successful development of children's thinking abilities. Moreover, bright and positive impressions associated with the successful process of learning English in kindergarten motivate the child to enthusiastically study at school. In general, learning English at preschool age affects the whole personality of the child, which contributes to his moral formation, development of communicative abilities, cognitive activity and expansion of horizons.

Every year the age of the beginning of learning English becomes younger and younger. In many countries, learning a second language used to be the prerogative of secondary school, however, at present there is a tendency to teach not only primary school students, but even preschool children. These changes are based on the belief that the earlier the learning begins, the more successful it will be. E.S. Salnikova explains the beginning of learning a foreign language at the preschool level by the increased social demand, especially with regard to the English language, since foreign languages are an important factor in the socio-economic development of society. She also mentions the fact that the introduction of this subject into the development of preschoolers is a response to the social order of parents, who are already fully aware of the importance of mastering a second language.

Materials.

Many psychologists and physiologists believe that early learning of foreign languages is dictated by the natural inclination of children to languages and their readiness to successfully master them. This is evidenced by the period of sensitivity in preschool children to mastering both their native and foreign languages. Preschoolers master the unaccented pronunciation of foreign sounds, words, and intonation especially intensively and successfully if the small child is constantly surrounded by authentic foreign language speech.

Both in domestic (S.L. Rubinstein, L.S. Vygotsky, etc.) and foreign psychology (T. Eliot, B. White, R. Roberts, etc.), scientists agree that a child masters a foreign language easier than an adult. The duration of the sensitivity period is defined differently by scientists: Roberts and Penfield set the framework from 4 to 8 years, Eliot - from 1.5 to 7 years.

The most common opinion is that foreign language classes can be started with children aged 3-10. The "golden mean" is probably between 5 and 8 years, when the system of the native language has become sufficiently strengthened in the child's mind, and he approaches the new language more consciously than at the age of 3-4 years.

In the period from 5 to 8 years, the child's brain has the greatest plasticity and unique features necessary for mastering a foreign language. Such features include the ability to accurately imitate speech, sounds, rhythm, intonation, stress, etc., as well as easily study language patterns and use them independently. In addition, preschool age has another undeniable advantage - the presence of play motivation, which allows you to organize English classes as naturally and entertainingly as possible.

I.N. Sazanova mentions a number of reasons why the beginning of learning a second language is most favorable at preschool age. First of all, the child is inquisitive at this age and is ready to learn something new, because the motivation lies in interest as such. Preschoolers do not yet have a language barrier and are not afraid of making mistakes, so this is an ideal period for developing spoken language in a foreign language. Finally, learning a foreign language allows developing such mental processes as attention, memory, perception and imagination, and systematic repetition of foreign words is necessary for the development of such abilities in children as generalization, analysis, systematization of material.

Speaking about the advantages of learning a foreign language at preschool age, it is worth mentioning the huge potential for developing an accent and pronunciation that are quite close to those of a native speaker. Moreover, children have more time to learn a second language, since this process begins earlier: they do not need to rush and memorize as much material as possible in a short period of time, the development of all foreign language skills is moderate and gradual.

Research and methods.

Thus, by the beginning of the school period, children already have some knowledge of a foreign language. It is also important that by learning a foreign language, a child also learns about the world, foreign culture, traditions, nature and generally broadens his horizons. Of course, at an early age, children are extremely motivated to explore the world and learn new things, so with the right organization of classes, this can have a positive effect on the process of learning a foreign language.

Like adults, preschool children are individuals with their own characteristics, preferences and beliefs. However, there are several key ways in which learning for children differs dramatically from learning for adults.

First, children are still developing cognitively, linguistically, socially, emotionally and physically. Students from 5 and even up to 12 years old are still developing their thinking skills, understanding of their native language, hand-eye coordination and other motor skills. They are still discovering the rules of interaction with people and learning to understand their own reactions to others and to the events

happening around them. The volume and speed of this development also mean that there are significant differences in the abilities, interests and characteristics of children at this age. There may be significant differences in the learning ability of students, for example, aged 8-9 and aged 10-11.

Secondly, children often lack an obvious motivation for learning English, unlike adults who usually learn it for a specific purpose. Children, on the contrary, begin language courses in most cases at the initiative of their parents. However, even the lack of a clear motivation for learning English does not bother children, who are very often open and curious about everything new.

R.Kh. Allahveranova also notes that preschool children do not have a developed understanding of the motives for learning a foreign language, which is further complicated by the need to master their native language fully and sufficiently. In this regard, learning a second language obviously becomes not a priority, but a secondary type of cognitive activity.

The next feature is that preschool children, as a rule, cannot read and write in their native language, so it often happens that children up to about 9 years of age may not be able to use reading or writing in learning a foreign language. Therefore, the development of speaking skills prevails in teaching English to older preschool children.

Results.

The psychological foundations of the communicative-activity and personal-activity approaches to teaching a foreign language were considered by S. L. Rubinstein, A. N. Leontiev, A. A. Leontiev and I. A. Zimnyaya. With this approach, the child is considered as a subject of educational activity, whose individual psychological, age and national characteristics are taken into account as much as possible. The child, his goals and motives, as well as unique and special psychological characteristics are at the center of the entire learning process, i.e. the student, first of all, acts as an individual.

The teacher in this case is a partner in working with the content of the lesson, who sets the goals of each lesson and accordingly organizes, regulates the children's actions and makes adjustments throughout the entire learning process, focusing on the range of interests of the child, his current level of knowledge, skills and abilities. As a result, the goal of each lesson is formulated from the position of each specific child, the entire group of children or language subgroup when implementing this approach.

Teaching a foreign language requires from the teacher not only knowledge of the language, but also an understanding of the general physiological, pedagogical and psychological characteristics of children's development. Speaking about the physical development of older preschool children, we can note increased activity and good control over the body. A high level of activity leads to the need to regularly organize moments of rest and relaxation. However, it is important to remember that long-term restriction of children's mobility can lead to aggression and loss of attention. Good results can be achieved by alternating classes and breaks, as well as physical exercise during each class.

In older preschool age, social development is characterized by an increased interest in other children and joint play. In addition, preschool children strive to help adults, as they need their approval and sympathy, so the teacher should create situations in which children can express themselves and achieve success.

In the intellectual and speech development of children, an interest in speaking is noted, and writing and reading are often difficult. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the development of foreign language abilities for listening and speaking.

At an early stage of education, a foreign language should be considered as a means of comprehensive development of the child's personality, directly taking into account his personal motives, hobbies and capabilities. Teaching a foreign language at preschool age should be based on the features characteristic of children of this age group. In this regard, one of the most common and effective is the path of natural

creation of an image of the language in a child, which is carried out by repeatedly listening to certain language structures. In this case, special attention is paid to listening, through which preschoolers get acquainted with the basics of foreign speech and learn them. Thanks to this, children develop and develop listening skills, which in turn allows them to create an "image" of the language structures of a foreign language and functionally use it to obtain information.

The weakness of the inhibitory process and impressionability affect the attention of preschool children, which, in this regard, is not stable enough. Therefore, there is a need for lively, energetic and exciting learning at an early stage of learning English as a prerequisite for the successful formation of the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as for the development of voluntary attention. This can be ensured by alternating different types of activity, among which mobile activities are also necessary, since monotony tires the child, and accordingly, his attention begins to wander and dull.

It is also important to remember that preschool children are dominated by visual-figurative memory, i.e. children best remember specific objects, phenomena, colors. From this we can conclude that it is necessary to associate words with objects and actions for successful acquisition of language material. It is interesting that a preschooler learns foreign words best if they are associated with some action that he, if possible, performs himself. In this regard, one of the best options for familiarization with language material and its consolidation is its accompaniment with movements and gestures.

Discussion.

At this age, children do not need to be explained certain rules of grammar or phonetics in the traditional way. Among the methods and techniques of teaching a foreign language to older preschool children, the game is undoubtedly in the lead, which must be put at the forefront of the learning process, since the learning process will become something exciting, significant, and the children will look forward to the lesson. Thus, the outstanding theorist D.B. Elkonin notes that the game serves as a means of developing the motivational-need sphere, mental actions, voluntary behavior and a means of cognition. In this regard, play activities in preschool age influence the development of many important mental functions, such as attention, memory, thinking, imagination.

For a child, play is both entertainment and work. The teacher has the opportunity to choose between a large number of different games in accordance with the goals of the lesson and the mood of the children: active, semi-active, calm. The teacher can use such games when explaining new language material, introducing and consolidating vocabulary, forming oral speech skills. Complicating the game in the process of teaching a foreign language, the teacher must adhere to the principle of gradualism, consistency and accessibility in teaching.

The presence of play motivation in preschool age is a huge advantage for the teacher, since it allows you to naturally and effectively build work with children in any direction, including when teaching English. In it, a preschooler can approach the use of English as naturally as in the process of everyday use of his native language.

During the game, many mental properties and cognitive processes are laid down, changed and consolidated, and the desire to independently explore the world is activated to the maximum extent. When conducting lexical games, the teacher must adhere to the principle of visualization using a variety of game techniques to consolidate new language material. It should be noted that lexical games should be as simple and understandable to children as possible. Reliance on object-manipulative games, visual-effective nature and creation of an image of a word through movement are the leading methods necessary for the formation of a comfortable artificial foreign language environment.

It is also important to note that the use of games in the process of learning a foreign language means that children need to be offered game speech-thinking tasks that contain the goal and motive of the speech

act. Such game activities contain a huge motivational potential necessary for the development of foreign language speech.

Despite the fact that preschool children have a thirst for assimilation and discovery of new knowledge, they are not very sedentary, so they begin to experience difficulties if they sit in one place for a long time and hold their attention on one type of activity.

In this regard, the teacher must remember that the activity must be changeable, varied, and also cause emotional involvement of children. One of the gaming technologies that allows maintaining and strengthening both the physical and mental health of preschoolers during the educational process is a physical education minute, which provides relief for children. Therefore, it is important to use various outdoor games during the lesson and not to forget to conduct physical education minutes. With their help, you can consolidate the lexical material, quickly relieve accumulated fatigue, thereby increasing the performance of children and motivation to study a foreign language.

At the preschool age, the process of teaching English is to form language and speech abilities. Let us consider the essence of the concepts of "language ability" and "speech ability", which are the foundation for the formation of children's ability to communicate in a foreign language. Foreign language ability is interpreted as "the ability associated with the mastery of language tools (phonetic, lexical and grammatical) and their use as tools of speech activity."

Foreign language speech ability, in turn, is based on language ability and is interpreted as "the ability to form and formulate one's thoughts, as well as to understand (by ear and by reading) the thoughts expressed by other people." Since preschool children cannot yet read in their native language, at this age they can only understand foreign speech by ear.

The above-mentioned characteristics of senior preschool children allow you to choose the appropriate methods and techniques for teaching children a foreign language. There are many different approaches to teaching English. Let's consider some of the most popular ones.

An approach is a component of a language teaching system, acts as the most general linguodidactic basis for mastering a language and gives an idea of the chosen knowledge strategy, which serves as the basis for choosing teaching methods and techniques. Modern methods of teaching foreign languages do not have a single classification of approaches to teaching.

If an approach describes how a language is used, what relationships exist between the various components of a language, how people acquire language skills and abilities, as well as the conditions that contribute to successful language learning, then a method is directly the practical implementation of the approach. It includes the types of activities and materials used, the roles of the teacher and students, and models for organizing educational activities. Let's consider traditional and modern approaches and methods of teaching a foreign language.

For a long time, one of the most popular methods was the Grammar-Translation Method, which took place through consistent and systematic execution of grammar exercises, translation of foreign texts, search for correspondences of the original language in the native language. When using this method, relatively little attention is paid to the development of speaking and listening abilities in a foreign language.

The Immersion Method involves complete immersion of students in the environment of the target language, the exclusion of translation, and encouragement for not using their native language in class. Children are immersed in learning a foreign language throughout the day and are expected to communicate using the target language.

The lexical approach involves learning a foreign language through collocations - lexical units presented in a certain grammatical form. Thus, with this approach, the main element of teaching a foreign language is the development of children's ability to combine lexical units.

Conclusion.

These methods are mainly used by foreign language teachers in schools, where children already have a good level of proficiency in their native language and are able to move on to learning the grammar of a foreign language and developing reading and writing skills. Preschool children are in the process of developing their native language, so there are certain problems in using, for example, the grammar-translation method. In this regard, the following methods are often distinguished for teaching children of this age group: audio-lingual total physical response, natural and communicative.

The Audio-Lingual Method is based on the theory of behaviorism. This method involves repeated repetition of lexical and grammatical structures, learning through dialogue samples in a foreign language with virtually no explanation from the teacher, as well as learning vocabulary in context.

The Total Physical Response method involves teaching a foreign language by relying on the senses. In this case, children learn a foreign language based on the teacher's oral instructions in a given language, so the importance of listening comprehension is emphasized. The teacher does not translate the instructions and commands into the native language, but achieves their understanding by demonstrating their execution. The students, in turn, follow the instructions, and if ready, can begin to reproduce these commands in oral speech themselves. The advantage of this method is that children may not have basic knowledge of a foreign language and can wait out the "silence period" at their own pace.

The Natural Approach is close to the audiolingual. This approach emphasizes the similarity between learning a native and a foreign language. Mistakes are not corrected during training, and students become familiar with the language using the same principles as with their native language (see-hear-repeat). The Natural Method involves using a foreign language in the classroom, achieving understanding on the part of children through intonation, facial expressions, gestures, reference pictures, real objects, and toys. Much attention is paid to the development of oral speech skills.

The communicative method (Communicative Language Teaching of Communicative Approach) is based on the principle that teaching a foreign language is most successful with direct, conscious and interesting communication. It is often contrasted with the grammar-translation method, since the result of using the former is fluent speech with grammatical errors. The result of the latter will be sufficient knowledge of grammar, but a clearly expressed language barrier and difficulties in communication.

Thus, preschoolers have a number of features that must be taken into account when choosing approaches and methods for teaching a foreign language.

It is important to remember that they quickly tire, desire for movement and variety. Teaching a foreign language should be done in a playful way, movement and a motivating environment, thanks to which children will have the opportunity to develop comprehensively.

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