

METHODOLOGY OF APPLICATION OF A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING TO YOUNGER SCHOOLCHILDREN

METODOLOGIA DE APLICAÇÃO DE UMA ABORDAGEM COMUNICATIVA NO ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS PARA CRIANÇAS JOVENS

METODOLOGÍA DE APLICACIÓN DE UN ENFOQUE COMUNICATIVO EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS A LOS NIÑOS MÁS PEQUEÑOS

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ABSTRACT: It is now generally accepted that the most favorable period for foreign language acquisition is an elementary-school age. School students of this stage are distinguished by good imitation abilities, inbred curiosity and the thirst for knowledge, the absence of language divide, which facilitates an effective language teaching to schoolchildren.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching to younger schoolchildren. Communicative language teaching. Communication-oriented tasks.

RESUMO: *Atualmente, é geralmente aceito que o período mais favorável para a aquisição de uma língua estrangeira é a idade do ensino fundamental. Os alunos desta fase distinguem-se pelas boas capacidades de imitação, pela curiosidade inata e pela sede de conhecimento, pela ausência de separação linguística, o que facilita um ensino eficaz da língua aos alunos.*

Palavras-chave: *Ensino de línguas estrangeiras a alunos mais jovens. Ensino de línguas comunicativas. Tarefas orientadas para a comunicação.*

RESUMEN: *Actualmente se acepta generalmente que el período más favorable para la adquisición de lenguas extranjeras es la edad de la escuela primaria. Los escolares de esta etapa se distinguen por la buena capacidad de imitación, la curiosidad innata y la sed de conocimiento, la ausencia de división lingüística, lo que facilita una enseñanza eficaz del idioma a los escolares.*

Palabras clave: *Enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras a escolares más pequeños. Enseñanza de lenguas comunicativas. Tareas orientadas a la comunicación.*

Introduction

The choice of the research topic is determined by the need to apply a communication-oriented approach to teaching foreign-language dialogical speech to primary school students. The study object is the process of teaching a foreign language to primary schoolchildren. The subject being analyzed is a methodology for the formation of dialogical speech skills based on

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the application of communicative language teaching aimed at increasing the effectiveness of educational process and activating the skills of dialogical speech among language learners.

To prove the need for communication-oriented approach to activate the skills of dialogical speech will be the purpose of this paper.

Let us generate the hypothesis of our study: the activation of the dialogical speech of primary school students will be effective provided: a systematic use of tasks based on communicative approach; an account taken of the age and psychological peculiarities of primary school children; enabling environment for activating students' mental activity.

The methodological framework for this paper is the work of leading domestic and foreign scholars: such scientists as L. S. Vygotsky, D. B. Elkonin and others were concerned with the theory of games; the problems of effective organization of foreign language learning were researched by I. L. Bim, E. I. Passov, V. M. Filatov, E. N. Solovova, etc.; M. Z. Biboletova, I. N. Vereshchagin, N. D. Galskova, E. I. Negnevitskaya were absorbed in the problems of implementation of communicative approach in foreign language teaching to primary schoolchildren; the psychological foundations of foreign language training were studied by L. S. Vygotsky, I. A. Zimnyaya, V. A. Krutetsky, A. A. Leontiev and others.

The study applied the following methods: analysis of the literature in this field; testing, pedagogical observation; development of pedagogical experiment and its implementation with subsequent analysis of the results.

Main Body

Communication-based language training is aimed at developing skills and abilities in oral and written communication. Teaching foreign language communication is effective when using tasks of a communicative nature. In the process of training, it is important to simulate real-life situations that are characterized by the principle of authenticity and stimulate students to learn a foreign language.

The communicative approach is focused on quick and efficient language acquisition through mastering various types of monologue speech, typical dialogues and forms of language modeling. Learning begins with a concrete language model. According to E. I. Passov, communicativeness lies not only in the fact that a practical speech goal is pursued but in the fact that the path to this goal is the very practical use of the language (E. I. Passov, 2000).

And this is possible only when the speaker has a specific language task and when he or

she performs linguistic manipulation of his or her interlocutor. Therefore, in class, it is necessary to organize for younger students a speech partnership within educational communication.

Dealing with the process of foreign language mastery, it is not possible not to bear in view the psychological characteristics. It has been proven by psychologists that the earlier you start teaching a foreign language to a child, the easier this process will progress. However, in some cases, mother-tongue and foreign-language learning has an adverse effect on speech and mental development. Scholars hold that the most favorable age to have grips of a foreign language is the age of 5-6 years. Children learn to recognize alien speech by listening, to express their thoughts by means of the studied language, that is, they achieve mastery of oral speech in a foreign language at an elementary level.

The initial stage is the most important for the reason that success in acquiring the subject at subsequent stages directly depends on the learning outcomes at the initial stage. English methodist G. Palmer wrote, "Take care of the first two stages and the rest will take care of itself" (G. Palmer, 1921).

No one is left in doubt that foreign language classes have a beneficial effect on child development, they contribute to the formation of logical thinking, raise their educational and cultural level. It has been proven by physiologists that it is more difficult for a child aged older than 10 to learn a foreign language, for the ability of the child's brain to acquire a language decreases with age. The speed and retentivity of memorizing foreign language material at an early age is explained by the predominance of long-term memory mechanisms, the presence of imprinting, that is, memorizing the material is faster if there is a mainspring and motivation. It is easier for children to master a foreign language than for adults if the topic of communication is interesting and important for them, which will be more effective at play. The game provides intrinsic foreign language learning motivation for younger students. Thus, it is important to take into account psychophysiological age characteristics of children in language training. Foreign language study at an early age will contribute to better command of the language and also carries a great intellectual, educational and moral potential.

Foreign language mastery at school presupposes intensive activity of students. The fundamental principles of the communicative method are the principle of personal orientation and the principle of collective interaction which will be implemented more effectively when creating situations for communication, using role games and group discussions.

If teaching to speaking is regarded as a goal, the use of a dialogical form of

communication will directly implement a communicative function of language. The initial stage of dialogical skills development includes the ability of polite greeting and saying goodbye, the ability of introducing oneself and introducing someone, expressing agreement and disagreement, and giving an emotional opinion.

In communication-oriented learning, it is important to use certain instructional techniques, activity tasks based on play, imitation and fluent speech.

Considering the features of spoken foreign language teaching to primary schoolchildren, it is necessary to mention certain features of teaching:

1. An individual approach is the basis of training.
2. Creating friendliness of the environment for communication via using various organizational forms.
3. Active use of playing forms of work, which contributes to the development of motivation, makes the educational process engrossing and interesting, which cannot allow children stay indifferent to learning.

Among domestic psychologists, teachers dealing with the problem of play activity, worthy are the works by N. P. Anikeev, M. F. Stronin, L. S. Vygotsky, S. L. Rubinstein .

M. F. Stronin, who actively suggested using teaching games, distinguishes 2 types of games: preparatory ones that contribute to language skills development and creative games, the purpose of which is to activate speech skills and abilities (M. F. Stronin, 1984).

According to E. N. Solovova, games can be divided into groups depending on the purpose: language games and communicative games; cooperative and competitive games; whole class, group, pair-work activities (E. N. Solovova, 2004).

A distinctive feature of games, according to N. I. Gez, is that speech activity is considered in a social context in light of a topic of conversation, relations between interlocutors, place and time of action, which makes the learning process being close to real life (N. I. Gez, N. D. Galskova, 2004).

The communicative environment in the classroom should be characterized by mental and emotional activity of younger students, an atmosphere of friendliness, trust and mutual understanding. This can be achieved through special games, taking into account the social and personal factors of the situational orientation of communication, as well as the communicative behavior of the participants in communication.

Results and Discussion

For the experimental study we have chosen grade 2 “A” of MBGEI “Secondary School № 30”, Stary Oskol. The study engaged 24 students. The purpose of our experiment was to prove the need to use a communicative approach and the effectiveness of using game assignments to develop dialogical speech skills at foreign language lessons in primary grades.

To identify the level of development of skills and abilities of the dialogical speech of the foreign language among younger students, we used the following assessment of the criteria indicators.

The degree of dialogical speech skills development:

high level (5 points) – a student can come into contact (at an elementary level) with a peer in educational, game situations of communication, can make up a short monologue story about himself or herself, their family, favorite activities, animals, toys; he or she knows names for persons, objects, actions, gives them a characteristic; he or she can give an emotional opinion of the perceived information, can give simple instructions in an educational, game and real situation; the student understands the questions of the interlocutor and can answer them using the studied program lexical and grammatical material;

average level (3-4 points) – the student’s dialogical speech skills are not fully developed; he or she can speak but makes mistakes that do not affect the understanding of the content; knows how to use linguistic material in monologue, and dialogical speech is partially formed: the student understands the main content of the speech addressed to him or her, can answer a question, making minor mistakes;

low level (1-2 points) – the skills of dialogical speech are not formed, the student cannot name the subject, describe it, communicate, give an assessment to the information; the student’s mastery of using the studied material in speech is not formed.

In the course of the experimental training, we regularly taught the lessons through games and terms of search and creative engagement.

At the close of the year, we used gaming activities to determine the level of development of dialogic speech skills. For example, the teacher was describing a picture. If the teacher spoke incorrectly, the student had to correct and complete it. The completion of the task involved teacher’s speech recognition, correct reaction to an erroneous description, and the most important thing in this task was a correct construction of the student’s own utterance, with the use of the studied lexical and grammatical material. The assessment was given to the student’s ability to react to the situation by using the learned vocabulary and grammatically correct answers.

After analyzing the answers of schoolchildren, we obtained the results that were

conductive to the determination of the levels of development of younger students' skills of dialogical speech by the end of grade 2.

The first level selects the students who, having correctly mastered phonetic, lexical and grammatical material, use it in speech with a minimum number of errors, who have developed elementary listening comprehension and speaking skills and who use the studied language phenomena at a productive level.

The students referring to the second level have not quite accurately and correctly mastered phonetic, lexical and grammatical material, are not always able to use the studied linguistic phenomena in speech, do not fully recognize foreign-language speech.

The third level of foreign language skills development among primary schoolchildren involves the students who have poorly digested language material of the second grade and who do not have the skills of dialogical speech.

The control assessment of school children has convinced us that the level of development of the dialogical speech skills, even taking into account that some of the students are at the same level, is increased, mainly there is an increase in high and average levels of development of dialogic speech skills due to reducing the number of school students with low level of achievement.

The consideration of the primary schoolchildren's dialogical speech skills development brought us to the conclusion that at the beginning of the experimental work, only 12% of school students could comprehend English speech and establish contact with an interlocutor at an elementary level in a foreign language, and 67% could not recognize foreign language speech at all and make up a simple sentence. But in the process of formative experiment, despite the fact that some students remained at the same level (although the dynamics of development was observed at all levels), there was an increase in the students' mastery of dialogical speech from low to average, and from average to high levels.

By the end of the experimental work, already 40% of students could fluently speak the foreign language in monologue and dialogical speech (in terms of the studied topics). There was a decrease in the number of schoolchildren with a low level due to their transition to the average one. And although 8% of primary schoolchildren were at the low level, there was an increase in the ability of school students to speak the foreign language fluently.

Summary

In sum, we can conclude that gaming activities provide a natural motivation for

speaking in a foreign language and foreign language lessons become interesting for schoolchildren. Playing in the educational process contributes to the accumulation of new language material and the consolidation of previously acquired knowledge. A game increases the ability to work and the motivation of students, in contrast to the monotonous performance of certain tasks. According to the results of the experimental study, it can be seen that play-based tasks engross even the most passive and poorly prepared students, which has a positive effect on their progress in study.

Tracing the development of the students' readiness for active participation in playing, the development of their skills and abilities, we observed the manifestation of subordination and interconnection of schoolchildren's skills and abilities. The materials obtained point to the fact that, under certain conditions, along with oral speech skills development, readiness to speak a foreign language is intensively formed. An important and essential aspect of the formation of schoolchildren's readiness is the applicational transfer of knowledge to new conditions, to new objects of activity, but the most important is schoolchildren's readiness to independently find imaginative ways to solve various situations and tasks, to find new ways of working. The methodology of gaming simulation of the educational process that we have analyzed, to a certain extent, brings on the improvement of schoolchildren's speaking skills, the development of their readiness for self-actualization and self-regulation, when they consciously learn to creatively apply their knowledge in a specific language situation which requires independent solution of a number of problems.

The obtained results of the experimental work confirmed the effectiveness of gaming modeling of the educational process aimed at improving the dialogic skills of younger schoolchildren.

The findings presented in this paper provide us with the freedom to take up the position that the use of play-based and search and creative tasks at foreign language lessons is designed to contribute to the development of thinking for oneself, logic, memory, imagination of the child, to the formation of his or her emotions, to the development of his or her communicative and cognitive abilities.

As an end conclusion it is worth pointing out that the observation of the process of teaching English through games and search and creative tasks indicates that their use provides means for fostering students' interest in the language, creates a positive attitude towards its study, stimulates autonomous verbal and cogitative activity of children, makes it possible to purposefully individualize teaching according to student ability.

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