

THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LINGUOPSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO PRE- SCHOOL PREPARATORY GROUP LEARNERS

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Abstract

This article examines the role and significance of linguopsychological characteristics in teaching foreign languages to pre-school preparatory group learners (ages 6-7). It analyzes key characteristics such as imprinting, imitation, motivation, and sensitivity, and explains how these features are most pronounced during the pre-school period. Based on an analysis of scholarly literature and research findings, the article demonstrates that starting foreign language instruction at an early age, when children are particularly linguistically sensitive, leads to significantly better learning outcomes. Practical recommendations for educators working with this age group are also provided.

Keywords: pre-school education, linguopsychological characteristics, foreign language learning, imprinting, imitation, motivation, sensitive period, preparatory group.

Introduction

Pre-school educational institutions serve as the first environment where a child receives education and upbringing, and it is at this stage that initial speech skills begin to develop. Scientific observations indicate that 70-80% of the primary information a person receives throughout their lifetime is acquired between the ages of 6 and 7. During this period, children experience rapid physical and psychological development, making it the most favorable time for foreign language acquisition.

Research conducted in various countries confirms that when foreign language acquisition begins in pre-school, at which time young learners are particularly linguistically sensitive, it allows for a higher level of foreign language competence in the future. Studies have found that students who receive foreign language education in

the pre-school period demonstrate significantly higher achievement compared to those who do not .

1. The Pre-School Period as a Sensitive Period for Language Learning

The pre-school period (ages 5-7) is characterized by a number of psychological and physiological features that make it uniquely suitable for foreign language acquisition. At this age, children's thinking is concrete and closely tied to vivid, colorful objects and actions . This characteristic of pre-school children's psychology manifests in their tendency toward visual and dynamic learning, which means that when a child learns a word that is directly connected to something they can see, a picture, or an action, they acquire it much more quickly .

International research supports this view. A study of Polish pre-school children learning English found that non-verbal intelligence, phonological awareness in the first language, and emerging literacy skills were all related to achievements in learning English as a foreign language . Importantly, even at a pre-school age, children demonstrated the ability to differentiate between their first language and foreign language discourse .

2. Key Linguopsychological Characteristics in Pre-School Foreign Language Learning

Imprinting (Rapid and Durable Memorization)

Imprinting in the context of language learning refers to the ability to quickly and firmly memorize language material and actively use it in speech. This characteristic is particularly strong in pre-school children. According to Rustamova's research, the imprinting characteristic manifests in the rapid memorization of object names, sounds, grammatical rules, intonations, and their active expression in speech .

In pre-school children, imprinting ability remains strong until adolescence, and language learning is most effective precisely during this period. This aligns with the "critical period" hypothesis of language acquisition .

Imitation (Imitative Ability)

The imitative characteristic is one of the fundamental mechanisms in foreign language acquisition. Children possess a remarkably high capacity for imitation; they unconsciously reproduce adult speech, surrounding sounds, and linguistic unit. This characteristic is particularly important in teaching foreign language pronunciation. In pre-school education, teachers should use imitation effectively by encouraging children to repeat the teacher's English speech, working with phonograms, and using songs and rhymes accompanied by movements and gestures . Research shows that when poems and songs are learned with accompanying movements and gestures, children learn the foreign language words much faster .

Motivation (Presence of Interest and Desire)

The motivational characteristic in pre-school children is expressed through strong interest in new objects, events, and situations, as well as a powerful desire to name them and use them in speech. Children's interest in new toys, events, and objects is particularly strong, and the desire to remember the names of new things generates speech activity. Teachers can capitalize on this natural curiosity by creating an engaging learning environment. For example, in pre-school settings, educators can begin teaching English from the moment children arrive in the morning, using greetings such as "Good morning," "Hello," "Hi," asking "How are you?" and teaching expressions of gratitude like "Thank you". This creates a natural, immersive environment where children learn through authentic communication.

Sensitivity (Perception Through Sensory Analyzers)

The sensitive characteristic involves perceiving surrounding objects and phenomena through sensory organs (vision, hearing, olfaction, taste, touch) and expressing them in speech. Children grasp objects with their hands, taste, and touch them, perceiving them in connection with their emotions, which ensures the regular functioning of all analyzers and contributes to rapid language acquisition.

In teaching pre-school children, the use of bright and colorful visual materials is crucial. However, educators must be careful not to overload children with excessive visual stimuli, as research by psychologists E.N. Boyko, E.N. Sokolov, and Z. Freud indicates that an overabundance of bright images can hinder the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

3. Characteristics of Pre-School Children's Psychological Development

Pre-school children's psychology has several distinctive features that educators must consider:

Concrete Thinking: At this age, children's thinking is concrete and tied to vivid, colorful objects and actions. Therefore, learning materials should be presented through bright visuals, movement, and hands-on activities.

Weak Inhibitory Processes: The weakness of inhibitory processes and high suggestibility in pre-school children means they require lively, dynamic, and interesting learning approaches.

Strong Imitative and Memory Abilities: Research indicates that pre-school children demonstrate strong memory, strong imitative ability, imprinting, motivation, and flexible speech ability.

Development of Sensory Channels: Since speech is a function of the brain that manifests alongside various sensory and motor reactions, developing children's speech requires exercises that strengthen both sensory channels and motor skills.

Based on the linguopsychological characteristics discussed above, the following practical recommendations can be made for teaching English to pre-school preparatory groups:

Creating a Natural Language Environment

Teachers should create a natural English-speaking environment from the moment children arrive at the pre-school institution. Using simple greetings, questions about well-being, and expressions of gratitude in English helps develop children's English speech naturally .

Using Visual and Kinesthetic Methods

Given children's concrete thinking and strong sensitivity to visual stimuli, teachers should use bright visual aids, colorful pictures, and concrete objects when introducing new vocabulary. Combining language learning with physical movements and gestures enhances memorization .

Incorporating Songs, Rhymes, and Games

Pre-school children learn best through play and repetition. Songs, nursery rhymes, and role-play games are effective tools for language acquisition at this age . Game-based methods that account for children's neuropsychological development characteristics are particularly effective for 5-7-year-old children .

Encouraging Repetition and Imitation

Since the imitative ability is strong in pre-school children, teachers should structure activities that require children to repeat phrases, words, and sounds. Phrase repetition tasks have been shown to be among the best-performed tasks by pre-school children learning English .

Focusing on Oral Skills First

At the pre-school level, the primary focus should be on listening comprehension and speaking. Reading and writing should be introduced as means of reinforcing oral language material . Children's passive vocabulary (what they understand) is typically larger than their active vocabulary (what they can produce), which is a normal developmental pattern at this age .

Addressing Linguistic Transfer

Teachers should be aware of potential problems stemming from linguistic transfer (interference from the native language) and emphasize differences between the first and second language in terms of syntax, morphology, phonetics, phonology, and orthography to prevent later consolidation of early errors .

Conclusion

The analysis of scholarly literature and research findings demonstrates that the pre-school period (ages 5-7) is the most favorable time for foreign language learning. The linguopsychological characteristics of this age group – strong imprinting ability, high imitative capacity, natural motivation, and developed sensory perception – make it possible for children to acquire foreign language naturally and effectively.

Key conclusions include:

- a. *The pre-school period is a sensitive period for language acquisition, characterized by high neural plasticity and receptiveness to new linguistic input.*
- b. *Imprinting and imitation are powerful mechanisms that enable rapid and durable memorization of language material in pre-school children.*
- c. *Natural motivation and curiosity about new objects and events should be harnessed to create engaging learning experiences.*
- d. *Multi-sensory learning through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels enhances language acquisition.*
- e. *Early foreign language instruction leads to significantly better learning outcomes and provides children with skills for future educational success.*

Research findings clearly demonstrate that students who receive foreign language education in the pre-school period achieve significantly better results compared to those who begin later. Therefore, it is highly recommended to start foreign language instruction at the pre-school level, taking into account the unique linguopsychological characteristics of this age group.

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