

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL THROUGH LANGUAGE EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:*The competence to communicate in both the mother tongue and a foreign language is one of the key competences approved by the Council of the European Union. Communication competence sums up linguistic competence with socio-cultural, generic and encyclopedic competence, in the sense of using it in the appropriate social framework. This competence has the following components: linguistic, grammatical, socio-linguistic, pragmatic, discursive and strategic. Communication competence refers to the ability to receive and send a message in different contexts using the correct language standards and the appropriate choice of communication situation. Language education activities offer, through the multitude of means of achievement, a very wide variety of situations through which children have the opportunity to form or develop their communication skills. Modern education emphasizes interdisciplinarity and interactive methods, and this contributes to the fulfillment of the original goal, that of forming an active and creative personality capable of successfully integrating into society and meeting its requirements. Language education can be done in various forms and using various methods. At preschool level, based on the experience of the group, we consider that the most suitable are the interactive methods (brainstorming, the "Thinking Hats" method, the stellar explosion, the quintet, the Venn diagram, the "Change pair" method, RAI and many others), which can be used successfully in language education activities for the purpose of training and developing communication skills. In the present article, there are presented the theoretical frames of communication development competencies, and also some practical models in which these can be developed at preschool level.*

Key words:*communication; language; competency; preschool; models.*

Introduction

The foundations of language development are laid from an early age, and in terms of education, in the early years of kindergarten. At this stage, children are put in various

situations of communication and learn that this aspect is of vital importance in their development as individuals. Preschoolers need to make simple statements or use different formulas to fulfill their simplest wishes. If the basic activity of a baby is to learn to speak then that of a preschooler is to communicate. From learning that sounds form words, to trying to understand the meaning of words and integrating them into phrases that they understood in certain environments or cultures, mastery of language use is an important achievement for young children. The ability to use language represents the child's transition to a higher level, from the use of symbols to representative thinking. By the age of three, children already have some experience with the concept of language. They can understand most sentences, use personal pronouns and the plural. Before the age of 6, they can already retell excerpts from stories, use the future tense, say their name, address, start telling short stories. The syntax of children becomes more and more complex after these years. Kindergarten years are those years in which emerging literacy skills in children develop. These are actually the skills on which future academic foundations are laid. (Bocoş, 2005)

It is of particular importance that preschoolers gain courage in the free expression of thoughts and feelings, of the self in general, in the continuous preoccupation of each individual to discover himself and to discover the world around him. This can only be possible through communication in its various forms, and the teacher is responsible for organizing and creating situations in which each learner can experience this ability.

Theoretical foundation

In the specialized literature is known the idea according to which, the acquisition of the mother tongue is the gateway to knowledge, only by knowing very well the mother tongue the preschool children can develop all aspects of their personality. (Kelemen, 2014)

The child feels a natural need to communicate, both in relationships with other children and adults. Language learning with all its components: speaking, listening, reading and writing is done as a whole and certain stages in the acquisition of communication cannot be delimited. Each child learns at his or her own pace of development.

Practicing speech provides children with an understanding of words and sentences and develops sensitivity in the auditory system so that children can have phonetic and phonological knowledge. Through their speech, children demonstrate an understanding of words and written materials. Preschoolers' experience with the world around them greatly influences their ability to understand what they read. Learning to read and write begins long before first grade and has long-term effects. These processes are ongoing and contrary to popular opinion, they do not start, suddenly, in kindergarten or first grade. From an early age, everything the adult does is important to support the child's literacy and language development. Speech and literacy develop simultaneously and influence each other. What the child learns from listening and speaking contributes to his ability to read and write and vice versa. Both phonological knowledge and vocabulary development begin at an early age by participating in rhyming games and songs, reading experiences and conversations with adults. (Kelemen, 2015)

The use of language itself is an act of creation, people turning thoughts into language, which in turn can be heard or seen. We are able to formulate sentences or even texts that we have not heard or seen before. By offering creative exercises, teachers give children the

opportunity to practice an important ability to use language, namely creative thinking. Some people cannot learn if they are not allowed to be creative. Also, many children become motivated, challenged or inspired when they can create something of value, if they feel that what they do reflects their own person. Creativity improves self-esteem by the fact that learners can see their own work with the related results and can see what they are able to achieve. Creative work improves learning and by bringing together the talents, ideas and thoughts of several people, both the work of the educator and that of the learner become more varied and enjoyable. This perspective on learning is also useful in everyday life, because it is part of the survival strategy of each individual, being at the same time the force behind personal development, culture and society. Creativity in language and communication activities can lead to true communication and cooperation. Preschoolers use language to do creative things, so they use it as a method in its original function. This will help them to use the language instrumentally and outside the educational institution.

In kindergarten, throughout my personal experience, I noticed that preschoolers have a great need to express themselves, to say what they want and in this framework the foundations of good communication or expression are laid. Children come with a wealth of knowledge from home, including their ability to express themselves. The role of the teacher is to guide the children towards a correct communication from all points of view, avoiding at the same time to limit the children's language and vocabulary only to certain topics.

This paper proposes to observe the development of communication skills especially from the perspective of language education activities. Through this type of activity, a wide world is opened to the child in terms of the manifestation of creativity. The world of kindergarten is in fact a world in which the child has freedom in action, thinking, in the courage to issue risky ideas and also here it can be said that preschool age is the age at which the ability to not wait for solutions can be developed. of adults, but to develop strategies for solving certain situations. (Păun& Incu, 2000)

The teacher has a very important role in developing the communication of preschoolers through the multitude of activities they design, taking into account the particularities of development of each child. It can highlight the creative and imaginative abilities of learners by the fact that he himself is creative, resulting in the transformation of curriculum design. Children in modern society need activities that train them both physically and mentally, and this can be done when the educator has an open perspective towards innovation and is himself in trend with the developments that occur in society. His creativity is reflected in his ability to design engaging and interactive interdisciplinary activities that ultimately lead to the creation of independent personalities, able to find new solutions in a new world.

Recent perspectives

The integrated approach within the instructive educational activities in the kindergarten

The integration by definition is explained as the return in the same place, in the same activity, of several activities of successive type, which lead to the achievement of the proposed objectives, to the acquisition of the contents, to the realization in practice of the proposed didactic project. (Curriculum for preschool education, 2008)

In the integrated activities, the approach is made through a unitary approach, the boundaries between the categories and types of teaching activities disappear, merge into a global scenario in which the topic is investigated with the means of different sciences, the contents

having a common subject, to be clarified following their completion and the achievement of the intended objectives. The integrated activities are those present in the planning, designed according to the curriculum. (Kelemen, 2014)

The theme is made so that, through the method of integrated teaching, children participate, get involved as much as possible, both emotionally, by training as diverse sources as possible, and by presenting the content with the help of various experiences, practicing all analyzers, learning through discovery. Thematic teaching involves the integration of different disciplines by developing an interesting idea that is linked to several areas. It is done in such a way as to reflect the connections between several disciplines and their connections with life. The activities are carried out according to the daily scenarios in which the fragments of activities from a week are found, respecting the theme and sub-theme of the week.

The scenario of the day guides children to opt for various areas or centers, which gives them the opportunity to choose learning areas and materials. Their variety encourages children to manifest, to observe, to think, to express their ideas, to interpret data, to make predictions. The children assume responsibilities and roles in the micro group they belong to, participating in interesting role-playing games, initiated by them.

Board or manipulative games direct children to practice mathematical content, measuring, reconstitution games, etc. Visits, walks have a special role in completing and understanding knowledge. Their theme is chosen in such a way that, through the integrated activities, the contact with the surrounding world is achieved.

The teacher establishes the atmosphere, personifies those qualities to be found in children, communicates the children's own enthusiasm, makes the learning process interesting. There must be a balance between what the educator offers and what the child wants, in order to successfully achieve the proposed objectives. Preschoolers are required to learn in an integrated manner, each stage of development being closely linked to the other. The integrated activities are opportune in this sense because they bring more coherence to the learning-teaching process, with special emphasis on play as the basic method of this process.

Preschool education has important tasks in preparing children for school, which ensures the efficiency of education in its first stage. To prepare the preschool child for school means to endow him with those acquisitions, abilities, aptitudes, abilities that will help him in the journey so complicated in discovering the world around him. Thus, the kindergarten together with the family and the society connects their efforts to ensure a quality, efficient preschool education, focused on the needs of the children. Kindergarten is the first experience of life in the child's society. It is a new framework for the child, through its dimensions and contents, through its various, new and interesting activities.

The preschooler is a budding personality, a future adult. He must be known and educated accordingly, supported to materialize his abilities and to develop skills that will help him to integrate in the school environment, in the European society. The task of teachers is to shape and shape the character of children in each new generation, so that the foundation of the future young person's personality is a correct and solid one, not altered by the influences of society.

The program of instructive-educational activities offers freedom to teachers to choose the types of activities, methods and contents according to the level and interests of the children in

the group, but also according to the experience, skills and desire to renew each one. In the daily program of the kindergarten, along with the common activities are included the activities on centers of interest and the activities of personal development.

The creation of a thematic center represents an important element in the development of a project with a theme of general interest; it must be positioned in a visible place, be attractive in terms of the variety of materials made available to children, who have the opportunity to play with them, handle them and satisfy their curiosity about the topic.

Activities on areas of interest must take into account the particularities of each child. One center of interest differs from another in content, methods, but each of them is part of a whole, using the same tools in communication and thinking, addressing the same integrity that is human and pursuing the same goal.

During preschool, the child's creative imagination can be expressed alive in the organized activity in the form of games of construction, imagination, role, table, drawing, modeling. These are carried out interdisciplinary within the activities on centers of interest and create an optimal framework both for didactic communication, specific to preschool education but also for the relationship of preschoolers through the exchange of information between group members. This way of carrying out the activities allows both the exercise of previously acquired skills, habits and knowledge, as well as their consolidation or transfer to new situations, thus generating independent initiatives and behaviors by adopting decisions. All this comes to complete the picture of school skills that the child needs when entering school.

The materials arranged in the centers of interest must be varied, stimulating the creative potential of preschoolers and motivating their curiosity. If the environment in which the child operates is properly structured, with useful materials and in sufficient quantities and distributed for a well-defined educational purpose, the child will be stimulated to choose games to develop and train the knowledge and skills necessary for social adaptation. The centers of interest can be organized at different times of the day in kindergarten. If the activities on centers of interest are organized before the common activities, they ensure the gradual transition from family life to kindergarten, satisfy the child's need for activity after a static period and through its content, stimulate their active and conscious participation and ensure a good psychological training in order to train children in joint activities. The activities on centers of interest can be planned between two common activities, thus achieving the pleasant transition to another activity. Also, the formative evaluation, which permanently accompanies the teaching-learning activity, can be done through the centers of interest, thus allowing the teacher to know the problems encountered by children in joint activities and to find solutions for optimal results. Activities on centers of interest represent a means of manifesting the child's personality, initiative and creative spirit. Activities of interest are a means of socializing the child through collaborative relationships in play with other children.

Through this type of activities, the teacher has the opportunity to observe and get to know the child in his sincere manifestation, true both by externalizing the behavior and by the way of expression.

The permanent arrangement of the room on centers of interest leads to the efficiency of the activities, the child developing his interest and curiosity, team spirit and imagination.

Learning activities organized on centers of interest offer children the opportunity to manifest independently by providing individualized education and the educator can know children better, can appreciate their behavior and assess progress and gaps in skills development, how to act to situations imposed by community life. The organization of the centers is done taking into account the weekly planning as well as the proposed objectives.

Practical communication competency development models for preschoolers

The development of creativity and expressiveness of oral language is one of the framework objectives provided in the Program of instructive-educational activities in kindergarten. To achieve this goal, the educator must show mastery to create situations that stimulate the development of creativity in children. Kindergarten is in itself a suitable setting to leave children free in everything they do. Preschool age is the age at which children do not pay much attention to the limits imposed by society and therefore the teacher can create situations not only through one type of activity but at all stages of a day. (Ilica, 2010)

In kindergarten, more than anywhere else, creativity should not be limited to a single type of activity or a single teaching sequence, but the entire teaching activity can be creative in that learning is thematic and integrated. Although it can be assumed that the development of creativity is achieved mostly through activities belonging to the aesthetic and creative field, in fact all activities in kindergarten contribute to this.

By using interactive methods in the teaching-learning process, the educator contributes to the education and development of children's creativity. This will be done in parallel with traditional strategies; in fact, their implementation is done only on the basis of the traditional which ensures the formation of basic concepts. Interactive methods increase the efficiency of the educational process by providing the basis for openness to innovation, facilitating the flexibility of thinking and enriching the imaginative universe. (Ionescu, 2000)

The new Curriculum highlights the importance of active-participatory methods, which encourage the placement of the child in the situation of exploring and becoming independent. The children's activities as well as the learning situations must be diverse and correspond to the individual particularities in terms of the child's interests, abilities and capacities. Children develop and learn at a different pace and have personal learning styles. In designing the activities, these particularities must be taken into account by developing children's self-esteem as well as a positive feeling towards learning. At the same time, teaching must adapt learning tasks accordingly, taking into account both the life experience and the child's learning experience.

Methodical applications in language education activities

In addition to the various means of carrying out language education activities, teachers also have at their disposal a series of interactive methods to help them achieve the proposed objectives. Interactive methods are a means by which the teacher can help children practice their ability to combine previous knowledge with new ones learned, they also stimulate communication, creativity, critical thinking, encouraging children to find new and bold solutions to problem situations.

Modern education is oriented towards the active involvement of children in the process of their own formation, therefore the methods must be chosen and combined to achieve this

goal. Unlike traditional methods, active-participatory ones focus on cooperative learning. By using traditional methods, children often passively witness the teacher's exposure. They do not develop children's thinking or creativity. (Torkos & Pasinszky, 2020)

The share of interactive methods is higher in terms of the learning process with the introduction of interdisciplinary learning.

In the following, we propose the exemplification of some language education activities, using interactive methods to support the didactic activity for fulfilling the proposed objectives.

The didactic game is a guided activity through which the children's sphere of knowledge is enriched, and the teacher has the opportunity to consolidate or verify this knowledge. It is structured on the following components: didactic task, game rules, game elements and game content. (Jurca, 2003)

1st level
Experiential field: language and communication
Activity category: Language education
Theme: With what and how do we express what we feel?
Subtheme: My beloved kindergarten
Activity topic: Favorite toy
Means of realization: Didactic game
Teaching task: observing the tasks on the sides of the cube: description, comparison, association, analysis of the favorite toy, arguing its usefulness.
Rules of the game: the child named by the educator throws the cube and solves the task indicated by its facet (describes, compares, associates, analyzes, applies, argues).
Game elements: applause, surprise, rewards.
Reference objectives:
- to participate in group activities, including play activities, both as a speaker and as an auditor;
- understand and convey simple messages; to react to them.
Operational objectives:
- describe the favorite toy by training the visual analyzer, listing at least three of its features;
- to notice the similarities and differences from another object;
- to identify the utilities of the chosen toy;
- formulate grammatically and logically correct sentences;
- to handle the materials provided carefully.
Methods and procedures: explanation, exercise, cube method, problematization.
Teaching aids: cube, toys, rewards.
Bibliography: Curriculum for preschool education (3-6 / 7 years), 2008.
Development: the introduction to the activity is done through a role play with the theme "Toy quarrel" - toys quarrel because of their importance, each presents arguments for its importance. Children have a bag from which they can choose a toy they prefer. The children are presented with the title of the game we will play. The rules of the game are explained - the child named by the educator throws the cube and solves the task (read by the educator) written on the facet of the cube. The child describes the extracted toy listing its characteristics (shape, size, color) and makes sentences about it. ("This is a teddy bear. It's big and brown"). Another child compares the toy to another object in the immediate vicinity ("The teddy bear looks like a doll").

Table 1. Structure of the activity

The other tasks are to associate the toys with other objects both in terms of their shape or size and their usefulness ("The toy is as big as the box of cubes"). Other children will analyze the characteristics of the toys and find their usefulness ("The toy can be used to make the group beautiful", "With the help of plastic dishes we can carry other small toys"). The teacher guides the children in such a way that they formulate grammatically correct sentences. The test game is performed and then the game itself, training as many children as possible. During the problem solving, the children are asked to solve the tasks on the sides of the cube but regarding the toys chosen by the other colleagues. The activity ends with general assessments of the game.



Image 1. Cube realization model

One of the ways in which children's storytelling is done is **retelling**. In this type of activity, children can be helped either by a series of illustrations or by a plan made in advance by the educators. Retellings help children to develop their oral language, to order their knowledge in a text in a cursive and logical way in order to render its subject as correctly as possible. Depending on the level of the group, children can be given representative images from the text, or they can be asked helpful questions. At level II, children can be allowed to narrate freely and identify for themselves the essential moments around which the subject of the text is centered.

2nd level
Experiential field: language and communication
Activity category: Language education
Theme: When how and why does it happen?
Subtheme: In the spring garden Fig. 5 The R.A.I.
Subject of the activity: The huge radish, a folk tale
Means of realization: retelling
Reference objectives:
- to participate in group activities, including play activities, both as a speaker and as an auditor;
- understand and convey simple messages; to react to them.
Operational objectives:
- to reproduce a fragment of a text;
- to formulate answers regarding the content of the story;
- to distinguish at least three characteristics of the main characters.
Methods and procedures: conversation, explanation, storytelling, R.A.I.
Means of education: plush radish, rewards.

<p>Bibliography: Curriculum for preschool education (3-6 / 7 years), 2008; Kelemen, G., (2014).</p>
<p>Development: the introduction to the activity is done when a huge radish appears in the group room and asks the children for help to tell their story. The children recognize the story of the Giant Radish. The retelling will be performed using the R.A.I. (Answer- Throw-Interrogate). Throw in the plush radish and ask a question about the content of the story ("Where did the radish grow?", "How was the radish?", "Who first tried to remove the radish?", "Who came to help Santa?") to whose child the radish was thrown. The child who catches the radish answers the question ("The radish was huge", "The radish grew in the garden", "Santa tried to get the radish out of the ground first", "Baba, the little girl, the cat came to help Santa"). If he answers correctly, he throws the radish at another child and asks him a new question. If the child who receives the radish does not know the answer to the question, the one who asked the question answers and throws the radish to another child. Attention is drawn to the retelling of the text in the logical order of the subject's moments.</p>
<p>At the end, rewards are given to the children and appreciations are made on the way the content of the story is told and on the children's creativity.</p>

Table 2. Structure of the activity

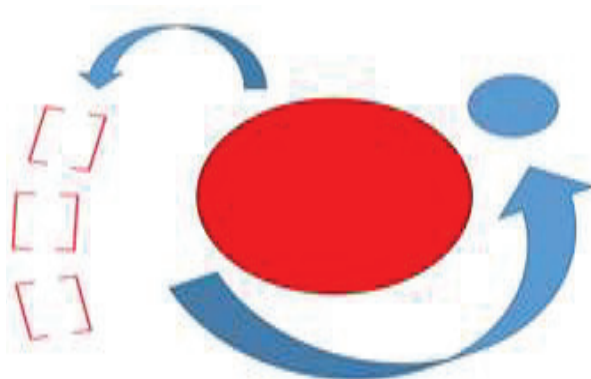


Image 2. RAI method (Answer, Throw, Interrogate method)

Children's stories according to a given plan have as a specific element the plan offered by the educators to the children to focus their attention on essential details and main characteristics of the characters, the logical sequence of events. This plan can take the form of titles or even questions.

2nd level
Experiential field: language and communication
Category of activity: Language education
Theme: When how and why does it happen?
Subtheme: Visiting the Zoo
Subject of the activity: The little house in the pot, a folk tale
Means of realization: telling children according to a given plan
Reference objectives:
- to participate in group activities, including play activities, both as a speaker and as an auditor;
- understand and convey simple messages; to react to them;
- to listen carefully to a text, to remember its ideas and to show that it has understood it.

Operational objectives:
- to identify the animal characters in the story;
- to retell the content of the story based on the main ideas;
- to reproduce the lines and actions of the characters.
Methods and procedures: conversation, explanation, storytelling, Coat of Arms Technique.
Teaching aids: images representing the characters of the story, rewards.
Bibliography: Curriculum for preschool education (3-6 / 7 years), 2008; Kelemen, G., (2014).
Development: the introduction to the activity is done by presenting a toy pot in which are the silhouettes of wild animals. The children's task is to extract an animal and say a characteristic of it ("The fox is red", "The bear is big", "The bunny is white"). The children thus recognize the title of the story: <i>The little house in the pot</i> .

Table 3. Structure of the activity

We present to the children the main ideas of the text:

1. The mouse finds the pot and makes his home in it.
2. The frog asks the mouse to receive her in the house as well.
3. The bunny joins the two in the house.
4. The fox also wants to live next to the other animals in the pot.
5. Although the animals were crowded, the wolf is also received in the house.
6. Inadvertently, the bear sits on the pot and breaks it, driving the animals out of the house.

The children develop the given ideas and based on them tell the text in the logical order of the events ("In the middle of the field was a big pot. The mouse finds the pot and makes a house in it, planning to live there alone. Suddenly a frog appears "A rabbit, who was passing by, sees the big pot and wonders who lives in it. She introduces herself and is also received in the house. The fox wonders if there is room for her." "Because the wolf is left without a house. The animals also get the fox to live together. The wolf comes and although there was no more room in the house, the animals crowd and make room for him. The bear, suddenly appeared, tired after walking all day." after the meal he did not know that they were guests in the cottage and sat down to rest a little. When he sat down on the pot, it shattered under the weight of the bear, the bear was frightened, and the animals fled where he saw with his eyes "). As the main moments of the subject are specified, the children paste the silhouettes of the characters in the order of their appearance in the story (Mouse, frog, bunny, fox, wolf, bear) on the coat of arms. The children highlight the positive features as they emerge from the text of the story ("The animals are good and welcoming because they left the other animals in the forest in the house."). In conclusion, general assessments are made on the development of the activity.

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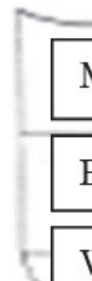


Image 3. Heraldry technique

Conclusions

The didactic games proposed for both level I and level II train children in formulating grammatically correct sentences and in describing the characteristics of some objects. You can see the structure of the didactic game: the children are introduced to the rules, the test game is performed and then the game itself. These activities allow the use of a wide variety of methods. The proposed methods are the cube method and the "Change pair" method. The cube method is a method that involves preschoolers throwing the cube on which different tasks are written to solve them. Tasks may differ depending on the level of the group or the proposed activity. The children are read the tasks on the sides of the cube, but they are the ones who throw the cube and solve the requirements. Children are asked to make correct statements, agree with the topic and predicate and describe the characteristics of the given objects. The activity "Favorite toy" is an integrated activity because by presenting the characteristics of toys, knowledge belonging to other categories of activities is used: knowledge of the environment, mathematics (presentation of the shape, color or utility of toys). Depending on the level of the group, children can be assigned various tasks: formulating antonyms or plurals for given words. Following the educational games, it can be seen that these activities are enjoyable for children, directly involve children and put them in a position to actively participate in activities. (Roman & Balas, 2010)

The retelling puts children in a position to reproduce the content of a text known to them. The R.A.I. develops children's both the ability to answer a question and the ability to ask specific questions. Children not only retell the text but are asked to characterize characters, to express compassion, to criticize negative attitudes, to offer final versions of the text.

All these activities, both through the use of traditional and active-participatory methods, contribute to the development of language, creativity, imagination, memory and thinking. They also put children in a position to find solutions to real problems but also offer the opportunity to participate in their own training.

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