

LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: *Preschool language education is a prerequisite to integrate the children easily into school-type activity but also in terms of their preparation for life. To enhance the verbal conduct in pre-primary education the aims are to stimulate their active participation both verbally and mentally when working in the kindergarden. The kindergarden is the educational institution which has the decisive role in the education and training of preschool children. It strives to create conditions for a normal development in all areas of preschool children, exploiting the physical and mental potential of each, taking into account the child's own pace, his emotional needs and his fundamental activity: the game. The author present her results regarding the education of language in a group of 16 children from the kidergarten.*

Key words: *preschool children, language education, kindergarten activities*

The kindergarden is the educational institution which has the decisive role in the education and training of preschool children. It strives to create conditions for a normal development in all areas of preschool children, exploiting the physical and mental potential of each, taking into account the child's own pace, his emotional needs and his fundamental activity: the game.

Preschool language education is a prerequisite to integrate the children easily into school-type activity but also in terms of their preparation for life. To enhance the verbal conduct in pre-primary education the aims are to stimulate their active participation both verbally and mentally when working in the kindergarden. The process to influence the child's speech begins at the small group (3-4 years old), taking into account the specific nature of the language, the shortcomings of pronunciation, the reduced vocabulary and other mental peculiarities such as the concrete thinking, the unstable attention, the involuntary memory (Dumitrana, 1999).

Speech development of children is achieved gradually by expanding the verbal relationships with others, in the situation of manifested curiosity for knowing the objects, their attributes, on the one hand, and by expanding the interrogative attitude on the origin and cause of phenomena, on the other hand. The game, as a means of relaxation and also of knowledge, facilitates mainly

the accumulations which should be acquired by the child in the moment of entering to school.

The game, in general, and specifically the didactic game is designed as a means of training and education, as a methodic process of optimal achieving of concrete tasks which are proposed by the educational process as a form of organization of the knowledge activity and development of psychophysical capabilities at all levels - and therefore that of language (.

"The language is not an amorphous peak of isolated words, but a huge dynamic system in a continuous development, in which a word depends on others, not only formally but also by the bonds that involves any word meaning" (Cazacu, 1968 apud Schwartz, Kelemen, Moldovan, 2009).

The language is in close relationship with all human mental processes and characteristics, including the most simple (sensations and perceptions), but psychological research had long been established that the main content of verbal communication is formed by the thinking.

Man learns vocabulary and the rules for the use of language in early childhood, and then enriches the experience throughout his entire existence. At the age of 0 - 1.5 years occurs the first contact with the word, the child hears the words pronounced by the adult; at the age of 2 - 4 years the child learns to name objects, as if he attaches to each a label; at the age of 5 - 7 years the child learns simple schema of language and learn to use sentences. Between 8-12 years the child learns the writing language, the reading and his vocabulary massively enriches; at the age of 13 - 15 years the child starts using abstract notions which require very complex linguistic structures. The essential factors in the genesis of language are the thinking demands facing the increasingly complex situations and all social relations more extensive (Piaget, 2005).

In the communication process people use means of communication, some of which are nonverbal (concrete actions with objects, gestures, facial expressions) and some verbal (sound, graphics).

Not every process of communication between people can be considered in the proper sense of the word. In strict acceptation the term of language refers to verbal language. So language is the human activity of communication through language.

There are highlighted the two fundamental functions of the language: the communication function and the cognitive function, of which the primary is communicative, but it is inextricably linked to cognitive. The other functions are derived therefrom (Ilica 2007).

The modern sense of the concept of communication on the one hand involves sending informational messages (converted into signals) by the sender to the recipient, and, on the other hand, the reception and decoding signals received by the receiver. These signals are encoded and communication

between people occurs due to understanding (decoding) of the signals system (words) by which are transmitted, and received the imaging, notional, conceptual contents etc. In this way is made the cognitive function of language (Birch, 2000).

Derived from the cognitive function, the regulatory function of language means the proper conduct of each process of knowledge. The regulatory function of language appears obvious in any voluntary activity. By verbal "orders" made by internally or externally language, can be triggered or broke, somatic or vegetative reactions, may be altered affective dispositions or are mobilized the body forces to cope unusual.

The emotionally expressive function is a language derived function. The man affective attitude towards other people is achieved with specific verbal means: rhythm, intonation, accent, break.

The imperative-persuasive language function is the ability to influence the other during communication. The full range of persuasive verbal means, starting from advice, request, order, threat etc., can be used to convince the others to give up or to mobilize to do something.

It is not without reason that the cultivation of language, the language education is a core objective of pre-school activity.

At the core of human activity is the verbal communication, and the learning and the development of language takes place in the child's communication with adults. The differences manifested in the communication skills of children at the begining of the kindergarten are determined by different family conditions in which they lived, how they influenced the development of speech of preschoolers.

In the kindergarten, through language, is conducted, the learning activity and the perception of the surrounding world. The child is thus led to distinguish what is essential, significantly, from nonessential; is helped to analyze, compare, group, classify by the language, directly contributing to stimulate thought processes, and to improve it. By the word in the activities of kindergarten, the child is ready to make the transition from perception to representation, to acquire a superior tool of investigation and knowledge of the surrounding world (Kelemen, 2007a).

In the transition from one stage to another of the pre-school age, the language presents specific features depending on the age peculiarities of forming device, the verbomotor and auditive analyzer, and on the specificities of children's thinking and the influences of the social-human environment. Characteristic for the preschool period is that language retains the character of the situation, but as the life experience is enriched, in the communication activity with adults, and the use of grammatical structure, appears and develops also the contextual language.

It appears and develops together with the language situation, which continues to unfold.

Because of the contextual language development are recorded the following progress in the child's psychological development:

- is intensified the intellectual function of language;
- it appear elements of activity planning on mental plan;
- the word adjusts the overall activity of children (Kelemen, 2007b).

With time the monologued external spoken language emerges and constitute a special form of language "for itself", the internal language. With the internalization of the exterior language, a process that occurs increasingly evident (about 4 ½ - 5 ½ years) is over intensified a particularly important function of language, namely the "intellectual" one, which consists essentially in mental planning and regulation of practical activities.

The inner language has a special significance in the development of thinking in carrying out intellectual operations. Unlike the external language, which remains a means of communicating with others, the inner language which is a "language for itself", no longer fulfills this function. Being a kind of communication of the individual with himself, the inner language refers to what is known to the subject, therefore, its basic function is to set some "principal" elements of the exposure to be according to the external language (2002, the language education).

The psychological research has shown that inner language appears and manifests particularly strong when the child has to solve a problem or met difficulties in its work. In this case the inner language becomes an audible expression of the thought of the child (the child "thinks" out loud) (Schaffer, 2005).

During the three years of preschool period, under the influence of the growing requirements of activities and communication, there is a rapid assimilation of various aspects of language (the phonetic side, vocabulary, the grammatical structure).

Under *the phonetic aspect*, the children learn till 4-5 years all the sounds of mother tongue, managing to correctly pronounce the words and the groups of words. At the age of 5-6 years, the correct pronunciation of all sounds generally being acquired, the focus will be on the improving the phonetic side, meaning reproducing sound with clarity, accuracy, safety.

The language development occurs also under the lexical aspect. Are recorded changes in both the increase in the number of the words as in the understanding of their significance. The degree of generalization of words-terms increases from one age to another. Such, children aged of 6 years meet in the concept of means of transportation, ship, boat, sled, wagon, which are distinguished by their external aspects, but which have as essential and common note – their identical utility (people traveling with them).

In terms of *grammatical structure* of speech in preschool children, there is a switching to forms increasingly complex and corecte. The preschooler child does not learn the grammar rules as such, and does not learn definitions, he appropriates grammatical structures practically in the live communication, listening to others, being correct when they make mistakes in their speech. He can certainly use words in various combinations, either in simple or developed sentences, either in phrases.

Regarding the *expressiveness of speech*, children have opportunities for shaping the expression (gesture, facial expression, intonation, etc.). However are still meet situations like: unjustified intensification of a sound, the prolongation of sounds, the sung playback of the text or the insufficient emphasis on the sounds in a word (Pânișoară, 2003).

The kindergarten can best meet the needs and interests specific of preschool age, the forms of activity of the child, some types of interpersonal relationships ensuring optimal development of the formative available potential of the child in this period which can be characterized by a pronounced psychic flexibility, a maximum receptivity, sensitivity and mobility.

The same idea is given otherwise very plastic in an article by Șchiopu Ursula as follows: "To decipher the many images of life around him, the preschool child needs a juicy contact with the children of his age and with the educator, represented as a messenger of the society who captures in its hands episodes of the first understandings, rounding their corners and mismatches " (Schiopu, 1993, p.231).

The researches come to stress the need of the education of language at this age and emphasizes that together with family, the kindergarten provides more effective, means and multiple opportunities to influence speech development of the children. In kindergarten, children's language is influenced primarily by the right, clear and expressiv speech.

The objectives of the research

Taking into account the Piaget's concept that "reading and writing process is based on perceptual structures and operators", (Piaget, 2005, p.97) we proposed the following objectives to follow in the research:

- the developing of the ability to perceive the words as lexical units;
- the use of the didactic games in the improving of the phonetic hearing and in the training and strengthening the skills of correct pronunciation;
- the enrichment and activation of the vocabulary volume of preschool children through didactic game, in accordance with the program requirements.

The research hypothesis from which we started in the investigation was undertaken following

Hypothesis

If the didactic game in fostering communication within small group is used as a form of activity, and as a method of teaching and learning, and assessment, then children will develop language, communication capability in a more rapid pace with increased motivation, providing improved performance in preschoolers.

The sample of subjects

In view to pursue and verify the specific hypothesis formulated in the research we have included a number of 16 children aged between 3 and 4 years old who attend kindergarten within small groups. The small group consists of 16 children, seven are girls and nine were boys, 10 are Romanian and 6 are Roma. From the 16 children nine are from organized families, 3 from families organized but with tense relations and the remaining 4 come from dysfunctional families (see table 1). From the description above appears that there are differences between the socio-cultural backgrounds from which the children are coming, and that affect their communication and language development.

Table 1
The structure of the sample

Characteristic	Type	Number of children
Gender	girls	7
	boys	9
Ethnicity	Romanian	10
	Roma	6
Familial background	organized family	9
	organized tensioned family	3
	dysfunctional family	4

Research Methods

Among the methods used for verification and activation of language development in preschool children we used small group interview method. This method consists of a direct free and individual query, the educator prepares an interview with questions that complement each other in order to verify the knowledge and the language development at the arrival in kindergarten.

The interview we made consists of 18 questions based on the responses obtained establishing the level of reached behavior or the development of each

child.

The same interview was used at the end of the first semester, for comparison of the language at the arrival in the kidegarten and at the end of the first semester.

A second research method that we used was the systematic observation of children under the aspects of language development. Language development is done through verbal, nonverbal and paraverbal communication.

Results and discussions. Based on initial assessment test was drawn a table of performance descriptors (Table 2).

Table 2. The initial assessment performance descriptors

Reached behavior	Behavior in development
A correct pronunciation of the sounds	Relatively he correctly pronounce the sounds but with sounds omissions or reversals
Designates 4-5 toys	Designates 1-2 toys
He forms a simple sentence about a special toy	He does not form a sentence about a special toy

Based on the final assessment test was drawn a table of performance descriptors (Table 3):

Table 3. The final assessment performance descriptors

Reached behavior	Behavior in development
Recognise the season	Does not recognise the season
He forms the simple sentences	Fails to compose a simple sentence
He calls the characters in the story "The Bear tricked by the Fox "	Does not call the characters in the story "The Bear tricked by the Fox "

The results of the final assessment are presented in the table 4 and the figure 1:

Table 4. The results of the final assessment

Items	Reached behavior (RB)	Behavior in development (BD)
The first item	10	6
The second item	10	6
The third item	11	5

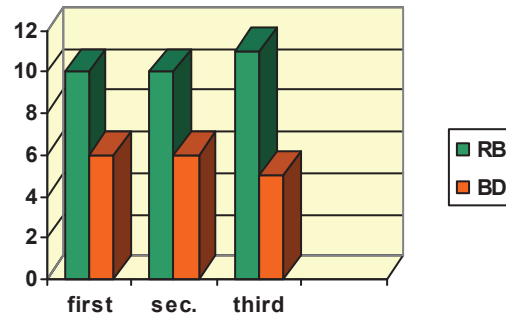


Figure 1. The results of final assessment

Following the interview applied at the entry into the kindergarten we found that a number of 4 children have a level of reached behavior and the remaining 12 children have a level of behavior in development. But after the interview at the end of the first semester we found that a number of 9 children have a reached behavioral level, and the remaining 7 children have a behavior in development level. The graphical representation of the results is carried out in the figure below:

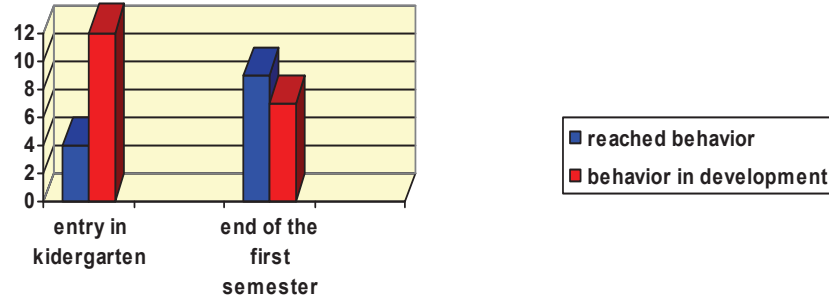


Figure 2. The results of the interview applied at the entry into kindergarten - and at the end of the first semester

The second method used in research was the systematic observation and was made by grid, under the aspect of the development of verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal language in order to check and evaluate the results obtained in the course of activities to educate the language by didactic games, but also through dramatizations, stories etc.

The interpretive results see a progressive increase in verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal language.

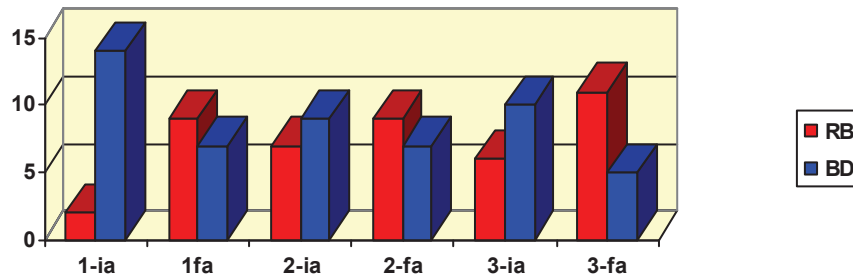


Figure 3. The comparative results at the first and final evaluation

Where: 1-ia = the first item, initial assessment
1-fa = the first item, final assessment
2-ia = the second item, initial assessment
2-fa = the second item, final assessment
3-ia = the third item, initial assessment
3-fa = the third item, final assessment

The research has shown the viability of the didactic game efficiency in the work of educating the language. Also from using the educational games described in the paper we found that the didactic games are effective ways of developing of teaching loads to children and educate the language. The efficiency of the games depended largely on how we knew to select them in relation to the concrete situations existing in the group and to formulate the right tasks based on the good knowledge of the children in terms of the reached level of language education and in terms of speech defects. As beautiful and light the games seem, so they must be well thought out and prepared by the educator.

Unlike other games, the didactic game is created by the educator, targeted and conditioned on the fulfillment of educational tasks and goes into the teaching means being acquired gradually by children and then picked, processed and integrated into activities by children, influencing the systematical content of them.

The didactic game is an activity that is distinguished by its specific structure from the other activities with similar content, by the full unity between teaching load and action game that takes the form of fun and keep it permanently.

Conclusions

We conclude that the game helps the educator to organize the intellectual activity of children in a form as attractive and accessible and with clear efficiency.

The didactic game plays a large contribution in the state, strengthening, deepening, verification, systematization and the assessment of knowledge, and between the educational means occupies the most important place through the influence they exert on the deepest side of the child's personality.

Knowing that all the work of kindergarten focuses on the oral communication, the educator envisages the raising of children's language level of development. As we know, speech is a communicative activity that appropriates by accumulations gradually learned and systematizes through numerous practice.

The didactic game has a wide contribution to stimulating the development of attention, memory, imagination, to the shape of preschool child's personality. Of course language develops in strong interaction with the thinking and interactes each other closely, although they are not identical phenomena.

We believe that the didactic game for language education contributes by its content and pursued objectives through the three types of activities has a strong formative and informative value on preschool children. We propose to increase the strengths informative and formative of the didactic game in preschool through use in the course of mathematics and language education activities, in addition to traditional methods and active-participatory methods, methods that asks to the child the more effort thinking, imagination, memory, will, engaging him in this process of rediscovering knowledge.

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