

## ACTIVITIES SPECIFIC TO EDUCATING LANGUAGE IN PRE- SCHOOL LEARNING SYSTEM

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**Abstract:** *This paper presents activities specific to educating language in pre-school learning system. Language and communication are one of the most important areas for all the learning levels. Correct speaking is the basis for all the human activities, therefore teaching children to speak literally correctly is a duty that every teacher has. It is obvious that educating language and communication is necessary in all specific activities like: didactic games, stories, stories based on pictures, dialogues as well as in mathematical activities, learning about the environment, drawing, etc. In fact, all types of activities require that the focus should be on: The correct pronunciation of specific words; Making correct sentences from a phonological lexical, grammatical point of view because they speak about actions, describe specific objectives and evaluate individual and collective activities; The importance of educating language and communication at pre-school level is placed in the top of the national curriculum in the pre-school educational system. It is largely discussed about and education is done according to the age of the children. A child is a unique human, a special one who is continuously growing up to become an adult. All the knowledge he/she acquires is stored within, in a personal style, in order to be used when he is an adult.*

**Key words:** *activities, communication, evaluation, children's speaking correctly;*

### **Introduction**

Teaching children to speak correctly is a patriotic duty of all teachers; it is also a cultural deed with profound social results. The activity of teaching children to speak correctly is a complex one and it is done during the entire process of learning. Even if a child does not speak correctly at the age of 3, he/she will acquire the necessary structures he/she needs in order to speak correctly further, it begins with using 2 or 3 words together and later

he/she makes up sentences and can also use a literal language at the age of 6/7 years old.

Language includes listening, speaking, reading and writing. Communication refers to an exchange of information. It is a social activity and it is done between human relationships, it is also done according to the social regulations.<sup>19</sup>

At the human level, communication has many forms:

- Intrapersonal communication,
- Interpersonal communication,
- Groups communication,
- Mass communication,

The four above types of communication must be adapted to the pre-school level, they mean exercising and practicing the speaking activity, which is:

- Speaking within groups with the possibility to change the emitter with the receiver ,
- Speaking about experiences, feelings, happenings, focusing on logic of the ideas,
- Speaking in front of the other colleagues.

Communication has an important role in interhuman relationships, at the pre-school and school age, children learn the basics of addressing to adults and listening to the others.

At the pre-school level, we can say that trying to teach a perfect communication is a fact which helps the further integration of the child at the following levels and is all based on the roots from the kindergarten.

The richer the language is the bigger the possibility to develop intersocial relationships is, meaning the possibility for the child to integrate in a system of relationships.

Speaking about the linguistic acquisition of the child, the school education comes as a continuation, a compensation of the education the child receives in his/her family and this way the child learns how to cope with the requirements of the school.

Learning a certain type of communication, the child learns how to fit in a certain environment among humans; he also learns a certain system of attitudes to words himself/herself and towards the others, a certain way to compare himself/herself with the life experience.

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<sup>19</sup> Curriculum-ului. Repere și Instrumente Didactice Pentru Formarea Profesorilor, Editura Paralela 45, 2010

**a. About language and communication:**

„Language is the first poem of a people” (L. Blaga)<sup>20</sup>

Developing language, trying to make linguistic communication varied and the interest for a correct speech are constant preoccupations of the school in general.

The correct speaking and writing in a language means knowing the language in all its aspects. Acquiring the language is an activity which involves a long effort from an individual because the technique of receiving and producing language is a very complicated one.

Speaking is an activity specific to humans, a main activity and a very important one for the mental activity as well. Without speaking one cannot imagine the existence of the human being or the society itself. The functions of language are:

1. The main function is that of sending one’s own thinking to another person;
2. The adapting function of language is that it is done within the society;
3. The ludic function of language is found during childhood;
4. The emotional function of language consists in expressing one’s feelings;

**a. The importance of children’s speaking correctly:**

“There is no difference between a child’s heart and language. His language has five fingers and it grabs any abstract object skillfully.” (Nichita Stănescu)<sup>21</sup>

Nursery school offers many possibilities to practice and develop language. The oral communication, dialogue or monologue, help to develop the phonetical aspect of language. The interior language becomes a way to speak for the pre-school child; he/she is focused on ideas, meanings and images. The development for a pre-school child’s language is based on cognitive experience in relation with the rest of the people.

When at nursery school, while communicating with the children around, the child is given the possibility to speak freely at any moment of the day, from his/her coming to school to his/her leaving from school.

Whether the activity is done individually or with groups, the focus should be on speaking so that their language become colourful, lively; in this way,

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<sup>20</sup> Blaga, Lucian „Poemele luminii”, ediție îngrijită de George Ivașcu, Editura pentru literatura, colecția „Biblioteca pentru toți”

<sup>21</sup> <http://poetii-nostri.ro/nichita-stanescu-autor-25/>

when communicating with his/her colleagues, the child acquires grammatical structures, morphological, syntactic, phonological and lexical structures.

Educating a verbal correct grammatical communication means to educate.<sup>22</sup>

1. Phonological aspect -the child can distinguish the sound of a word.
2. The lexical aspect- the child enriches his/her active/passive vocabulary, based on the experience .
3. The syntactic aspect- the child will be able to use a correct language from a grammatical point of view.

Family is a factor which influences positively or negatively a child's way of speaking; there are times when a talkative child is always stimulated to speak and a silent one neglected. As the child grows up, it happens that he/she changes his/her way of speaking and becomes from a talkative person a silent one and vice versa. This happens around the age of 3 and it has to do with the others' reaction to his/her speaking.

### **1.2 The difficulties of learning Romanian**

Learning Romanian language correctly is done with teachers, taking into account the learners age and the phonological aspects of the language.

The Romanian phonological system has certain characteristics in saying certain sounds, Romanian being a phonological language, which means that every letter has a corresponding sound. At the end of the school year I gave children a test, to analyse sounds, words and sentences. I told children to listen to the following words: apple/coat/car.I asked them to analyse each word and say how many sounds there were in a word, which the sounds were , which the first, the seconds or the last sounds were. I asked them to listen to: "The child is playing with the ball". The children had to analyse the sentence, say how many words there were and which their order in the sentences was. They had difficulties in establishing the sound of long words, made up of more sounds and they said that there were fewer sounds than there actually were.

## **2. Methods to teach communicative structures**

Method is the main element to achieve an objective .

The didactic methodology refers to all the methods and didactic means which are used in the learning process; it also refers to the nature, functions and possible classifications of different methods of teaching.

The methods are: action plans and ways of action.

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<sup>22</sup> Kelemen, G. „Sinteze de pedagogie preșcolară”, Editura Mihailo Palov, Vrsac, 2014

Using the learning methods refers to:

- Achieving some knowledge goals;
- Achieving some teaching goals;
- Achieving some skills goals;

### **2.1: Educational resources**

The educational resources are , according to Cucuș, "instruments or systems of instruments meant to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, to get some skills, to evaluate some acquisitions, to make some practical activities within the teaching process."<sup>23</sup>

The educational resources can be grouped in:

1. Educational resources with a didactic message: natural objects (animals, plants, insects) objects which imitate real ones, audio-visual aids others;
2. Educational resources which facilitate the transmission of the didactic message (instruments, laboratory devices, technical equipments, musical instruments, sport equipment, computers, etc).

The most important functions of means of teaching are:

3. To stimulate;
4. To form;
5. To form intellectual and practical skills;
6. To illustrate and demonstrate;
7. The esthetical function;
8. The evaluation function;
9. Ergonomical function;

### **3. Evaluation**

Moto: "Evaluation has an important place in the learning system, where it is integrated. It always has a direct or indirect relation with the learning progress in extension and in quality."<sup>24</sup> (Henri Pieron) Evaluation is an action of learning and knowing a phenomenon in all its aspects, with all its features, the state and the function of a system and the results of an activity. Consequently, its object can be a phenomenon, a person (student,teacher) an activity or its result, an institution, the learning system itself, etc. Another definition can be found in the book entitled "Pedagogy" written by Constantin Cucuș. According to this definition, it is "the process by which useful information is obtained and given, leading to making further decision." According to Jean Vogler, to evaluate has many other meanings among which there is always a synonymy, they are: "to appreciate", "to think of",

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<sup>23</sup> C-tin Cucuș „Pedagogie”, Iași, 1999

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cairn.info/revue-bulletin-de-psychologie>

”to estimate”, ”to judge”. Evaluation is a systematic progress by which the educator tries to determine if the level of the intended objectives is passed by the children and this operation consists of a value judgement.

### **3.1 Types of evaluation:**

In the pedagogical teaching, the criterion of the suggested goal and the criterion of the usage frequency are used, they refer to:

- Initial evaluation,
- Continous evaluation,
- Cumulative evaluation,

There is another classification of the evaluation functions which can be taken into account:<sup>25</sup>

- Noticing and appreciating the school results obtained, classification and ranking of the students according to their performances,
- The diagnostic of the activity done by students,
- The prediction function, suggestions for the decisions which are going to be made, referring to the activity of the following levels, stages and the anticipation of the possible results.

Taking into account the previous functions, the evaluation has a lot of specific functions:

- It gives students a feed-back about their results and helps them to see if the objectives they had are completed;
- It helps students to develop the ability of self-assessment, by comparing their results to those expected by the school itself;
- It helps the educator notice the success and the failures of the educational process, comparing the objectives to the results;
- It gives the educator the possibility to see which the difficulties are for the children .

Noticing the children’s language , the educator will see the children’s abilities to:

- Make an oral request;
- To give information;
- To take part in a dialogue with questions and answers;
- To answer the questions they are asked.

According to these things that the educator can see in the children’s behavior, he/she can establish some performance criteria, when it comes

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<sup>25</sup> Roman, A., Kelemen, G. „Elemente de pedagogie- Repere in evaluarea cunoștințelor psihopedagogice”, Editura Învățătorul Modern, Chișinău, 2014

about evaluation or noticing children's abilities to use the communicative structures.

“VERY WELL”- the child must make a clear statement, make up a story using a rich vocabulary, have a correct pronunciation and a correct intonation, answer the questions based on the story.

“WELL”- the child can make up a story, but has a poor vocabulary and has some grammatical mistakes.

“ACCEPTABLE”- the child hardly makes up a story, hardly knows the story line, has speaking mistakes, he/she answers the questions with very few words.

“NOT ACCEPTABLE”- the child cannot make up a story, cannot focus on a subject of a story or any theme.

### **3.2 Evaluation methods:**

Here comes some ways of evaluating the children during the initial evaluation:

- Fill in the missing words

Task: "I am going to read you a story. Pay attention please, listen and when I stop, you think for a short time and say which the missing word is. (The child may look at the text) It is a nice weather, the sky is...(clear), the sun is...(bright/shinning). Joanna and Mary are walking, they are picking ...(flowers) and...(singing) their favorite song."

27. The pronunciation test:

Task: The child is asked to listen carefully and repeat what he/she hears, in the following order :

- r,s,ș,t,gz,j,f,c,b,ce,ci,ge,gi;
- diphthongs and triphthongs : ea,oa,eau(floare,vreau);
- groups of two and three consonants: mn, cr, șt, str, ctf (pumn, creangă);
- counting from 1 to ten (ordinal and cardinal numbers);

28. The vocabulary test (to establish the amount of the words known by the child)

Objective: to check the vocabulary the child has and how he/she understands the words.

Method of the test: naming a number of words denoting the objects around, the child is asked the following question: „what do you know about...?”(doll, chair, apple,etc)

Task: "Listen carefully what I am asking you and say everything you know about..."

Marking : the correctness of the answer is evaluated and the fluency of the speaking flow.

The number of words the child uses when he/she answers is also evaluated.

Two points are given for every correct answer, one of which for the content of the answer and the other for fluency.

### **3.3 The continuous evaluation**

It consists of continuously checking the results, during the whole process of learning; it usually checks small amounts of knowledge.

This type of evaluation has a permanent character and is included in the learning process from the beginning to the end of the teaching stage; it is especially used to check knowledge, skills and abilities. This type of evaluation uses conversation, learning and teaching games, hand outs; the usage of these methods implies much preparation before the evaluation itself. "Draw/ Write ... as many lines as many syllables you can hear in the following words: (the child is shown images with a ball, a flower, a car, a bicycle), words made up of 2,3 or 4 syllables. The oral test of making up sentences with a given word:

The task is:., Make sentences which start with the next word ..." (the child is given an image). The child must make sentences beginning with that word (simple and compound sentences).

**3.4 The cumulative evaluation:** It is done in the pre-school learning system at the end of a long period of a teaching. ( for example it can be used after a few weeks in which the children studied the theme SPRING and they had many lessons on this theme, or at the end of a school year). This type of evaluation implies a rigorous planning according to the objectives the teacher has, objectives which should refer to the whole thematic area.

Example: A questionnaire about educating the language, may have the following tasks:

- Circle the image which represents your favourite object;
- Make a sentences using this word;
- Say this word in syllables;
- Say which the initial and the final sound is in this word and write down the corresponding letters;

Except these questionnaire hand outs, another efficient method to evaluate the children is the continuous noticing of the children's behaviour during the activities they are involved in; this helps the educator to see how much the children are interested in the theme they are presented.

## **4. Experimental research regarding the specific activities to educate speaking at a preschool level:**



#### 4.1 Research purposes

In order to make children's speaking perfect, I have experimented the way in which the critical thinking methods or the classical methods influence children's assimilation of communicative structures .

Children are receptive to both methods but the explanation the teacher offers, its clarity and the material used are very important.

It is a fact that both types of activities are worth using because they activate and enrich children's vocabulary and they can surely be considered means of developing communication. The active-participating method which emphasises the efficiency of the dramatic pedagogy is brainstorming. The complementary methods bring new things to the traditional instruments. (oral activities, written or practical activities). The alternative methods imply a substitution of the traditional methods with the modern ones.

- **The general hypothesis**

If I use the didactic strategy of the 3 M (method, means, material) will the educational process become more efficient?

- **The specific hypothesis**

Will the children acquire the knowledge more easily if we use the modern methods of the dramatic pedagogy more often than the classical methods?

- **Independent variables:**

- i. The development of the oral communication with preschool children is largely influenced by the usage of modern methods based on dramatic pedagogy, although the importance of the didactic games is not excluded;

- ii. The involvement of the children is organising and developing the didactic games;

- iii. The active contribution of the preschool children at both levels of the experiment.

- **Dependent variables:**

- 29. The ability of understanding the importance of each job;

- 30. The development of the intelligence, attention and team spirit;

- 31. The acquisition of new words, the enrichment of vocabulary, the improvement of conversation between children;

The experiment itself:

Stage 1: An activity based on dramatic pedagogy was proposed, based on brainstorming where the communicative activities are emphasised; the children were about 5-6 years old. I wanted this activity to be like a game and I used coloured pieces of cardboard for the traditional method.

Target groups: 5-6 years old

Nursery school: P.P. Pecica

Theme of experiment: The costumes parade

Means of teaching: games and dramatical situations

Domain: language and communication

Techniques: brainstorming

Educational resources: coloured paper, scissors, glue, paints, tinsel, clothes

The stages of the activity:

1. Catching the attention: I did this by a discussion; I told children to imagine that they were grown ups and they have to choose a job.

2. Announcing the objectives: I clearly stated that each job had something specific and they had to make some materials to present their jobs with the helps of those accessories.

3. The activity itself:

The children made their accessories and put on their costumes. They presented their jobs. We all imagined that there was a magical portal which we had to get through and suddenly became adults. They presented the following jobs: driver, builder, kindergarten teacher, doctor, etc.

Stage 2: Doing the same activity, but in a traditional way, as a didactic game with small pieces of paper (cardboard)

Target group: 5-6 aged children

Nursery school: P.P. Pecica

Activity type: didactic game

Domain: language and communication

Method: explanation, conversation, presentation.

Educational resources : cardboards showing jobs, a T.V., small baskets.

Task: Name the jobs you are shown

Rules: The teacher will name a person who has to describe the picture he/she is shown (each child gets a picture that he/she will present to his mates as he/she was „on T.V.”)

Elements involved in the game: surprise, applause

Stages of the activity:

- The lead- in stage was done by presenting the surprise and the materials used;
- The announcement of the little of the game and the presentation of the rules;

Playing the game itself: each child had to present/describe his/her image, using correct grammatical sentences and phrases, and then

he/she put the cardboard on the table. Each correct answer was rewarded by applauses:

General objectives:

- To recognise and repeat rules specific to social life;
- To communicate with the groups by using words, gestures, body language:

Specific objectives:

- To state the activities specific to grown ups;
- To describe each activity using language and nonlanguage types of communication;
- To make the right accessories for the job he/she speaks about to communicate with colleagues using the right words and correct language;

Results:

I made the following table where I wrote down the results for each contestant:

- Weak;
- Medium;
- Good;
- Very good;

<b>1.The ability to select the materials</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
The ability to notice fast what's new			4	21
The ability to make a decision fast		2	5	18
Imagination			5	20
The ability to act in the social life		2	3	20
<b>2.Oral presentation, the ability to communicate with the group</b>		4	3	18
The correctness of the sentences		4	3	18
The correctness of the statements		4	3	18
The right vocabulary			5	20
Oral communication		2	5	18
Non-verbal communication			5	20
<b>3.The ability to work within a team</b>		1	4	20
Helping the others in the group		1	1	23
Accepting the colleagues suggestions		2	3	20
Altruism		2	3	20
Sharing successful results		2	10	13
Behaviour within the group			5	20

18 of 25 children got a "very good" mark for most of the criteria I wrote, 5 children got "good", 2 got "medium", but one got "weak, because each of them contributed to the success of the group.

#### Analysing the results

Even if all the objectives were achieved, during the game children were asked to obey some rules which limited their communication within the groups and limited their way of acting freely.

It was difficult for them to:

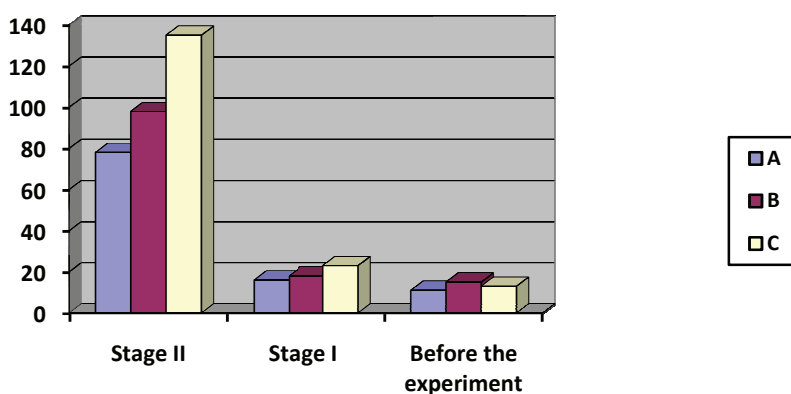
- Help others within the groups;
- Accept their mates suggestions;
- Behave nicely within the groups;

There were not too many differences between the children because they could not change the activity, the didactic game, a common activity with any other activity.

Modern interactive methods represent a new way of developing both communication skills and their verbal ability at pre-school children and this leads to the integration of important skills of correct and fluent speech.

The usage of the histogram plotting allowed me to compare results in comparison with the two samples of the experiment.

A= THE CAPACITY OF SELECTING THE MATERIALS;  
B= ORAL EXPRESSION; GROUP COMMUNICATION ;  
C= SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WITHIN THE GROUP;



#### Conclusions

"Words represent only a tool to express a thought." (Mihai Eminescu)<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> <http://cerculpoetilor.net/Mihai-Eminescu.html>

The communication between the teacher and her/his children is very important if we see it as a way to establish a relationship between that one who gives information, messages and those who receive the information.

The teacher can offer models of ways of communication, rules, definitions, but they are useless if children are not used to communicating.

The ideal communication means to "translate" your message by specific skills. By his mission in school, the educator has to act like a master of communication.

In this article, I have tried to present active methods specific to communication as a learning way at the pre- school level.

To sum up, I do consider that stimulating the self-assessment is one of the main methods of optimizing the evaluation.

I strongly believe that the teacher should lead- in the children in the accurate learning of the evaluation criteria (which is communication in this case); this way they will clearly understand the teacher's appraisal and they will not interpret it in a negative way , a thing which might have bad influence on their personal evolution.

The teacher can give communication patterns, rules, definitions; they all become useless if children are not trained to communicate.

The teacher can improve his/ her conduct, especially in teaching, learning design strategy, planning educational activities under the following aspects:

1. Deep analysis of information content for its essentiality and its accessibility for transmitting information at different times of the day and for all children;

2. Usage of communicative methods known to enhance dialogue, because the communication is not just a message; it is important how the message is received and understood.

3. Knowing which the effects of actions taken will be, in order to improve them. Teacher – children communication has a purpose which is very important in the broadcasting of the information and the attitudes involved in the teaching- learning process.

Arghezi concludes that "communication begins with the choice of words"<sup>27</sup> which leads us to the following statement: communication is necessary as a means of effective teaching activity.

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.tudorarghezi.eu/opere.php#.WL5qw9LyjIU>

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