

TEACHING ENGLISH IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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Annotation: This paper explores the teaching of English to preschool children based on L.S. Vygotsky's theory. It analyzes effective methods, including the communicative approach, play-based learning, and Total Physical Response (TPR). The importance of language immersion, active interaction, and play as key elements for successful foreign language acquisition in early childhood is emphasized.

Keywords: preschool education, early language learning, English, thinking, perception, TPR method, developmental period, play-based learning.

English is essential in many fields, including education, science, business, and international communication. Learning English expands educational and career opportunities, making it increasingly important. For children, starting English at an early age is beneficial, as they absorb new information more easily. Early language learning enhances cognitive abilities, improves communication skills, and prepares children for future schooling. Thus, early English education is becoming a crucial part of modern education.

The Importance of Early English Learning. Early exposure to English in preschool plays a key role in developing speech, memory, and thinking skills. Studies confirm that young children are highly receptive to new language structures, making learning more effective. Play-based and communicative methods help children acquire language naturally, making learning engaging and encouraging active language use.

Teaching Methods in Preschool. Effective English teaching in preschool is based on methods tailored to children's developmental needs:

- Communicative approach – develops language skills through active speech use.
- Total Physical Response (TPR) – helps children remember words through movement, linking speech with actions.
- Play-based learning – includes songs, rhymes, active and board games, making learning enjoyable.
- Immersion method – teachers use English in daily situations, creating a natural language environment.

These methods allow children to acquire a foreign language effortlessly, viewing it as a tool for communication rather than just a school subject.

Research on Early Language Learning. Scholars such as L.S. Vygotsky, J. Bruner, and P. Kuhl have studied second language acquisition in early childhood. Their research confirms that children learn a foreign language through interaction and imitation rather than rote memorization. Studies by Ellen Bialystok show that bilingualism enhances cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills. Patricia Kuhl's research demonstrates that young children can perceive sounds from any language, but as they grow, their perception adapts to their native language, highlighting the importance of early language exposure.

Vygotsky's Theory and Its Application L.S. Vygotsky proposed that children learn language through interaction with others in the zone of proximal development—the gap between what they can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. This underscores the importance of teacher support in helping children use new words and structures.

Vygotsky also emphasized the role of sign systems and visual aids in learning. Flashcards, gestures, and symbols help children connect words with meaning, facilitating retention. His theory further suggests that learning a second language enhances cognitive development by encouraging children to compare and understand different linguistic structures.

Experiment

To evaluate the effectiveness of different teaching methods, an experiment was conducted in a preschool with 20 children aged 4–5, divided into two groups.

The first group learned English through the TPR method, where children responded to teacher commands with physical actions (e.g., *"Jump!"*—children jump, *"Touch your nose!"*—they touch their noses). The second group was taught using a traditional method, where words were explained through translation and repetition.

The experiment lasted one month, with lessons held three times a week for 20 minutes. Afterward, the children were tested. In the first group, 80% of the children correctly recalled learned words and commands, while in the second group, only 50% did.

These findings confirm that TPR is more effective for preschoolers, as associating words with movement improves memorization. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes active engagement and play-based learning.

Early English learning is most effective when based on interaction, play, and natural language immersion. Vygotsky's theory and modern research confirm that preschoolers acquire language best through practice and social interaction. A combination of communicative methods, TPR, and play-based learning makes language acquisition both effective and enjoyable for young learners.

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