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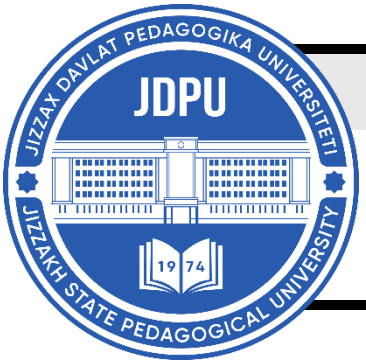

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EFFECTIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: In today's globalized world, learning English is becoming increasingly important not only for school-aged learners but also for preschool children. Early childhood is a critical period when a child's thinking, speech, curiosity, and worldview develop rapidly. At this age, children absorb new information quickly and naturally. Therefore, starting English language instruction during preschool years significantly enhances learning outcomes. This article explores the key principles, methods, and modern approaches to effectively teaching English to preschool children.

Introduction. Teaching English to preschool children requires methods that match their natural ways of learning—through play, curiosity, and interaction. At this early age, children absorb language quickly when it is presented in meaningful, engaging, and enjoyable contexts. Therefore, effective English instruction in preschool should focus on creating a supportive environment enriched with songs, games, visuals, stories, and hands-on activities. These methods help young learners develop listening and speaking skills naturally while fostering a positive attitude toward language learning. By using child-centered and play-based techniques, educators can build a strong foundation for future language development.

2.Material and methods

Psychological barriers refer to internal emotional or mental obstacles—such as fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, and fear of judgment—that interfere with a learner's ability to communicate effectively. These barriers are especially common in the development of speech skills, where learners may struggle not because of insufficient knowledge, but due to psychological resistance. The aim of this article is to deepen understanding of how psychological factors influence language use and to promote the creation of inclusive, emotionally-aware teaching practices that support effective speech skill development.

Psychological barriers encompass emotional and mental states that hinder an individual's ability to express themselves confidently. Such obstacles may arise from fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, or even past negative learning experiences. According to researchers such as Brown, affective variables—including self-confidence, anxiety, and willingness to take risks—play a crucial role in second language acquisition and oral performance. Within language learning environments, these psychological barriers often appear through avoidance behaviors, silence, or limited participation in speaking activities, ultimately restricting learners' communicative growth.

3. Research and Discussion

Psychological barriers significantly affect learners' ability to develop effective speech skills. Many learners experience fear of making mistakes, being judged, or not being understood, which results in hesitation and weak verbal performance. In educational environments, recognizing and addressing these barriers is essential for fostering effective communication. Teachers must be aware of these internal challenges and strive to create a positive, non-threatening atmosphere that encourages learners to express themselves freely. Supportive feedback, encouragement, and gradual exposure to speaking tasks enable learners to overcome psychological resistance and build stronger speech skills.

Several types of psychological barriers can negatively influence the development of speech skills:

Anxiety.

Speech anxiety is one of the most widespread psychological barriers. It may manifest as stage fright, nervousness during public speaking, or fear of using a second language. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) introduced the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which describes the apprehension experienced specifically during second-language performance. High levels of FLA can hinder fluency, reduce spontaneity, and lead to avoidance of speaking tasks.

Low Self-Esteem.

Learners with low self-esteem often believe they are not capable of speaking well or that their ideas lack value. Such negative self-perceptions reduce participation and limit opportunities for improvement. Over time, repeated negative thoughts create a strong barrier to active communication.

Past Negative Experiences.

Some learners may have experienced trauma related to public speaking, ridicule, or bullying. These experiences create deep psychological aversions to speaking in front of others. Even in supportive environments, they may experience panic or heightened anxiety. Teachers should remain sensitive to such backgrounds and provide low-pressure, confidence-building speaking opportunities.

Fear of Judgment.

Many learners avoid speaking due to fear of being judged by teachers or peers. This fear can create a mental block that prevents natural and fluent communication. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights that emotional variables such as fear and tension may block language input from being processed effectively.

Lack of Motivation.

Motivation is a powerful driver of language learning. When learners lack interest or personal goals, they tend to avoid speaking practice. Low motivation slows progress and weakens the development of oral fluency.

Perfectionism.

Some learners set unrealistically high standards for themselves. Perfectionism leads to fear of making errors, excessive self-correction, and overthinking before speaking. As a result, fluency decreases because the learner focuses more on accuracy than on communication.

These psychological barriers often interact with one another and vary in intensity depending on individual backgrounds and learning environments. Addressing them requires a supportive, empathetic teaching approach that promotes emotional safety, gradual exposure to speaking tasks, and consistent positive reinforcement.

Anxiety plays a particularly critical role in language learning. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), learners experiencing high levels of Foreign Language Anxiety often struggle with fluency, spontaneity, and participation in spoken activities. Similarly, low self-esteem can prevent learners from taking risks and viewing mistakes as part of the learning process. These emotional states, when unaddressed, restrict opportunities for meaningful practice and hinder speech development.

Building confidence involves repeated positive speaking experiences, constructive feedback, and emotional support from teachers and peers. Educators should normalize mistakes, encourage a growth mindset, and cultivate a low-stress speaking environment.

Practical exercises are essential for reducing psychological barriers and enhancing confidence. One effective method is role-playing, where learners simulate real-life situations—such as ordering food or giving a short presentation. Role-playing encourages risk-taking, experimentation with language, and comfort in using English in different contexts.

Another useful technique is positive self-talk. Learners practice repeating affirmations, such as "I am capable of speaking confidently" or "Mistakes help me learn." These statements gradually reshape the learner's mindset, reduce self-doubt, and build confidence in their speaking abilities.

Conclusion. Psychological barriers play a crucial role in shaping learners' ability to develop effective speech skills. The findings of this study show that difficulties in speaking are often not the result of insufficient linguistic knowledge, but rather of internal emotional factors such as anxiety, low self-esteem, fear of judgment, past negative experiences, lack of motivation, and perfectionism. These barriers reduce learners' willingness to participate, limit fluency, and create mental blocks that prevent natural and confident communication.

Understanding these psychological factors is essential for educators who aim to create supportive and inclusive learning environments. By providing positive feedback, reducing the fear of mistakes, encouraging gradual exposure to speaking activities, and offering emotionally safe opportunities for practice, teachers can significantly lower learners' affective filters. Practical strategies such as role-playing, cooperative tasks, and positive self-talk further contribute to building confidence and enhancing speech performance.

Overall, addressing psychological barriers is not only beneficial but necessary for successful speech skills development. When learners feel emotionally supported and confident, they are more willing to engage, practice, and ultimately achieve greater communicative competence. This emphasizes the importance of integrating psychological awareness into teaching methodologies to foster more effective and meaningful language learning experiences.

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