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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL****MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC –
METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS AND MECHANISMS FOR THEIR ACQUISITION
FOR PRIMARY GRADES****Moxirakhon Abdumalikhodjayevna Usmonkhodjayeva***Independent Researcher, Department of German Language**Chirchik State Pedagogical University**E-mail address: moxira1929@gmail.com**Chirchik, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: primary education, listening, speaking, didactic exercises, tasks, interactive methods, visual aids, the principle of "listening to speaking".

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Abstract: This article examines the content of effective didactic exercises and tasks used in teaching a foreign language to primary school pupils and analyses their role in enhancing learners' linguistic and communicative development. The study focuses on interactive methods aimed at immediate response during the listening process, as well as the use of visual aids, action songs, drawing dictation activities, and dialog-based tasks. These techniques contribute to activating pupils' linguistic activity, improving attention and memory, and facilitating the conscious and systematic acquisition of foreign language material. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the methodological significance of the "from listening to speaking" principle, demonstrating its role in the gradual formation of speaking skills. The findings highlight practical approaches to increasing the effectiveness of foreign language instruction in primary education.

Introduction

In our country, special attention is being paid to the teaching and learning of foreign languages at the level of state policy. In particular, "by introducing advanced teaching methods through the use of modern pedagogical and information and communication technologies,

fundamentally improving the system of teaching foreign languages to the younger generation and training specialists who can communicate fluently in these languages, thereby creating conditions and opportunities for them to make full use of the achievements of world civilization and global information resources, and to develop international cooperation and communication” has been identified as one of the priority educational directions of our state. In this regard, in 2012, the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures for Further Improvement of the System of Learning Foreign Languages” was adopted, on the basis of which foreign language classes began to be taught from the first grade of primary school. This, in turn, required significant amendments to the State Educational Standards, and, if necessary, their redevelopment in accordance with European standards of educational quality.

As a result, Order No. 406 of the Minister of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 17, 2021, was adopted. According to Annex 2 of this document, qualification requirements were developed. In this regulatory document, the specific skills to be acquired at each grade level in primary education are clearly defined based on a competency-based approach. Several types of competencies included as key concepts in this document are required to be reflected in the content of curricula, syllabi, and textbooks.

Materials and methods

Communicative competencies, self-development competency, social and civic engagement competency, information literacy competency, national and universal cultural competency, mathematical literacy, and the competency of being informed about and utilizing scientific and technological innovations are among the key skills to be acquired.

According to the scientific research of the German scholar H. Reusch, children who grow up in a linguistically rich environment (for example, those to whom books are frequently read) tend to be more successful at school, as they are able to master their lessons more effectively. In order to achieve the goal of aligning with European standards of education quality, it is essential to develop these competencies. It is noteworthy that the evaluation criteria for each subject, particularly foreign languages, have been integrated into the official framework, and that the assessment system (A1, A1+, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C1, C2 levels) corresponds precisely to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) used in the European education system.

It is well known that learners approach the process of foreign language acquisition differently depending on their age and level of knowledge. This fact must also be taken into account by teachers. The State Educational Standards (SES) and other educational normative

documents provide the legal framework for this process, on the basis of which textbooks are developed and lessons are planned.

Result and discussion

In the European education system, particularly in the German education system, such regulatory documents are based on “Der Gemeinsame Europäische Referenzrahmen für Sprachen (GER)” — the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) — adopted by the Council of Europe in 2001. Relying on this document, State Educational Standards, curricula, syllabi, and subject syllabuses are developed and structured.

An analysis of this document shows that there are several common features in the language competencies targeted for children (ages 4–10), adolescents, and adults: authentic communication, solving real-life tasks and assignments, and the ability to engage in spoken interaction are defined as the main learning objectives.

However, while oral communication is emphasized in preschool and primary education, at later stages of education, all competencies including translation skills are considered equally important. Based on these principles, it is advisable to visually generalize the foreign language competencies that are common to all language learners (see Picture 1).



Picture 1. A Visual Overview of Foreign Language Competencies

In teaching foreign languages to young learners, especially to those who have not yet acquired reading and writing skills, special attention should be given to developing listening comprehension and speaking skills rather than focusing on reading and writing. As stated in the methodology of language acquisition, “in accordance with child development, the receptive skill of listening comprehension precedes reading skills, and the productive skill of speaking precedes writing skills in importance.”

According to Y. Shoenicke, “In learning a foreign or second language, listening serves as the core competence: new concepts and key lexical items (such as words and expressions) are usually delivered orally first, and it is crucial for the learner to perceive and retain this input. This requires the learner to attentively and consciously process acoustic information and to comprehend it. Therefore, foreign language lessons should aim to build and enhance conscious listening comprehension.”

From our perspective, exercises and tasks designed for primary school learners should be structured in a way that enables students to answer questions after the first listening, allowing them to experience a sense of success and achievement. Such exercises should not expect lengthy oral or written responses from students, but should instead involve selecting the correct answer, marking true or false, or choosing appropriate options, which is more effective for this age group.

In the didactics of foreign language teaching in primary education, the possibilities of presenting lesson material can be summarized as follows:

- the teacher shows real objects or their pictures and names them in the target language (students repeat the words);
- the teacher sings action songs and demonstrates corresponding movements to match the lyrics;
- the teacher instructs students to draw specific objects (drawing dictation);
- the teacher reads a text and uses matching images, body language, or facial expressions to convey meaning;
- the teacher reads a dialogue using a puppet or other visual aids.

Such didactic activities are designed to present new lesson material in a way that stimulates linguistic activity in learners, helping them gradually transition from listening to speaking. This natural and developmental language acquisition mechanism can be described as “From Listening to Speaking” (see Picture 2).

Picture 2. Model “From Listening to Speaking”

Differentiating the types of exercises and tasks to be performed at each stage not only by the teacher but also by the learners themselves is essential to effectively develop speaking skills. This targeted approach ensures that learners are gradually guided toward active oral communication. The evidence presented above clearly indicates that in teaching foreign languages to primary school students, “seeing–hearing–understanding” serves as the foundation for the development of oral language skills. However, in this process, the teacher’s role becomes even more crucial: the teacher must encourage students to speak and provide sufficient support. Such scaffolding gradually leads to free communication in the target language. The formation of speaking skills in a foreign language develops through a gradual transition — from imitation to reproduction of remembered content, and finally to free speech production (Picture 3).



Figure 3. Model for Developing Speaking Skills in a Foreign Language for Primary School Learners

It should also be noted that in developing speaking skills, exercises such as self-talk, imitation and repeated speaking, and role-playing dialogues have proven to be highly effective during the experimental phase of the study.

In the field of foreign language didactics, numerous academic sources have actively debated over the past decade at what age, in which grade, and at what stage of education children should begin learning reading comprehension and writing skills. As mentioned above, listening comprehension and speaking skills are crucial at the initial stages of foreign language instruction. A critical view of introducing reading and writing skills at the very beginning of pre-primary and primary education is frequently found in subject literature.

For example, in Germany, where each federal state has its own education system, several curricula emphasize that reading and writing in a foreign language should begin only after literacy in the mother tongue (German) has been fully developed — typically from Grade 3 (around age 8).

In contrast, similar to practices in many European countries, in Uzbekistan, writing is introduced from the beginning of foreign language instruction, for example, by providing the written form of words beneath pictures. This means that children start learning reading and writing from the earliest stages. There are several scientific and pedagogical justifications supporting this approach:

- Children are naturally curious and interested in how new words are written;
- Children are visual learners and quickly become accustomed to typical letter combinations in their mother tongue;
- Children compare and identify similarities and differences between their native and foreign language;
- Children tend to develop their own “writing language”; if writing is not introduced early, this can lead to misunderstandings or frustration later in the learning process.

In the methodology of foreign language teaching in primary education, many recommendations focus on developing reading and writing literacy. These include: reading

aloudly, writing after pronunciation and comprehension, understanding written forms before reading and writing, reading softly at first and then loudly, and various practical exercises to support these stages.

For example, the “read softly first, then loudly” activity may be organized as follows:

1. Students silently read familiar words or short sentences to themselves.
2. They match the words with corresponding pictures or arrange the text in the correct order.
3. Finally, they read the words, sentences, or short texts aloud.

Young foreign language learners typically begin writing by copying individual words or short texts. Through this, they come to understand that written forms support and reinforce language learning.

According to primary education methodology, teaching writing through games is particularly effective for young learners. This requires maximum sensory involvement and active physical engagement.

During the experiment, the mechanism for teaching writing skills was enhanced through the “Syllable Jumping” game (Silbenhüpfen). Several students line up next to a wall. Based on the number of syllables in a word written on a card, they jump accordingly (once for one syllable, twice for two syllables, etc.). The first student to reach the opposite wall wins. The student holding the card (or the teacher) reads the word syllable by syllable, and others repeat it and perform the corresponding action. The teacher provides general supervision.

This game can be modified — for example, instead of jumping, students can clap the number of syllables in the word.

Other effective writing games include:

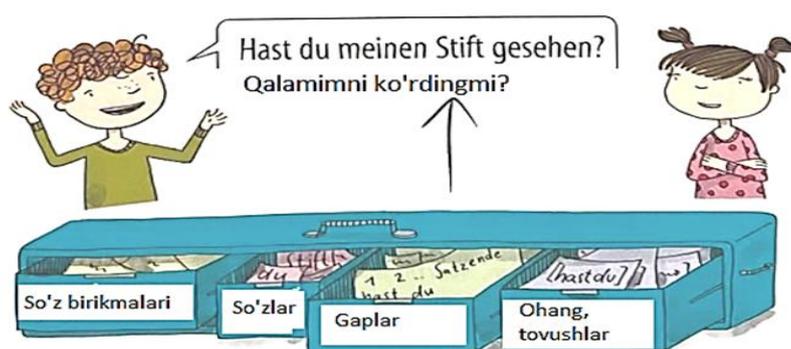
- “Find the Words” – A word or phrase is cut into separate letters and placed face down. One student reveals the letters in sequence while another guesses the word or phrase.
- “Typing Machine” – Two teams stand on opposite sides of the classroom, each holding letters. The teacher says a word, and the team that arranges it correctly first wins.
- “Shopping List” – Two students read items from a shopping list in one corner of the classroom, while another group writes them down in another corner. “Shoppers” walk between them, engaging in short dialogues.
- “Running Dictation” – Two identical texts are posted on the classroom walls. Student A runs to the text, reads and memorizes a phrase, and then dictates it to Student B, who writes it down. The roles are then reversed. The activity continues until the text is completed. The teacher monitors accuracy.

These activities not only make the writing process engaging but also integrate listening, speaking, and reading with writing.

However, the skills of listening comprehension, speaking, writing, and reading comprehension alone are not sufficient for successful communication. To achieve real communicative competence, students also need to master linguistic resources (Figure 4), such as:

- recognizing and pronouncing sounds and intonation;
- applying correct word and sentence stress;
- acquiring a minimal active vocabulary;
- understanding and using basic grammatical structures (e.g., declarative and interrogative sentence patterns).

Based on this, it can be concluded that students should memorize and actively use frequently used word combinations and simple sentence patterns in their speech to support effective communication.



Picture 4. Linguistic resources required for communication within language skills.

Language learning and the development of language skills take place through sounds. "In foreign language classes at the primary education level, it is essential to focus on helping students acquire correct pronunciation and intonation from the very beginning. However, it should also be noted that constantly correcting mistakes can discourage children from speaking and diminish their enjoyment of the learning process. In such cases, it is more effective to simply repeat the correct pronunciation and intonation patterns."

In teaching foreign languages to young learners, perceiving pronunciation and intonation, such as distinguishing sounds, recognizing stress at the syllable, word, and sentence level, differentiating short and long sounds, and identifying word boundaries is crucial for successful communication in the target language. One of the most central tools in communication is vocabulary. Learners who are just beginning to study a foreign language find

it difficult to communicate without sufficient vocabulary. Although nonverbal tools such as body movements and facial expressions may support understanding, a minimal vocabulary is still essential for effective interaction.

Research in the field shows that an average of about 8,000 receptive (passive) and approximately 2,000 productive (active) vocabulary items are needed for everyday communication and interaction. It is also noted that young learners can effectively learn no more than ten new words per lesson, while older learners can handle up to twenty or slightly more. When teaching lexical items to young learners, it is important to emphasize that language acquisition occurs through linguistic activity. Students acquire vocabulary by listening, understanding, and using lexical units in meaningful communication situations.

Conclusion

In primary foreign language education, the development of accurate pronunciation and intonation, along with the acquisition of a minimal vocabulary, constitutes a fundamental component of early linguistic competence. These foundational skills provide the basis for effective oral communication and help learners gain confidence in using the target language. To foster active speech and communicative competence, it is essential to engage students in a variety of communication-oriented exercises that integrate both listening and speaking activities. Such exercises may include interactive dialogues, role-plays, repetition tasks, and phonetic drills that encourage immediate verbal responses. Furthermore, the simultaneous development of phonetic, lexical, and contextual skills supports the gradual formation of natural communication patterns, enabling learners to understand and produce meaningful utterances in real-life situations. This integrated approach not only enhances students' language acquisition but also promotes motivation, cognitive engagement, and long-term retention of the learned material. Consequently, prioritizing listening and speaking from the earliest stages of instruction is critical for establishing a solid foundation for further language learning and for developing autonomous communicative abilities.

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