

English teaching features on the basis of Montessori system among preschool age children (working experience)

Liliya Nazimovna Akhsanova, Gulnara Ildarovna Salyakhova

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

IIRHOS, High School of Foreign Languages and Translation,

Department of English in the sphere of high technologies

E-mail: ahlina@mail.ru, gulnarik_sal@mail.ru

Contact: +79272482504, +79178637538

Abstract

The modern world expands the boundaries of international communication and sets a number of tasks for the Russian Federation education system, including the upbringing of a competitive person, capable to realize himself in his own country and abroad. The educational environment has many methods of teaching English to preschool age children. A special place among them is occupied by Maria Montessori's pedagogy the high efficiency of which was checked personally by the article authors, as they were working according to it for more than five years.

M. Montessori system is based on maximum freedom and an individual approach. It motivates children to study - they learn on the basis of interest exclusively. An important point for the development of the system is that this technique is not a closed one and it requires a creative approach from a teacher who enriches it with his own experience and knowledge, improving and complementing it.

This work is dedicated to the identification of English language teaching features for preschoolers. The study result allows to assert confidently that the Montessori's pedagogy is a constantly evolving system, the arsenal of which has practice techniques verified by years which require a creative approach from a teacher, the integration in the system of training concerning rhythmic, musical and regional geographic components, graphic activity, theatrical art, which leads to a high level of a foreign language mastery by pre-school children.

Keywords: Montessori, pedagogy, English, preschoolers, preschool age.

INTRODUCTION

Today there is a tangible rise of interest concerning the teaching of English among children, which is determined by the positive processes occurring in the economic, social and foreign policy of our country. The Concept of the Federal Target Program "The development of education during the years 2016-2020" expressly states that education shall be directed to "... the development of a competitive man potential, capable to realize himself not only within our country, but also on a global scale" [1]. As studies and many years' experience of teachers, researchers and trainers show the best age to start learning a foreign language is the preschool age [2;3].

There are many methods of teaching English to preschool age children in order educational environment. After a brief review one may identify the main ones: N. Zaitseva's method, Glenn Doman's method, Waldorf pedagogy, playing technique, communication technique, learning through video, project technique and mixed technique. A special place among these is occupied by Montessori's pedagogy the features of which will be considered most thoroughly. The relevance of this topic is proved by the following facts. Maria Montessori's technique is recognized worldwide. According to the decision of UNESCO, her name was included in a short list of teachers who had a great influence on the course of pedagogical thinking during the XX-th century (John Dewey, Georg Kerschensteiner, Anton Makarenko, Maria Montessori). She was twice nominated for the Nobel Prize. The institutions working according to the Montessori's method are listed in the Guinness Book of Records. Montessori's methods have strong positions in our country; there are new centers and kindergartens which apply it in their work; professional training institutions for teacher training appeared; scientific and practical conferences are held regularly.

Initially, the method was developed for the children with delayed mental development and a complex adaptation to the outside world. At that the initial task was not the increase of intellectual development indicators but the adaptation of children to society. The results exceeded all expectations. Children caught up to their peers in mental development. Today, this technique is used also to train healthy children. Briefly, its main principle can be put into the words, expressed by Maria Montessori: "Freedom is the only remedy, which leads to the fullest development of a character, mind, and senses and gives a tutor the opportunity to observe quietly the "miracle of growth" [4].

Moreover, we may highlight the undoubted advantages of this technique:

- Training takes place without an adult help. Students independently organize and plan their activities;
- Mutual aid principle takes place: seniors become more responsible, juniors become more confident;
- Students gradually acquire the ability to search for the answers to their questions, find and correct their mistakes;
- Methodology actively develops logic, intelligence, speech, fine motor skills and the ability to introspection.
- In the end, this makes it possible to "... learn to live independently, make decisions and take responsibility for oneself, for one's own actions and deeds, for your life and then for the lives of loved ones " [5].

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The technique involves three types of lessons: individual, group, total (the entire class is engaged). Each class works according to the following principle: freedom within certain limits. The program contains a set of the most important rules which vary depending on the age of children, but it is always based on the basic principle - the respect for yourself, for each other and to the world.

Each child works in an individual comfortable pace, which he chooses himself, alone or together with others. A teacher, based on his observations in respect of children chooses new activities and new materials, which he can offer to one child, a group of children or to all children. Teachers do not set any timeframes, do not make any haste, and do not force children to perform an exercise. The technique also allows us to develop a child's personality by the means of foreign languages. This involves the mastery of a direct (speaking, listening) and an indirect (reading, writing) forms of communication by children. The subject part of training content is based on a child's knowledge about environment (things he says, a way he listens to, what to read, the method and the content of writing), reflects the familiar child's sphere of communication: social, household, educational and labor, cultural and gaming. The essence of Montessori's method is in a free work for children within the developing object-spatial environment created by a teacher. This environment involves the use of Montessori's materials (manuals). Its special feature is that a child can work alone with it, and the manual is based on "error control", that is, a child may correct his mistakes by himself. These materials correspond to different zones in Montessori's environment. A teacher guides child's activity, giving it greater autonomy than in the traditional education system. According to Maria Montessori's method the classes for preschool children differ from normal lessons, they do not include standard exercises and challenging assignments.

RESULTS

Using this technique, the authors of the article developed subject - spatial environment of a foreign language. It is based on speech development area, the learning to read and write and sensory education area. Since the development of any language develops primarily the communicative abilities of a child, the zones of traveling and geography are also included here.

In order to prepare children for reading and writing frame-inserts are used widely. The game material of M. Montessori's frame-inserts introduces the sensory standards for a child, develops the ability to distinguish the form of plane figures and their location visually and by touch, trains an optical-spatial thinking, teaches to recognize shapes and colors, develops observation, attention, good eye, fine motor skills and the coordination of hand movements. Children encircle the figures of frames and inserts, line them with colored pencils and memorize English matching of concepts easily, for example: "blue, pink, a square, a star", and also make syntagms or phrases: "It's a little red oval; I like this black square; a yellow house, a big star".

At the same time a child learns the basic mathematical knowledge ("Count the figures ...", "One, two, three ..."), develops his thinking ("Find a red oval", "Show me a black square", "What is missing?").

The study of sounds in Montessori's system also has its own peculiarities. There is the concept of "phonetic letter", which corresponds to the sound entered using the manual of so-called "rough characters". It also may include "phonetic words" which a child will be able to read easily pronouncing each letter in the way it was called during the presentation of rough letters. At that he easily combines these sounds in a word.

Based on their own experience, the authors of the article recommend exercises to master the English alphabet letters.

1. Outline the letters by an index and a middle finger (or just an index one), pronounce them after a teacher. The next stage of writing a letter will be a letter silhouette drawing in the air with a finger. This exercise develops visual, tactile and auditory sensation. They help a child to learn the symbolic image of sounds.

2. Put the letters in the various items or give them to children whose names begin with such letters or sounds.

3. Turn letter cards face-down. A child turns over a card, outlines a letter with a finger, says the sound loud and calls the word that begins with that letter.

4. Put the cards face up. A child outlines a letter and names it with closed (tied) eyes. Thus, the perception is set here by direct tactile sensing of a letter. Through these exercises a graphic sign image is fixed in a much shorter period than it is possible at an ordinary method of teaching, when a child is guided only by a visual image of a letter.

Rough figures are used during the teaching of numbers in English. The exercises with these figures can be performed similar to the letter learning tasks.

A big help in learning to read is a pink and blue series of phonetic material: pink material comprises three-letter words, and blue material comprises longer phonetic words. This is related to the peculiarities of English language, as Englishmen make an accent on one syllable in each word. In long words unstressed syllables are swallowed and ended with indistinct vowel sounds. Therefore, according to the Montessori system a child is provided with short, clear-sounding words at first, and then he learns to work individually with longer words. In order to develop a sure reading of short words aloud the author of this article uses the following exercises with phonetic pink material:

1. The exercise with cards and words. A child puts the items in a row calling them. Further he puts word cards which are the names of objects. A teacher asks the child to name each sound of a word at first slowly and then faster, until the sounds are not developed in a word, and then match each card with a subject.

2. The exercise with cards and images. A child is offered with word cards, which he applies to the corresponding images.

3. The exercise with the lists of words. Offer a child to read word lists posted on a sheet. These sheets may be placed on the walls and changed regularly. A child can read at any time.

4. The writing exercise using cereals. First a child outlines a rough letter, and then he repeats the image on semola using a stick.

These exercises are designed to help a child to gain more confidence in reading and proceed to reading in silence. Blue phonetic material allows a child to learn to read two-, three-syllable words, doubled with consonants and teach him to put an accent.

During the study of phonetic grammar in Montessori system pedagogy the color coding of different parts of speech is used. Thus, the articles are indicated in gray, nouns - in black, adjectives - in blue, verbs - in red. Later, a child becomes acquainted with adverbs (orange), prepositions (green), pronouns (purple), conjunctions (pink) and interjections (yellow). The exercises, conducted with children in groups to develop phonetic grammar may be used as an example. Pupils are asked to bring or give certain objects: "Give me a red pencil", "Show me a big book" ... Children do this exercise several times. Then it is offered to bring a thing, omitting its name. For example, "Bring me a blue...". Children bring various items randomly, but they are rejected until a correct item is provided: "No, it's not this thing", "No, bring me another thing". After that, the item is called. This exercise reinforces the unconscious understanding of noun function and importance.

Phonograms and "non phonetic" letters are the most difficult ones for a child. Montessori's pedagogy uses special exercises and materials: cards with phonograms, pictures, movable alphabet, which is actively used in the work. After the exercises with the use of aids a child learns to read and distinguish different letter combinations, developing reading and spelling skills. In addition to teaching and language games, a lot of outdoor games is used in practice, the purpose of which is to develop coherent reading skills, the feeling of the read texts. For example, there is the following exercise. Students are offered with strips on which the tasks are written ("Find a black cat", "Open a big cupboard"). Words in tasks are very simple and entertaining at the same time. For example,

these are the commands which allow a baby to find a hidden object, a prize, a treasure in the form of a quest.

There is a developed system of techniques, exercises and materials in order to enrich the vocabulary of children in this method. During the study of the topic "colors" colored plates, didactic and outdoor games are used.

1. The work with colored plates (picturing of primary color objects). It is necessary to arrange the plates in a row vertically or diagonally, fold a spiral (a child takes colored cards, for example, "flower", names a color and puts them into a spiral "a pink flower, a blue flower").

2. Choose any color card (a red house), and pick some items of the same color: (a red bus, a red roof, a red leaf).

3. Find the same color objects. For example: (a black table - a black pencil, a green bag - a green pen). Or find this color in own clothes or in a schoolroom. In order to master numerous forms of behavior in society by children, such forms of work as short conversations, dialogue, role-playing games, the elements of staging and puppetry and games are used: ("Greetings", "My name", "My friends", "My family"). Using these lessons the models of behavior are developed in different situations. Within Montessori system such exercises are conducted using the mother tongue in a circle before training. For example: "- Hello, dog; - Hello, Sasha!; -How are you?; -Good, Thank you; -And you?; -It's so-so.; -Good-Bye.; -Bye."

Within the regional geographic education the children get acquainted with the basics of sciences such as geography, biology and history. A child learns to perceive the world as a whole, studies countries and continents, their history, the names of the seas and oceans, as well as features of plant, animal and people lives.

DISCUSSIONS

There is quite an extensive developmental material for better learning of this knowledge: pictures, puzzles, maps and flags of different countries and presentations. During the preparation for the classes it is important to find the ability to integrate English language with the visual arts, music and linguistic country study. In its work, the authors of the article seek to expand the geography of the surveyed countries: it is not just the UK, America, Australia and other English-speaking countries, but also Turkey, India, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, etc.

Country study classes (especially with the use of foreign language) significantly expand vocabulary, develop mental outlook, as well as develop the respect for the nature and culture of other countries. In Montessori's system the classes should include the role, cognitive, linguistic games, because at this age a game is the way of initiation to the adult world for a child, the way of knowing. Besides, it is necessary to create the atmosphere of immersion in the culture, life and traditions of the studied countries. This is achieved by the elements of costume dramatization, music, dancing and the symbols of a country. For example, the authors of the article and children created the flags and emblems using applications, performed a collective work on Big Ben tower modeling (from salt dough); they painted the model of a London bus using "clay image" technique, produced a national Scottish musical instrument - a bagpipe; conducted a tea party according to "Five o'clock" topic; organized the traditional English game of "Croquet"; we listened to the national ethnic music; we taught children the elements of national dances ("Jig", "Polka", "Sirtaki", "Flamenco", "Tarantella", "Belly dance", etc.); created the elements of national costumes with children (Scottish, Indian, Spanish, Japanese, French ones, etc.); acquainted with the national cuisine of different countries; conducted workshops on Japanese calligraphy; We built the model of the Great Wall of China and a double-decker London bus from the pieces of furniture, etc.

M. Montessori paid a great attention to the development of a child's independence. The creative activity in English develops and promotes it. Classes become bright, extraordinary and memorable for children. You can use a lot of tools and techniques. It is necessary to know not only the method, but also to integrate it, to look for new approaches, to adapt training to local conditions and an individual development of children. The main thing is that the whole process of a foreign language learning helps to develop a harmonious personality of a child, who is mentally, physically and emotionally healthy.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion may be based on own observations and the article author conclusions. It turned out that you may teach without assessments and penalties, on the basis of respect for a child's personality. The organization of teaching English for preschoolers using Maria Montessori's method significantly increases the effectiveness of English language mastering by children, contributes to the development of their personal qualities, increases the level of motivation to learning, satisfies the educational interests of children, develops their communication skills, expands the worldview of children, helps to create a more complete picture of the world, and it makes a positive influence on the development of readiness to school among preschool children.

In the process of experiential learning the authors have tested the system of exercises and materials in the form of Montessori's manual, which is an important and effective component in teaching English language among pre-school children.

The study showed that Montessori's pedagogy is constantly evolving and has the techniques tested by years of practice which require creative teacher's approach, the integration of rhythmic and musical, regional geographic components, graphic activity, theater arts, creative tasks in the system of education. These components form a very important quality - a high level of a foreign language mastery among pre-school children.

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