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Developing Foreign Language Teaching: Regional Experience

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to describe the regional educational experience in the field of the early teaching of foreign languages. The importance of developing education by means of foreign language is caused by the requirements of the Federal state educational standard in preschool education. The article highlights the necessity in developing foreign language teaching. The characteristics of the experimental program of creative developing of preschool children by means of English (goals, approach, content, methods, principles) are outlined in the paper. The program is based on the methodology of Communicative Language Teaching and on integrating in the process of teaching different kinds of children's activities.

The requirements to the professional competence of a teacher working with young children are described in the article.

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1. Introduction

At present the early teaching of foreign languages is considered to be one of the most important stages in the development of the continuous language education in our country. Scientists that are engaged in the early teaching of foreign languages agree on the point that there are many advantages of the early teaching of foreign languages: it is the most favorable period for language development (up to 8 years old) and it should be used to create a solid basis for further linguistic background; the early education of children allows a maximum training time for learning a foreign language - the earlier we start, the more time we have to study it; from an early age, getting acquainted with the culture of the target language, we educate children in tolerance, a sense of belonging to others; the study of

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a foreign language at an early age, along with practical relevance, develops children's ability to comprehend their mother tongue better; language learning improves children's memory, their thinking, perception, imagination, etc. And besides the early foreign language learning not only promotes more robust and free practical knowledge of it, but also carries a great potential for children's development (intellectual, moral, creative). UN documents and especially the Convention on the rights of the child based on the primacy of universal human values and the harmonious development of personality, the recognition of the child part of humanity says: "the education of the child should be directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child to their fullest potential" (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1991).

2. Program of creative developing of children

Methodists of the Department of foreign languages of our university named after I.A. Bunin, together with the teachers of music, art history have elaborated a program of creative developing of children named "Rainbow". The purpose of the program is to develop a child according to his age peculiarities and individual features, education in the spirit of universal values. The main feature of the program is an integrated approach to the education, development and learning of children. Classes in the section "Rainbow" are divided into four main blocks: linguistic (English language); rhythmic (dance, ritmoplastika); painting; music (songs, outdoor games, mini-performances). Classes in a foreign language with the integration of music, rhythm, fine art elaborate a kind of a multicultural environment for the education and upbringing of young children. Let us consider the linguistic block in a more detailed way. First of all, two words about the choice of the language. Parents choose English and neglect other languages (French, German). The reasons for English as a first foreign language are evident. In public eyes English enjoys a higher social-economic status as the language of international communication in politics, business and education and is seen as a must for the future successful socialisation of the child and making a career.

It is well known that the key figure in the pedagogical process is the child. And in our program a child-centred approach is planned. A child-centred approach encourages active participation and involvement as well as allowing for a personalised, individual response. The fundamental objectives for learning a foreign language in Studio "Rainbow" are the following: to develop skills, to use a foreign language for communication with the account of language abilities and needs of preschool children; to develop elementary communicative skills in listening, speaking, writing and reading; to develop child's personality, his/her linguistic skills and such psychic functions as memory, imagination etc; to develop motivation for further foreign language learning; to develop communication, cognitive and intellectual abilities of a young child and "learning to learn" skill; to develop interest to other languages and cultures and to motivate children to learn other languages; to provide for further communicative-psychological adaptation to the new language and culture; to develop the ability - to overcome barriers when using a language for communication - to provide knowledge of elementary linguistic phenomena. Special attention is paid to the early introduction into the world of target culture, especially the children's culture like folklore, games, stories, tales and rhymes.

The program is based on the methodology of Communicative Language Teaching and on integrating in the process of teaching different kinds of children's activities. "The child's activity is both the basis and the source of intellectual and communicative development" (Protasova & Rodina, 2010). We plan the rapid change of the child's activity (physical flexing, musical-rhythmic gymnastics, motor-speech exercises, outdoor games) during the lessons. Change of the activity saves children from fatigue and boredom. The variety of children's activities are carefully selected in accordance with the syllabus and the stages of language skills development which helps the teacher to assess the progress of young learners. It also aims to make the teacher's job easier by conducting a system of lessons gradually leading to the development of foreign language skills. According to our program learning a foreign language is planned as a game-like activity. Engaging children in a game can make any language unit communicative. "Learn playing!" is our motto. Game- and play-like activities create conditions not only for teaching children English, but also provide for the consolidation of elementary mathematical concepts, language development, development of skills of logical thinking, acquaint kids with the world around them. The children are conducted in small groups (8-10 per group). Thus on the one hand each child receives maximum attention and support from the teacher, and on the other hand playing in a group children learn to communicate and adopt new rules of conduct in the team. Children usually have 2 classes a week, each class lasts from 25 to 30 minutes. The

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