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FORMATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article examines the features of developing foreign language communicative competence in primary school students. Special attention is given to the importance of early foreign language learning, the significance of cognitive and social aspects of education, and the methods that contribute to effective language acquisition. Modern pedagogical technologies are considered, including game-based methods, multimedia resources, and the principles of embodied learning. The article analyzes the challenges associated with teaching a foreign language at the primary level and proposes possible solutions.

Keywords: foreign language, communicative competence, primary school, game-based methods, multimedia technologies, embodied learning, cognitive development.

The development of foreign language communicative competence in primary school students is a crucial task in modern pedagogy, as this stage is critical for shaping children's linguistic abilities. In today's world, where knowledge of foreign languages provides access to international communication, education, and career opportunities, early language learning has become a priority in many countries' educational systems. The primary school years (ages 6 to 10) represent a period of high cognitive plasticity, making children particularly receptive to acquiring new language material. Research in cognitive psychology confirms that at this age, children adapt more easily to new linguistic systems due to their strong imitative abilities, high memory retention, and lack of fear of making mistakes [2]. Additionally, early phonetic development helps children acquire more natural pronunciation, making language learning especially effective during this period.

However, teaching foreign languages in primary school presents several challenges. Traditional teaching methods, which rely on memorizing grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, do not always align with the cognitive and emotional characteristics of young learners. Due to their developmental stage, children do not perceive language as a set of rules but rather acquire it through natural communication. Therefore, foreign language instruction in primary school should incorporate play-based learning, elements of the communicative approach, and multimedia technologies that engage students in the learning process through active interaction. In recent years, there has been growing interest in methods that immerse children in the language environment. These methods include communicative techniques, project-based learning, theatrical performances, and

embodied learning strategies that connect language acquisition with movement and sensory experiences. Studies suggest that such methods not only enhance motivation for language learning but also help develop strong communicative skills. Thus, the relevance of this study lies in the need to identify effective approaches to foreign language education in primary schools. This article examines key aspects of developing foreign language communicative competence, analyzes modern pedagogical technologies, and proposes solutions to existing challenges in teaching young learners foreign languages.

According to the Critical Period Hypothesis proposed by Lenneberg [5], children acquire phonetics, vocabulary, and grammatical structures more effectively at an early age. During this period, the brain exhibits greater neural plasticity, enabling children to absorb language naturally, much like they acquire their first language. This phase not only lays the foundation for linguistic competence but also contributes to the development of intercultural awareness, which plays a crucial role in future socialization and academic success. Early exposure to a foreign language fosters an intuitive understanding of linguistic structures, pronunciation, and even cultural nuances, helping children develop a more authentic accent and deeper linguistic proficiency compared to those who start learning later in life. Furthermore, research indicates that early foreign language acquisition positively influences various cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and analytical thinking [4]. Studies have shown that bilingual or multilingual children demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and an enhanced ability to switch between tasks. Learning a second language strengthens neural connections and improves executive functioning, which benefits overall intellectual

development. Additionally, early exposure to multiple languages has been linked to improved creativity, higher adaptability in learning new concepts, and even a delay in age-related cognitive decline later in life. Another important aspect of early foreign language learning is its impact on academic performance. Research suggests that children who study foreign languages from a young age tend to perform better in subjects such as mathematics, reading comprehension, and critical thinking. The mental discipline required to learn and differentiate between multiple languages enhances overall learning strategies, helping students become more effective learners in general. Moreover, multilingual individuals often exhibit superior problem-solving skills, as they are accustomed to processing and analyzing information from different linguistic and cultural perspectives.

In addition to cognitive benefits, early language learning also enhances social and emotional development. Exposure to different languages and cultures at an early stage fosters empathy, cultural tolerance, and a broader worldview. Children who learn foreign languages early tend to be more open-minded, adaptable, and confident in cross-cultural communication. This not only prepares them for global citizenship but also gives them a competitive advantage in an increasingly interconnected world. Given these numerous advantages, integrating foreign language education into early childhood curricula is essential for maximizing children's linguistic potential and cognitive development. The next section will explore effective teaching strategies for fostering foreign language communicative competence in primary school students.

Key Approaches to Developing Foreign Language Communicative Competence. Developing foreign language communicative competence in primary school students requires a diverse set of teaching strategies that align with children's cognitive and social development. Effective methodologies must engage students in interactive, meaningful, and engaging activities that promote natural language acquisition. This section explores three key approaches: game-based learning, embodied learning, and multimedia-assisted instruction, all of which contribute to creating a dynamic and immersive language-learning environment.

Game-based learning is a highly effective tool for fostering communicative skills among young learners. It creates an engaging, low-stress environment where students can practice the target language naturally. Role-playing activities, songs, rhymes, and interactive tasks help build an immersive language atmosphere and reduce language anxiety, making learning more enjoyable and effective. One widely recognized method is Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by James Asher [1]. TPR combines language learning with physical movement, requiring students to perform actions in response to verbal commands given in the target language. This method enhances vocabulary retention and reinforces grammatical structures by linking verbal input with motor responses. Because children are naturally active learners, integrating movement helps reinforce learning through multiple sensory channels, ultimately leading to stronger long-term retention. In

addition to TPR, other play-based strategies such as storytelling games, interactive group challenges, and board games can encourage spontaneous speech production. For instance, role-playing games allow students to assume different identities and engage in meaningful dialogues, helping them develop confidence and fluency in a relaxed, supportive setting.

Embodied learning refers to the integration of physical activities into the language-learning process. Research suggests that movement-based learning enhances memory retention, engagement, and cognitive flexibility. This approach is based on the idea that cognition is deeply connected to sensory and motor experiences, making physical interaction with language a crucial component of effective learning. Incorporating gestures and physical actions into foreign language instruction allows students to associate words with real-world experiences, leading to deeper comprehension. For example, using hand gestures to illustrate meanings of words, mimicking actions while learning new verbs, or enacting short dialogues with movement-based cues can make abstract linguistic concepts more tangible. Another innovative application of embodied learning is language quests, where students move around the classroom or school environment in search of answers to questions in the target language. These activities encourage active participation, collaborative learning, and practical application of language skills in real-world contexts. Additionally, incorporating dance, music, and drama into language lessons fosters an immersive experience. For example, using dramatization and storytelling not only enhances vocabulary acquisition but also promotes emotional engagement, helping learners form meaningful connections with the language.

Advancements in educational technology have transformed foreign language teaching, providing interactive, multimodal, and adaptive learning opportunities. Multimedia tools cater to different learning styles by incorporating audio, video, text, and interactive elements, aligning with the principles of multimodal learning theory [3]. These tools create a rich linguistic environment where students can practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in an integrated manner. One of the most effective ways to use technology in language learning is through educational applications and digital platforms. Programs such as Duolingo, Kahoot!, and Quizlet offer game-based exercises that reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in an engaging format. Additionally, language-learning apps often use adaptive learning algorithms, personalizing content based on individual student progress. Interactive smart boards and digital storytelling platforms also enhance the learning experience. Teachers can use multimedia presentations, animated stories, and interactive quizzes to make lessons more visually and aurally stimulating. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) tools further enhance engagement by allowing students to experience real-life language immersion without leaving the classroom. Furthermore, online communication tools such as video conferencing and collaborative digital projects connect students with native speakers and peers from different countries. Virtual

pen-pal programs and online discussion forums provide authentic communicative experiences, helping students develop cultural awareness and real-world conversational skills. The development of communicative competence in young learners requires a multi-faceted, interactive, and student-centered approach. Game-based learning, embodied learning, and multimedia-assisted instruction all contribute to a stimulating and immersive language-learning environment. By integrating these methods, educators can create a more natural and effective foreign language learning process, fostering greater fluency, motivation, and cognitive development in primary school students.

While early foreign language learning offers numerous benefits, its successful implementation in primary education is often accompanied by several challenges. These challenges stem from pedagogical, institutional, and socio-cultural factors, which can hinder the effective development of communicative competence in young learners. One of the primary difficulties in foreign language acquisition for young learners is the limited exposure to real-life language use. In non-English-speaking environments (or any other foreign language being taught), children often lack opportunities for authentic language interaction outside the classroom. Since language learning is a social and interactive process, immersion and frequent practice are crucial for achieving fluency. However, in many educational settings, students only engage with the foreign language for a few hours per week, which is insufficient for developing strong communicative skills. Research suggests that language acquisition is most effective when learners are constantly exposed to meaningful, context-rich input. Without real-world exposure, students may struggle with oral fluency, pronunciation, and spontaneous speech production.

Another significant challenge is the disparity in access to high-quality teaching materials and technological tools. While multimedia learning, online applications, and smart classroom technologies can significantly enhance language instruction, not all schools—especially those in rural or underfunded areas—have the necessary infrastructure. Many institutions still rely on traditional textbooks, which may not fully support communicative and interactive learning approaches. The lack of modern teaching aids, such as interactive whiteboards, digital storytelling platforms, and augmented reality applications, limits the diversity of instructional methods that can be used in the classroom. The effectiveness of foreign language instruction largely depends on the teacher's expertise in both language proficiency and modern pedagogical methodologies. Many teachers, especially in non-immersion schools, may not have sufficient training in communicative language teaching (CLT), embodied learning, or game-based methodologies. Additionally, teachers often face curriculum constraints, where rigid lesson structures and standardized assessments do not allow for creativity, student-centered activities, and interactive learning methods. For young learners, engaging and dynamic approaches—such as role-playing, task-based learning, and cross-curricular integration—are crucial for motivation and long-term retention.

By shifting towards performance-based evaluation, schools can ensure that students are not only memorizing language structures but also developing functional and spontaneous communication skills. Language learning, especially in the early years, is heavily influenced by students' motivation, confidence, and attitudes towards the target language. However, young learners may develop anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or frustration if they struggle with pronunciation or comprehension. This issue is particularly relevant in traditional classrooms, where students may feel pressured to produce correct answers rather than experiment and engage freely with the language. To create a more positive and motivating learning environment, teachers should: Foster a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere, where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process rather than failures. Integrate storytelling, humor, and play-based learning, ensuring that lessons are engaging and emotionally rewarding. Use student-centered activities, allowing children to express themselves creatively through role-play, drawing, music, and movement. Encourage personalized learning goals, where students track their own progress and celebrate their achievements. Despite the challenges associated with early foreign language learning, strategic curriculum planning, teacher training, and technological integration can significantly enhance communicative competence in young learners. By addressing the lack of language practice, resource constraints, teacher preparedness, assessment methods, and motivational barriers, educators can create a more effective, engaging, and sustainable language-learning environment. Investing in innovative methodologies and inclusive language programs will not only improve student outcomes but also contribute to the development of globally competent, multilingual individuals.

To enhance the effectiveness of foreign language instruction in primary schools, a comprehensive approach should be adopted, integrating both traditional and innovative teaching strategies. One of the key aspects is the development of communicative skills through role-playing, storytelling, and interactive games that encourage spontaneous speech production. These activities create a natural language environment, helping students to use the language in meaningful contexts rather than simply memorizing isolated vocabulary and grammar rules. Another important method is the use of gestures, movement, and visual aids to reinforce language comprehension and memory retention. Embodied learning, which connects physical actions with linguistic input, has been shown to enhance cognitive processing and long-term retention of new information. Teachers can incorporate techniques such as using hand signals for specific words, acting out verbs, or engaging students in activities that require movement to help them internalize language structures more effectively. Integrating digital technologies into the learning process also plays a crucial role in modern language education. Educational applications, virtual simulations, and interactive whiteboards provide students with a diverse and engaging way to practice language skills. Digital tools allow for personalized learning experiences, enabling students to progress at their own

pace while receiving instant feedback. Platforms like Duolingo, Quizlet, and Kahoot! make language practice more enjoyable, fostering motivation and sustained interest in learning. In addition to classroom-based strategies, organizing language camps and extracurricular clubs can provide students with valuable opportunities for real-life language practice. These settings encourage communication in an informal and supportive environment, helping children build fluency and confidence. Interaction with peers and exposure to authentic language use outside the classroom significantly contribute to the development of communicative competence. Research confirms that a blended approach, combining structured instruction with playful and experience-based learning, enhances student motivation and supports the development of long-term communicative competence. Additionally, fostering a positive and low-stress classroom atmosphere encourages students to take risks in language use, making learning both effective and enjoyable. By implementing a combination of these methods, educators can create a rich linguistic environment that facilitates natural language acquisition and prepares young learners for further linguistic and academic success.

The formation of foreign language communicative competence in primary school students plays a crucial role in developing their linguistic abilities, cognitive functions, and intercultural awareness. Early foreign language learning contributes to better acquisition of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary while also positively impacting memory, attention, and analytical thinking. However, to achieve high learning efficiency, it is essential to consider children's developmental characteristics and apply modern pedagogical approaches.

Game-based methods, embodied learning, and multimedia technologies create a favorable language environment that actively engages students in the learning process. The use of role-playing games, movements, gestures, and digital tools makes foreign language acquisition more natural and productive. At the

same time, challenges such as a lack of language practice, limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and difficulties in assessing communicative skills must be addressed.

To improve teaching methodologies, a comprehensive combination of traditional and innovative approaches is necessary, including the active use of interactive methods, the establishment of language clubs and camps, and the development of assessment systems for oral communication and communicative skills. Research confirms that integrating various methods enhances student motivation, supports language development, and fosters strong communication skills in a foreign language.

Thus, the successful development of foreign language communicative competence requires flexibility, creativity, and continuous improvement of teaching strategies. Further research in language education will help develop even more effective methodologies, ensuring high-quality foreign language instruction from an early age.

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