
INDICATORS FOR MEASURING DIALOGIC SPEECH AT PRE-SCHOOL AGE

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Abstract: One of the most important achievements of child development is the learning of a language and its activation through speech. Ferdinand de Saussure believes that “people use the rules of language to produce speech” [1]. In his essay “Course in general linguistics” he distinguishes between language, speech and speech activity. In his view, language is an element of speech activity, but it itself is an integrality. He describes speech activity as heterogeneous and belonging to both the individual and the social sphere. Saussure defines speech as an individual expression of language. Language is a system; speech - its realization.

As means of communication, language can be considered as a social, biological or socio-psychological phenomenon. Its development begins with birth and continues throughout life. The most intensive processes are those of its adoption in pre-school age. Through spoken communication, children meet their natural need for self-expression, self-assertion and self-actualization. Through the adopted language knowledge they exchange information and express their needs, thoughts, desires and feelings. This dynamic exchange of personally meaningful information through verbal channels can be defined as a dialogic associated speech.

In the second half of the last century ontogenetic psycholinguistics greatly expanded its knowledge of how children master the language system, focusing on the linkage of linguistic ontogenesis with the perceptual and cognitive development of children.

Linguistics describes the language system as a complex set of three main components with five distinct areas of linguistic functioning, which are differentiated in accordance to the content. Bloom and Lahey (1978) define the basic components of the language system: “a form, content and use” [2].

If we accept Bloom and Lahey’s theory of the basic components of language and Chomsky’s theory (speech is an individual expression of language) when looking for criteria to study the dialogue in children, we can assume that dialogue is a process of dynamic exchange of structured language units of speech united by a mutually recognizable form which is structured in accordance to content.

The main problem in exploring dialogic speech is the selection of the indicators with the help of which it will be measured. The factually measurable structures - productivity, autonomy, lexical-grammatical shaping of dialogue and integrity (according to Daskalova) are selected for the purposes of the study.

Keywords: language, dialogue, pre-school age

Pre-school childhood features a number of modifications which influence the speech development. The change of stereotypes in communication inevitably leads to the activation of the social context in communication.

Language turns slowly but steadily into a contracted system of conventional signs which are controlled and governed by rules. Thus a child masters the dialogue speech as a unity of lexical, phonetic and grammatical items in the environment of the social interaction.

“Language acquisition and speech development in pre-school age are closely related to the communication behavior of children not only as a system of symbols, which impacts the cognitive processes, but also as a means of information exchange” [3].

The linguistic information which is included in specific educational content corresponding to the specific features of psychological and physiological development of children in pre-school age can be best acquired in the context of oral dialogue speech.

According to M. Balabanova, “the relation of speech mechanisms to the specific language structures is inconceivable without the psycho-linguistic patterns of text production and text reception” [4].

Dialogue coherent speech is an inseparable unity of listening and speaking. It is a kind of speaking activity by means of which oral communication is accomplished. Communication has a crucial significance in the education of coherent speech. It can be individual, group or public, formal or informal.

For this reason, the process of creation of a communication or speech situation is a core issue in the organization of the contemporary educational process.

Oral speech, together with written speech and internal speech, is one of the three basic kinds of speech which shape the language. Ontogenically, it emerges first and undergoes the most impetuous development until the sixth year of the life of a child. In this short period the child learns to speak and communicate with the other people,

shapes the majority of one’s vocabulary and establishes the fundamentals of one’s grammar and syntax knowledge. The foundations of a child’s language are being built by the acquisition of oral speech.

The ultimate goal of the development of dialogue speech for the child is not simply to master the basic linguistic structures, but also to learn how to use them in accordance with the communicative situation.

“Coherent speech is closely connected with the mental development of the child and foremost the development of logical thinking. It gives the opportunity to accomplish speech communication as a supreme form of communication and, thus, it becomes the most significant means of versatile development of the personality of the child” [5].

“The rapid development of a child’s speech in pre-school age can be observed due to the child’s wider social contact and more diverse and varied activity” [6].

Only the foundations of speech competence are set up in pre-school age, while its complete shaping occurs in the period of middle childhood. Dialogue speech is much more syntactically and grammatically well-arranged, has more proper wording, features more extensive use of adjectives, conjunctions and compound sentences. Although a child’s speech is still emotionally intense, it is becoming more accurate, more consistent and more coherent. Disconnecting speech from its situational character is determined by the fact that it acquires to a greater extent social character as a means of communicating with other people. “The child enters the period of questions, which is very specific of the speech and thought development. The child starts listening to the conversations of other people, to narrate and to love being read and told stories much more than before” [6].

The developed diagnostic set of instruments for a research of the influence of certain indicators for the development of dialogue speech is consistent with the State educational requirements for preparatory groups (6 – 7 – year-old children) and the competence approach in education. It includes the following indicators (according to Daskalova):

Relating indicators to the diagnostic tasks to establish the development level of dialogue speech with 6 – 7-year-old children

Table No. 1

<p>Topic “An encounter between acquaintances in inappropriate time” Task: Composing a conversation with narrative elements. Topic: “Five mischiefs” Task: Composing a conversation about the explanation between the relation between cause and effect.</p>	<p>Indicator No.1 Productivity</p>	<p>The kind and the number of the sentences in the statement</p>	<p>3 points – the child composes 8 or more sentences using compound sentences and complex sentences in the statement; 2 points – the child composes between 5 and 7 sentences using compound sentences and complex sentences in the statement; 1 point – the child composes less than 4 sentences, simple sentences prevail; 0 points – the child is not able to compose a narration using a series of a plot in pictures.</p>
	<p>Indicator No. 2 Independence</p>		<p>3 points – the child defines the problem of the communication situation presented in pictures by its title. The child independently composes a dialogue between the participants in the situation; 2 points – the child defines the problem of the communication situation presented in pictures by its title with outside assistance. The child independently composes a dialogue between the participants in the situation; 1 point - the child defines the</p>

			problem of the communication situation presented in pictures by its title with outside assistance. The child is unable to compose independently a dialogue. 0 points – the child is unable to cope with the assigned task.
	Indicator No. 3		
	Lexical and grammatical layout of the dialogue		3 points – the child expresses grammatically correctly with adequate use of lexical instruments; 2 points – the dialogue has no grammatical mistakes, lexical inaccuracies are made; 1 point – grammatical inaccuracies are made, the lexical instruments are used inappropriately; 0 points – the dialogue is not shaped up
	Indicator No. 4		
	Cohesion		3 points – the dialogue corresponds to the situation, there is a logical connection and cohesion; 2 points – insignificant semantic mistakes are made, the relation cause-and-effect is incorrectly interpreted or major connecting facts miss; 1 point – mistakes of the semantic bonds are made, significant modification of the order of events, the narration is not finished; 0 points – no dialogue

Factor analysis

The relative weight of the influence of each indicator according to Table 1 is displayed on the diagram of fig. 1.

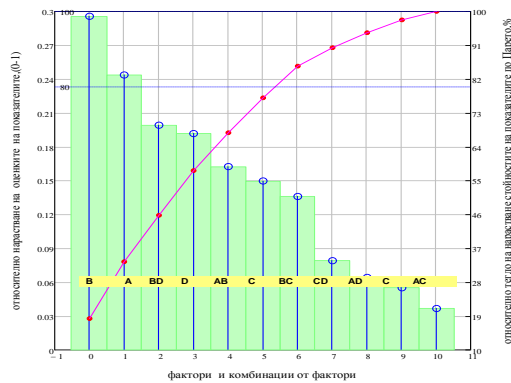


Fig. 1 Relative weight of indicators

The indicators on the diagram of Pareto are coded as follows: indicator 1.1 – “A”, indicator 1.2 – “B”, indicator 1.3 – “C”, indicator 1.4 – “D”, combinations of indicators AB, AC, AD, BC, BD, CD.

The dependence of relative weight of influence of each of the indicators, as well as their combinations, shown on fig. 1, demonstrates the following specific facts with the experimental group:

Indicator “B” – “*Independence*” makes up about 30%, while indicator “A” – “*Productivity*” respectively influences 25% of them.

The combined influence of indicators “B” – “*Independence*” and “D” – “*Cohesion*” or indicator “BD” – “*Independence*” + “*Cohesion*” occupies third place according to its relative weight of influence and makes up about 20% of the relative weight of the total position.

The combined influence of the stated three indicators – “B”, “A” and “BD” makes up not less than 80% of the score (see fig. 1.). The rest of the indicators have less relative weight of influence.

Conclusion: The conducted research may lead to the conclusion that the indicator independence is crucial for the development of the dialogue speech for children before starting school. The combination of independence and productivity has the highest degree of influence.

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