

DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO YOUNG LERANERS

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Annotation: The given thesis describes the significant changes in the impact of education on the mental development of young school-age children, and some of the problems they face in understanding themselves, and some issues they face in learning foreign languages and some methodological recommendations for solving them.

Keywords: Main problems, self-confidence, solution, interactive teaching, and a useful method.

In an increasingly globalized world, the importance of learning foreign languages from an early age has become widely acknowledged. Numerous studies suggest that young learners possess cognitive advantages for language acquisition, such as greater neuroplasticity and an innate ability to mimic pronunciation and intonation (Lenneberg, 1967; Singleton & Ryan, 2004). Despite these benefits, teaching a foreign language to young children presents unique and complex challenges. These difficulties stem from developmental, psychological, pedagogical, and environmental factors that affect how children absorb and retain a second language.

One of the primary challenges is related to the cognitive development of young learners. Children under the age of seven are still developing essential learning skills such as memory retention, abstract thinking, and attention control (Piaget, 1970). As a result, traditional language teaching methods that focus on grammar and vocabulary memorization may not align with their learning capacities. Furthermore, young learners often have short attention spans, which makes it difficult for them to engage in prolonged language activities without becoming distracted or restless (Cameron, 2001).

Another significant difficulty lies in the lack of appropriate teaching methodologies and materials. Many language curricula are designed with older students in mind and are not adapted to the needs of early learners. This mismatch often results in reduced motivation and interest among young children, especially when the content is not interactive or age-appropriate (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002). Additionally, insufficient teacher training for early language instruction further exacerbates the problem. Not all educators are adequately prepared to employ the playful, immersive, and repetitive techniques that are most effective for this age group.

Moreover, environmental factors such as parental involvement and exposure to the language outside the classroom significantly influence language development. Children who do not receive reinforcement at home or who lack access to media in the target language may struggle to retain what they learn in class (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Language interference from the child's first language can also create confusion and hinder fluency.

In summary, while young learners have the potential to achieve high levels of proficiency in a foreign language, a range of difficulties—both intrinsic and extrinsic—must be acknowledged and addressed. Identifying and understanding these challenges is essential to developing effective strategies that support early foreign language acquisition.

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