

DETERMINING THE OPTIMAL AGE FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN TERMS OF SPEECH THERAPY**Novgorodskaya Irina**

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Abstract. The article deals with the peculiarities of the early learning of a foreign language by preschool children and its influence on the psychological and speech development of a child. Different points of view on the topic of identifying the optimal age for starting to learn a second language are analyzed.

Keywords: foreign language, native language, early age, bilingualism, speech disorders, preschoolers, psychological development, speech development, child, learning.

It is not hard to notice that the idea of children learning foreign languages early on has become increasingly popular. More and more parents are of the opinion that the earlier their child begins to immerse himself in the diversity of the linguistic world, the easier it will be for him to learn different languages as an adult.

There are also different points of view on this matter from experts. Some of them believe that learning foreign languages should begin almost from birth, others suggest to combine native and foreign language learning, and someone insists on the rejection of early acquaintance with foreign languages in favor of their native one.

Most often, the dispute involves psychologists, teachers and speech therapists. Some of them try hard to prove the benefits of early foreign language learning and its impact on a child's psyche. For example, educator Danilova L.N. in her works argues that learning a second language speeds up the processes of expanding memory and overall horizons, doubles the active and passive vocabulary, and promotes the formation of abstract thinking. (2)

Aleksandrova N.Sh., on the other hand, believes that early immersion of a child in a speech environment consisting of several languages can lead to disorders in the child's speech development, as well as negatively affect the overall development of mental processes in general. (1)

It is worth considering both points of view in more detail in order to draw your own conclusion regarding the optimal age to start learning a foreign language.

Izvekova F.S., expressing his point of view about the benefits of early foreign language learning, says that children of the early preschool age learn the rules of a particular language much easier than adults. Their psyche is more receptive to new knowledge. It is enough for them to play, everyday or creative situations in order to learn the basic rules and use them in active speech. Consequently, he

is of the opinion that the study of a foreign language should begin as early as possible. (5)

The same opinion is held by Spiridonova A.V. In her works, she argues that children who learn a foreign language from the age of two years, have a positive motivation for further language learning. They are also more willing to learn a second and even third language. (8)

However, there are other points of view. For example, K.D. Ushinsky noted back in 1949 that a child must first learn his or her native language before starting to learn a foreign language, otherwise he or she will know neither. He believed that one should start learning a foreign language no earlier than age eight, and sometimes even later. (11)

There are also reasons, highlighted by V.P. Kryuchkov, for which bilingualism is considered a risk factor. Among them: when two languages are learned at once, one language system affects the other, resulting in their mixing, leading to a number of difficulties for the child; learning two languages at the same time can be a frequent cause of overwork of a child; if speech is not fully formed in either language, the structure of speech thinking is destroyed, which can lead to psychological stress. (6)

In order to understand at what age a child can most effectively learn a foreign language, it is first necessary to understand what psychological and speech changes occur at each age, from 4-6 months to 7-8 years.

It is known that the psyche of children of early preschool age is characterized by intensive formation of cognitive abilities, quick and easy memorization of presented language information, the ability to imitate behavior and speech actions from the environment, the desire to speak, using any means and opportunities. All of this can only contribute to the formation of speech skills in relation to both the mother tongue and a foreign language.

Baby speech begins to form as early as four months of life, at first it is a baby babbling, then simple words, which later become full-fledged speech.

But it is worth bearing in mind that not all children have all the necessary abilities. If a child tends to have a speech impairment, the early study of foreign languages may lead to a worsening of the situation and negative consequences for the native language.

When learning foreign languages, children with speech problems can experience great difficulties, as there is no special foreign language curriculum for such children, they learn according to the general program, which makes it much more difficult for them to learn. (4)

Therefore, parents, before immersing the child in the study of a language, it is necessary to consult a speech therapist. The specialist will be able to assess the state of the child's speech abilities, determine the level of his or her speech development. Perhaps the child will first need lessons aimed at the correction of missing language abilities.

Danilova L.N. believes that in cases where a child of 4-5 years has speech problems, it is worth postponing the introduction of a foreign language. (2)

There is such a phenomenon as interference, when there is a negative transfer from the native language to the one that is studied in parallel or a little later. Interference creates persistent errors in speech, which are quite difficult to eliminate completely, and have a negative impact on the acquisition and development of the speech system of preschool children. (3)

Given the possibility of interference, it is worth concluding that you should not start teaching children a foreign language before the age of five, and sometimes 7-8 years. It is by this age that children have fully mastered the simple and more complex forms of the language system of their native language, as well as their mental processes are formed at the necessary level for such learning. If in early childhood, starting at age three, the child had any minor speech impairment, by age 7-8 they may be completely or largely eliminated and will not interfere with mastering a foreign language system.

But you should also pay attention to the methods with which you can make the learning process more interesting for the child, which will help him not just memorize new rules and words, thus reducing his motivation to learn. Organizing lessons in the form of play can help prevent distractions and reduce fatigue.

Playful activity is leading children of preschool and primary school age, so the teaching of a foreign language should be built in this form, using the change of activities. For example, you can use pictures, cubes, game sets, books-bizibordy that will allow to captivate the child and contribute to an easy and relaxed learning a foreign language. Also, the combination of speech and motor analyzer through shading, coloring, tracing, etc. will combine the enrichment of active vocabulary with practical activities. (4)

It is important to remember that a child between 5 and 8 years old does not yet have full independence, so it is simply necessary to involve him or her in the process of language learning through communication and joint activities. It is known that independent learning by watching videos and listening to foreign words is less effective than learning through real communication and play with adults and peers. (7)

Thus, to summarize, we can conclude that teaching a child a foreign language too early, starting at 6 months of life, is not necessary at all. Each parent can independently determine the optimal age for such training for their child, approaching this issue consciously, consulting with specialists such as a psychologist, speech therapist and teacher.

Analyzing the views of reputable scientists who dealt with the issue of learning foreign languages, we can assume that the optimal age for mastering a foreign language - from five to eight years. In this age period, the child is easiest to learn, quickly perceives and remembers the rules of the language system with the proper organization of basic lessons, which should be conducted using a leading activity for this age - play.

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