

Formation of Communication Skills in Junior Schoolchildren with Intellectual Disabilities in the Conditions of Inclusive Education

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Abstract: *The article deals with pedagogical and psycho-correctional means of ensuring communicative interaction of junior schoolchildren with disabilities (with mild and moderate mental retardation) in the context of inclusive education. Specifics of development of cognitive, emotional, personal-motivational, communicative and behavioural components of communication of a unique personality of a junior schoolchild under correctional and developmental influence and in the conditions of inclusive education are analysed. The definition of communication skills of children with special educational needs has been clarified. Systematic - neuropedagogical, competence, personality-oriented and communicative-activity approaches to consideration of methodical tools for formation of communicative skills in junior schoolchildren taking into account their special needs and individual capabilities are applied. A model of formation of communicative-personal potential in children with intellectual disabilities and correction of their communicative individual-psychological properties has been developed. The program on formation of communicative competence and providing positive motivation for communicative interaction among students with intellectual disabilities, taking into account neuropsychological and pedagogical recommendations, is substantiated.*

Keywords: *Communicative competence, neuropsychology, neuropedagogy, correction, training, special children, thinking, speech, intelligence, inclusive education.*

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Introduction

Neuropsychological analysis of the problem of communication of children with intellectual disabilities confirms the relationship between the work of their higher nervous activity with low levels of development of mental processes and emotional and volitional sphere, as well as insufficient needs for communication and social relations with peers and adults. The specifics of the communicative activity of special children with mental retardation affect manifestations of low self-esteem, self-doubt during communication and rejection by their classmates. Conditions for inclusive education facilitate the process of communicative interaction of children with disabilities. A positive attitude to the special on an equal footing in many educational and life situations can determine their cognitive interests in others, to learning and an interesting world around. We believe that the communicative competence of children with disabilities is an important factor in their integration into the school community through a successful way of accepting their individual characteristics and further socialization in an inclusive learning environment.

In consideration of the foregoing, the important objectives of our article are: a theoretical analysis of the problem of formation of communicative competence in primary school children with intellectual disabilities under conditions of inclusive education and coverage of applied aspects of correctional and developmental work with this age and special group of children. The scientific novelty and theoretical significance of the researched problem lies in the fact that it is for the first time that the role and methods of correctional and developmental teaching as an innovative inclusive technology are revealed; the importance of the correctional and developmental program for the development of the communicative potential of special children and communicative training is indicated; psychological and pedagogical conditions for successful formation of communication skills in primary school children with intellectual disabilities are determined; some methodical recommendations for neuropsychologists, primary school teachers and parents on effective pedagogical strategies for formation of communication skills, taking into account the peculiarities of their intellectual disabilities have been highlighted. Generalized conclusions can be used as recommendations taking into account their practical significance in neuroscience in the work of primary school specialists, which are focused on personal and professional self-development and partnerships in an inclusive environment.

Theoretical analysis of the problem of formation of communicative competence in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities in the context of inclusive education

According to the neurophysiological approach in correctional neuropsychology and neuropedagogy, disorders of intellectual development of children are associated with inertia of neuropsychological processes due to organic diffuse damage to the cerebral cortex, which causes pronounced specific features of the cognitive sphere of a special child. In turn, the consequences of dissociation between cognitive processes and the level of adequacy in the emotional response to communicative interaction in children with disabilities are social maladaptation, isolation, reduced self-control, exceptional selectivity in communication, lack of cognitive interests, mismatching of emotional states to the requirements of real educational situations, insufficient development of thinking.

Modern Ukrainian specialists in special psychology, correctional and inclusive education have developed recommendations for providing psychological and pedagogical, correctional and developmental services to children with special educational needs and providing their systematic qualified support taking into account peculiarities of their development and educational needs (Poroshenko, 2018).

The problem of formation of communicative skills in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities was studied within the study of the following issues: providing recommendations to teachers and parents on psychological and pedagogical services for children with disabilities (Babich, 2016, Bondar, 2019, Boryak, 2019, Kolupaeva, 2009, Poroshenko, 2018, Tsvetkov, 2017, Light & Drager, 2007, Light et al., 2007; Brinton & Fujiki, 2017, Gillam et al., 2018), and practical recommendations for inclusive education of children (Azarova, 2018, Bazhukova, 2016, Kolupaeva & Savchuk, 2011, Fetalieva & Zubailova, 2016, Bakhshi et al., 2017, Singal, 2008, Deppler et al., 2011).

The criteria for reviewing the literature we used are requirements for neuropedagogical, neuropsychological, competence, personality-oriented and communicative-activity approaches to the problem of formation of communicative skills in junior schoolchildren taking into account their special needs and individual abilities. Integration of these approaches is inherent in the research of Boryak (2019) in the proposed model of complex medical-logo-psycholinguistic-pedagogical study of the current state of speech activity of junior schoolchildren with mild and moderate degrees of mental retardation. The purpose of Boryak's work is to determine

conditionality of speech development disorders: the level of intelligence development, the state of analyzers, the state of the CNS, the level of speech development, emotional and volitional sphere. The author presents a model of a complex differentiated system of formation and correction of speech activity of junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities. Systematic and integrated analysis of technologies for formation of communication skills in junior schoolchildren, taking into account the types of thinking, individual characteristics of the nervous system functioning, the level of speech development are most fully covered in this scientific work.

The value of Babich's (2016) scientific work lies in the competence approach as a personality-oriented, activity and technologically important conceptual basis for finding effective means of developing communication skills and studying the state of development of communication potential of children with visual and intellectual disabilities with a combination of these disorders. Careful diagnosis of the level of communicative competence of special children enabled a rational selection of correctional and developmental methods and development of algorithms for formation of the communicative potential of the personality of a special child.

Undoubtedly, special educational needs of children are successfully addressed in an inclusive learning environment. Conceptual provisions of inclusive educational practice are most fully presented in the works of Kolupaeva (2009), Bondar (2019). In the work of Kolupaeva (2009), in particular, some aspects of the personal-activity approach to correctional and developmental teaching and application of a multidisciplinary approach in the organization of student support within the theoretical and experimental modelling of inclusive education of children with special educational needs were covered. In the theory and practice of inclusive education according to Bondar (2019), features of personality-oriented teaching are more fully revealed, in addition, features of communication ethics and communication with individuals with disabilities, the specifics of the support team work and steps of individual educational route for children with special needs and making individual plan for the child's development, as well as recommendations on teaching methods in an inclusive primary school class are considered. Much attention is paid to behavioral technologies and competencies of teachers in inclusive education. The advantages of educational technologies in inclusive education may have the most optimal success for formation of communicative competence of primary school children were outlined.

No less important for implementation of the objectives of our article are the data on differentiation and specifics of mental development of

children with intellectual development disorders and correctional and educational work with them are reflected in the work of Kolyshkin (2013). Compared with other works, it provides a sufficient psychological and pedagogical characteristic of children with intellectual development disorders, communication and behaviour necessary for implementation of theoretical and experimental modelling of formation of communicative competence of children with intellectual disabilities. The work is of practical value due to its connection with neuroscience, as it analyses the clinical and pathogenetic approach to mental retardation, which is associated with severe neurodynamic disorders, which are reflected in the process of developing speech skills.

The researchers provided the following recommendations for development of the speech and communication sphere: to develop in children with disabilities the ability to establish and maintain contact with others; learn to control their own behavior during communication; teach to properly initiate the process of interaction, to maintain communication; to expand the circle of communication, to establish rules of interaction through imitation of skills of the adult; learn to make optimal use of verbal and nonverbal communication tools; to develop observation skill, the ability to evaluate their relationships with people; in primary school to develop reading skills using the method of memorizing written words (global reading), to voice their own desires by composing a sentence from cards with individual words, etc.; to form communication skills through development of speech, language comprehension (verbal or visual means, with the help of specific concepts or figurative symbols; with the help of gestures or writing; use of auxiliary communication means) (Poroshenko, 2018, p. 184).

We define formation of communication skills in junior school children with intellectual disabilities as their mastery of the experience of communicative interaction with the use of speech tools-functions (formulate an opinion, clearly support dialogue, answer, ask, choose intonation, agree or refuse) and appropriate to the situation. Mastering the communicative potential is possible in a favorable environment for a special child with partnership relations. Such an environment is the inclusive education.

Inclusive education, taking into account individual developmental deviations, is based on the fact that each child is worthy of respect because of its uniqueness. The scientific and theoretical basis for inclusive education is the "Concept of special education for people with physical and mental disabilities in Ukraine for the coming years and prospects", "The concept of the State standard of special education for children with special needs". The

main tasks of inclusive education are: ensuring the right of children with special needs to receive general secondary education in the conditions of general educational institutions in a complex combination with correctional and rehabilitation measures; all-round development of the child's personality on the basis of its talents and abilities, formation of interests and needs; preservation and strengthening of health of children; providing in the process of training and education of qualified psychological, medical and pedagogical assistance, taking into account the child's state of health (Kolupaeva, 2009, pp. 172 - 173).

The word inclusion originates from Latin include and means inclusion. Inclusive education is a term used to describe inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in the educational process of a secondary school and providing them with equal learning conditions in an inclusive classroom, self-esteem, social partnership with peers and adults, equal inclusion in communicative interaction with the school environment. Under such conditions, all children receive equal opportunities in their development, regardless of their physical or mental disabilities, supported by competent pedagogical professionals to work on inclusive education programs.

Inclusion is an attempt to instill self-confidence in children with intellectual disabilities, motivating them to learn together with others. Children with special needs require not only support, but also development of their abilities and success in school. As they enter school, children with intellectual disabilities begin to realize the importance of communicating with each student as an individual. A good result is given by completing project tasks in pairs, when special children can learn examples and receive support and encouragement by making mistakes. Working in a small group gives children opportunity to open up and share their experiences (Fetalieva & Zubailova, 2016; Melnyk, 2021; Komogorova, 2021; Melnyk et al., 2019).

The researchers analysed technologies of implementation of individual educational route of children with special educational needs, considered specifics of drawing up an individual plan of a child development and provided recommendations on teaching methods in an inclusive classroom of a primary school. In their opinion, teaching methods in inclusive education are correctional and developmental, they stimulate children with special educational needs to work independently, be proactive. Means of providing the correctional component of inclusive education are: realization of correctional goals in the process of teaching and educating children (in class, during homework, at educational activities); conducting correctional and developmental classes by specialists (correctional teacher, psychologist, occupational therapist, etc.); fulfillment

by parents of the requirements and recommendations of specialists regarding the corrective effect on the child (Bondar, 2019, p. 99).

The results of many foreign studies describe practical recommendations for inclusive education of children with disabilities, the most important of which are: 1) training of teachers in the specialty “inclusive pedagogy” to work with special children, their support (Bakhshi et al., 2017; Singal, 2008); 2) exclusion from education of children with disabilities is consolidation of the status quo of low expectations and failure, and the attitude of teachers and parents to children with disabilities affects their development, so in a school inclusive environment it is necessary to apply pedagogical technologies and assessment criteria for this group (World Bank Group, 2019). In inclusive education, an important role is played by encouragement of positive behavior in communicative interaction, manifestation of social competence, partnership with all children in an inclusive environment (Deppler et al., 2011).

To organize accessibility and effectiveness of an inclusive educational environment, comprehensive and adequate assistance to special children is needed. In this regard, for each child doctors, psychologists and teachers of educational institutions develop an individual educational route taking into account medical-psychological-pedagogical diagnostics, dynamics and prognosis of mental development of children with various forms of intellectual disability, which should be taken into account when organizing inclusive educational space (Bazhukova, 2016; Maksymchuk, 2018; Onishchuk et al., 2020; Sheremet, 2019).

Kolupaeva, A.A. and Savchuk, L.O. identified the benefits of inclusive education for students with special educational needs: improving learning results; providing age-appropriate role models in the face of peers; creating opportunities for learning in a realistic / natural environment; assistance in formation of communication, social and academic skills; equal access to education; increase self-esteem; development of independence; expanding opportunities for establishing new friendly relations (Kolupaeva & Savchuk, 2011, p. 10).

Peculiarities of development of communicative activity of children with intellectual disabilities, which are covered in the works, do not lead to leveling of the need to communicate with other people and to learn about the world around them. Instead, due to the pronounced ability to imitate behavior of others, the model of their own behavior forms a whole system of clichés that children use in appropriate situations, which has a positive impact on formation of communication skills (Babich, 2016).

Of course, children's communication skills reflect the culture of their family. The process of developing communication skills in children with intellectual disabilities will be effective if: parents are aware of the importance of this process and work comprehensively, namely consolidate the skills acquired in classes with teachers and transfer them to different activities of a child with intellectual disabilities; this takes into account peculiarities of child's development, the "zone of immediate development", gradual complication of non-verbal and verbal components of communicative activity; parents in collaboration with specialists work on gradual formation of communication skills: starting from understanding and using simple non-verbal means of communication to gradual transition to verbal communication (Babich, 2016).

Trainings for development of communicative skills in students with mild and moderate degree of mental retardation (intellectual disabilities) are developed by teachers of special classes in the conditions of inclusive training on the basis of current knowledge of communicative potential of such children in real educational situations. Thus, Makoveeva, S.V., a teacher, describes a correctional and developmental program based on cognitive (formation of adequate ideas about friendly relationships between people), emotional-motivational (analysis of needs and motives for communication and understanding, manifestation and control of emotions, reducing the level of negative emotions) and behavioral (how to build adequate and conflict-free relationships) components of communication. The methodical means and methods of correction of the set tasks to influence the main areas of the student's personality were: observation, communicative training exercises, thematic drawing, story-role games, situational tasks, group discussion, nonverbal interaction, relaxation techniques, psycho picture, role play, psychogymnastics, elements of art therapy, psychodrama (Makoveeva, 2017).

In the context of modern correctional pedagogy, correctional and educational work with mentally retarded children should be comprehensive and carried out on the basis of both differentiated (based on the typological features of different forms of mental retardation, different degrees of cognitive impairment) and individual approaches. When carrying out correctional work with mentally retarded children, a teacher should adhere to the sequence of pedagogical requirements for children; to teach children self-control of behavior, to involve them in comparisons, assessments, causal justifications of acts of behavior; consistently increase requirements for children's behavior; build the educational process on specific positive examples; to preserve and develop a child's sense of self-respect, to protect

them from ridicule and humiliation from others; to involve students in the work of self-education, but with setting of the most specific and realistic goal, ensuring constant control and enhanced pedagogical guidance in this process; to carry out any educational event with a high emotionally positive background; to prevent conflicts between children, and in case of their occurrence to promote their quick and positive resolution, to teach mentally retarded children the correct behavior in conflict situations, to predict the consequences of incontinence (Kolyskin, 2013: pp. 132 - 136).

Neuropsychological research allows to identify a neuropsychological factor that underlies certain dysfunctions associated with intellectual disabilities and to develop an appropriate correctional program. Corrective and developmental work consists both in training of conducting separate mental operations, and in organization of integral, meaningful communicative activity of the child and the adult. This can be only formed in a game. Game partners (child - child, child - teacher, psychologist, father, etc.) have a unifying feeling: they are in some exceptional situation, together they do something important, different from others and going beyond the general norms of life. This contributes to formation of the feeling “me – others”, “me – you”, “I” (Yurov, 2006).

Foreign researchers Gina Conti-Ramsden, Pearl Mok, Kevin Durkin, Andrew Pickles argue that children with communication and speech difficulties are emotionally vulnerable in personal and social adaptation, especially in the process of communicating with peers. Social communication skills play an important role in their mental development, and emotional self-regulation affects the adequate behavior during communication, so the psychocorrection and family approach to therapy should take into account emotional problems of children with frustrated communication needs, their breadth, resilience (Conti- Ramsden et al., 2019). In turn, Matthew P. Spackman, Martin Fujiki & Bonnie Brinton confirm that communication and speech disorders cause learning failure (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017), as well as affect children’s ability to understand emotional reactions of others, so they also suggest including in the main classes tasks for formation of skills of social and emotional interaction (Spackman et al., 2009). The results of research by foreign researchers also confirm the fact that children with speech disorders may have impaired understanding of emotions (Fujiki et al., 2011).

For effective communicative interaction, it is important to develop linguistic, operational and strategic skills in children with complex communication needs, using transactional techniques – an interactive process in which participants of the process agree, interact, choosing optimal

actions (Light & Drager, 2007) and complex strategies together with communication: innovative names and popular topics in communication, color, light, humor, interesting tasks – taking into account age and individual approach (Light et al., 2007).

Azarova (2018) has developed an effective method of corrective work with training of communication skills in the inclusive education for first-graders with special educational needs and a low level of communicative competence revealed by her. The methodology included the following areas of work of a correctional teacher: formation of a favorable socio-psychological climate in an inclusive classroom; development of communication skills in children with disabilities in communication with peers with normal psychophysical development during training; formation of ideas among teachers about the structure of defect in children with special educational needs and specifics of their socialization in the context of inclusive education (Azarova, 2018).

The main purpose of our study is to develop a correctional and developmental program for formation of communicative competence in students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive learning environment. The purpose defined the following tasks: to analyze ways of development of communicative competence in children with special educational needs taking into account a comprehensive (personality-oriented, competence and communicative-activity) approaches to development of correctional and developmental technologies, including communicative training and pedagogical principles of inclusive training; to develop a method of developing cognitive, emotional, personal-motivational, communicative and behavioral components of communication of the unique personality of a junior schoolchild under the correctional and developmental influence and in an inclusive learning environment.

Model of formation of communicative and personal potential in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive learning environment

System-integrated technologies of formation of communicative skills in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities and methods of correctional and developmental education of special children are considered by us as a complex of innovative inclusive technologies within the program developed by us for development of communicative potential of special children taking into account personality-oriented, neuropedagogical, competence, communicative-activity and clinical-pathogenetic approaches.

The model of formation of communicative skills in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive learning environment has been developed by us in accordance with the following tasks: to diagnose communication and speech skills and motivational, cognitive and emotional attributes of children with intellectual disabilities to identify their level of development; on the basis of collected empirical data to develop a program on development of communicative potential of special children and its correction and to check efficiency of the chosen pedagogical technology on the basis of results of experimental research; to carry out correctional and developmental influence on the basis of communicative training (active formation of communicative skills in an inclusive group) and communicative-speech exercises (on development of coherent dialogic and monologue speech, phonetic-phonemic hearing, vocabulary and formation of grammatically correct speech); to develop methodical recommendations for neuropsychologists, primary school teachers and parents on effective pedagogical strategies for formation of communication skills and motivational and personal attributes of children with disabilities.

In correctional and developmental work on formation of communication skills in junior high schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities, we consider the following principles are important: individualization (taking into account age and individual-personal characteristics), inclusive partnership (involvement of all specialists of educational institution and parents in formation of communicative potential in a special child), personality-socially-oriented communication (through admitting the child into real educational or extracurricular situations, reinforcing positive communicative experience), consistency and systematicity (complication of communicative tasks in proportion to formation of communicative skills), respect for another person and sincere acceptance of their experience (teaching students a successful communicative-interpersonal interaction).

The results of research of modern domestic psychologists are interesting for development of communicative training and communicative-speech exercises for this category of children. Thus, Boriak, O.V. developed a comprehensive differentiated system of formation and correction of communicative and speech activity of junior schoolchildren, taking into account age, degree of mental retardation, concomitant developmental disorders, the terms of correctional and developmental work (Boriak, 2019).

The researcher proved that effectiveness of the process of formation and correction of communicative-speech activity of junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities is possible under the following conditions:

introduction of individual and differentiated-individual assessment of students' achievements, in accordance with the indicators of development of speech competencies; development of individual correctional and developmental programs of work taking into account cognitive abilities and individual dynamics of progressive development of a junior schoolchild with a mild degree of mental retardation (for institutions of inclusive education); mutual interaction of the teaching staff and practical psychologist (if necessary, medical professionals – psychiatrist, psychoneurologist); successful adaptation of students through bilateral emotional contact of a teacher-speech therapist (defectologist): tactful, friendly attitude to the child, a positive emotional assessment of any of their achievements; increasing effectiveness of correctional and developmental work, by reporting on the current and potential capabilities of each child, involving parents in joint work in the framework of cooperation “teacher-speech therapist – child – parents” (Boriak, 2019).

Foreign researchers Bonnie Brinton, Martin Fujiki (2017) offer for children with disabilities a technology of social communication using children's literature. Sandra L. Gillam, Abbie Olszewski, Katie Squires, Katie Wolfe, Timothy Slocum, Ronald B. Gillam (2018) believe that encouraging children with language disorders to narrative stories has an effect on their socialization, expands their vocabulary, improves language skills and works on formation of communication skills. Sandra Laing Gillam, Daphne Hartzheim, Breanna Studenka, Vicki Simonsmeier, Ronald Gillam (2015) confirmed the effectiveness of the narrative method in working with autistic children.

Thus, in the communicative-activity and competence approaches of foreign and domestic correctional teachers on formation of communicative competence the aspects of communicative activity are present in all activities of the child. Optimal actualization of this type of activity in children with intellectual disabilities can be done only with a person-centered approach, taking into account the real level of development of communicative competence and mental development of the student. Under this condition, children develop a positive attitude to communicative interaction, and therefore, there are stable motives for communication and the need for affiliation. Positive emotions accompany the optimistic thinking of the child with confidence in the acts of communication in the social environment.

In the context of neuropedagogy, in teaching communicative activities, as in any other activity of children, a teacher should follow certain rules: the adult gives examples, and the student selects independently the algorithm (existence of a problem situation); if a certain number of students

actively absorb the material, this may become interesting to others (a teacher should turn complex material or abstraction into a language of material that can motivate, interest students); in case of developmental arrest it is necessary to apply a formative learning, but without excessive subject overload (energy support of the psyche is weak in most children, regardless of disorders); to form a motive for behavior (the ability to answer the questions “what I want” and “why”); acquisition of knowledge by a child should be meaningful and timely, consistent and intrinsically logical (in the unity of emotional and cognitive operations, taking into account sensitive periods) (Tsvetkov, 2017).

Conclusion

Modern correctional pedagogy carries out a systemic (neurophysiological, competence, personality-oriented and communicative-activity) approaches to development of correctional and developmental technologies for formation of communication skills in junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities. According to their theoretical and theoretical-methodological conceptual provisions, the model of formation of communicative-personal potential on the basis of communicative training and communicative-speech exercises with junior schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities in the inclusive education environment proved to be effective.

The problem of developing communication skills in children with intellectual disabilities is extremely important to ensure their psychological and social welfare. The process of acquiring communicative competence by them should be based on differentiation (for diagnosis and prognosis) and unity (for correctional and developmental effect) of cognitive, emotional, personal-motivational, communicative and behavioral components of communication as an important condition for personal integration of junior schoolchildren. The correctional and developmental core of such work is to take into account neuropsychological, pedagogical and medical recommendations for development of a program for formation of communicative competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

The main factor in the integration of children with special educational needs is partnerships in an inclusive classroom. The success of children’s communication always depends on a favorable psychological atmosphere for communication in an inclusive group, which is influenced by the professional competence of the partner – the teacher, correctional teacher. In partnership conditions, under the corrective and developmental influence of inclusive education, a unique personality of a junior schoolchild-

communicator with the skills of accepting individual features of one's inner world is formed. In such a class, students are sensitive to the needs of their classmate and are able to understand and be willing to accept his distinctive and at the same time unique features.

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