

PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF YOUNGER ADOLESCENTS AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Polonska Tamara Kostiantynivna

Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (PhD), Senior Researcher,
Leading Researcher of Foreign Languages Teaching Department
Institute of Pedagogy of the NAES of Ukraine

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines “adolescents” as individuals in the 10–19 years age group and divide it into *early* (10–13 years), *middle/mid* (14–16 years) and *late* (17–19 years) adolescence [1]. Adolescence represents the bridge between childhood and adulthood, and is characterized by important physical, psychological, and social changes.

The transition from primary to basic school is a turning point, a crisis period in the lives of very young adolescents, so knowledge and consideration of their psychological characteristics will help teachers to identify and outline optimal approaches to selecting and organizing the content of foreign language learning. The primary school has already formed sufficient experience for students in using a foreign language in typical situations of foreign language communicative interaction, which they are ready to deepen and improve. At the same time, this transition is one of the most difficult in the life of children and can be quite painful: they experience psychological discomfort, which can develop into personal psychological problems, leading to others - slow cognitive development, reduced academic performance and more. Therefore, students at the beginning of the 5th grade need some time to adapt to new teachers, rules, style and pace of learning.

Social adaptation is considered “one of the important issues directly linked to human behaviour, which is in turn a reaction of an individual trying to achieve harmonization of his motives and needs on one hand, and the requirements of the environment and the different circumstances in the other hand; so, he cares about the positive actions that brings satisfaction and leads to more social acceptance, and therefore the ability to adapt in different life situations” [2, p. 63].

School adaptation is interpreted not only as a process of adaptation to effective functioning in an educational environment, but also as the person’s active exploration of the surrounding environment associated with his/her ability to develop psychologically, personally, and socially. It is demonstrated that during the initial stages of schooling, the process of a child’s adaptation to the educational environment, which is accompanied by difficulties, often has an adverse effect on his/her further studies at school and later at institutions of vocational education.

An important mental neoplasm of adolescents is the development of arbitrariness for all mental processes, caused primarily by other, higher demands on them by educational activities. A teenager is already able to independently organize his

thinking, memory, attention, to a certain extent regulate his own emotional and volitional processes.

In adolescence, the intellectualization of all psychological actions continues. First of all, this is expressed in the development of children's **abstract thinking**, that is, in changing the ratio between concrete figurative and abstract thinking in favour of the latter. The main thing in the development of thinking of younger adolescents is the fact that they first master the process of concept formation, move to a new and higher form of intellectual activity - to thinking in concepts (conceptual thinking). This contributes to the development of skills to analyse, systematize and group complex phenomena, to identify common and different. The ability of students to assimilate significant amounts of textual information is growing. In this regard, the teacher must ensure the relationship in the content of teaching a foreign language with the previous level of education, clearly follow the thematic focus, dosed and gradually introduce new concepts based on material known to students, etc. At the same time, children of this age retain elements of visual-figurative thinking, which is typical for younger students. The combination of visual-figurative thinking with manifestations of abstract thinking creates favourable conditions for mastering a foreign language.

A characteristic feature of the psychophysiology of the modern student is **clip thinking** (clip – “a text fragment”, “a film fragment”, “a newspaper clipping”), the formation of which is associated with a constant increase in information flow as a result of rapid development of modern information and communication technologies. Clip thinking involves a superficial and fragmentary perception of information with the help of short and vivid passages, without trying to establish logical connections between them. The advantage of this type of students' thinking is the rapid perception of images, visuality, emotionality, associativity, the ability to absorb a large amount of information. However, today's children, who are used to receiving instant information in the form of short fragments, have a reduced ability to think critically. The teacher must take into account both negative and positive aspects of clip thinking and direct efforts to appropriate and effective organization of learning according to educational and emotional needs of students and their age with the introduction of modern learning technologies (critical thinking technology, case technology, problem-based learning technology, etc.).

At this age, the amount of child's **memory** increases significantly not only due to better memorization of the material, but also its logical understanding. Unlike mechanical memorization, memory becomes logical (the use of logical operations in the process of memorization). For teaching a foreign language, an important factor is speech memory, which in adolescence is already more closely associated with awareness, systematization, and the establishment of logical connections. Involuntary memorization is primary relative to voluntary and plays a key role in student learning. However, involuntary will be more effective with meaningful activities. The main task of the teacher in working with adolescents is the purposeful development of memory processes: memorization, preservation, reproduction. In this regard, the teacher should not only offer language and speech material, but also form effective strategies for learning activities, that is, techniques that facilitate the memorization of the necessary

information by forming associations (mind maps, the 5Ws rule, chronological scales, etc.).

Adolescents' **attention** becomes more stable, conscious and selective. Unlike primary school students, who are dominated by involuntary attention, teenagers are able to focus not only on visual objects, but also on imaginary ones. In the process of education and training, voluntary attention is developed, associated with the use of volitional efforts to solve specific problems. Involuntary attention is due to interest in the subject of study or a particular activity. Learning activity will be effective if the teacher uses the potential of involuntary attention, developing voluntary attention in parallel. The teacher can control the attention of students by presenting new material in various ways, including it in an independent activity, making it interesting for its content.

In basic school, a new type of educational motive is defined - the **motive of self-education**, presented in simpler forms (interest in additional sources of knowledge). This motive can be partially satisfied with the help of additional texts (videos) for reading with interesting socio-cultural topics. If in primary school the basis for mastering a foreign language was a student's immediate environment, then in the basic school the role of information about the characteristics of life in the languages being studied (sociocultural component) increases significantly.

Adolescence is characterized by such specific neoplasms as a sense of adulthood, the need for self-realization and self-affirmation, which is possible only with subject-practical activities related to communication. The growing need for socialization means that **communicativeness** becomes one of the important characteristics of the individual. To develop students' communicative skills, it is necessary to model situations of communicative interaction in which they can train the use of new language and speech material, solving problems close to real ones. **The feeling of adulthood** is the central personal neoplasm of the adolescent, which is expressed through the subjective attitude to himself as an adult, the idea of himself as an adult. **The need for self-affirmation** is a teenager's focus on finding, discovering and realizing their individuality, uniqueness in the system of social relations. If teachers do not know and do not take into account new development trends in adolescence, then the process of education and upbringing may be ineffective, and the formation of the personality will occur spontaneously.

Education in the basic school is characterized by the use of teaching methods that activate the mental and speech activity of students, their activity in performing tasks. Students are most attracted to tasks that require independence, the ability to combine material depending on the needs of the speech situation. Imitation exercises and mechanical (rote) memorization recede into the background. Much attention is paid to the development of unprepared speech. In basic school, students must be taught to navigate the main speech situations in which a person may find themselves, to express their thoughts at the initial level. We can say that it is at this stage that the basic language skills are laid, the child masters not only the lexical, but also the grammatical structure of a foreign language, tries to build statements on his own in accordance with the studied theoretical and practical material.

Since the main role in the development of the child is played by communication with peers, it is therefore advisable to use group and pair work. These forms are of great importance for the formation of a student's creative personality; they train positive interdependence and individual responsibility. The process of working in groups or pairs is always creative and exploratory: the task is set before the group and everyone has an incentive to stand out and contribute. The use of group forms of work creates conditions for both the development of thinking and self-affirmation. Group work forms the ability of students to compare their work with the work of their peers and exercise self-control. The group form of work cultivates a sense of sociability, collectivism, mutual assistance, it promotes the development of students' independence, the ability to listen and speak, removes fear and uncertainty when speaking a foreign language.

In foreign language lessons, it is advisable to use such forms of group work as a discussion game, brain-ring games, role-playing games, brainstorming, dialogue, circle of ideas. Each student chooses a role that is convenient for him and speaks on behalf of the chosen character. Thus, the psychological barrier of fear for a language mistake is removed and the opportunity to express one's own opinion is provided. Such forms of work teach students to clarify the information received, enter into a conversation, involve other participants, respond adequately to the remarks of communication partners, agree or disagree with the opinions of others.

In our opinion, the use of project technology will also be effective. Projects (both individual and group) stimulate children's artistic creativity, provide an opportunity to search for information independently, share it with classmates, give students the opportunity to feel like young researchers, and also develop interest in learning a language. The fulfilment of tasks-projects stimulates the manifestation of the child's identity, the desire for collective cooperation and equal partnership. A notable feature of the project is that its final product has a material embodiment: a collage, an album, a comic book, a questionnaire, a presentation, a dramatization. Thanks to the final product, children see their result of joint activities, which increases their motivation to learn a foreign language. The teacher can use mini-projects designed for one lesson and long-term projects with subsequent presentation in the lesson.

Thus, knowledge of the psychological characteristics of students by teachers is very important both for the selection of learning content and for the organization of the educational process.

References

1. Programming for Adolescents. Why should WFP do more? World Food Programme. Italy. 10 pp. URL: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000115848/download/>
2. AlZboon, S. O. Social Adaptation and Its Relationship to Achievement Motivation among High School Student in Jordan. *International Educational Studies*. 2013. Vol. 6, No 10. Pp. 63–69. URL: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1068713.pdf>