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Typology of Communicative Activities as the Basis of the Technology of their Forming in Preschoolers with Developmental Delay

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Abstract

Introduction. The aim of the presented research was to substantiate theoretically and experimentally the classification of communicative activities of preschoolers with developmental delay and to substantiate the technology (main directions) forming such preschoolers' communicative abilities.

Materials and methods. Experiments (ascertaining and formative) with the use of special conversations, analysis of activity products, analysis of medical, psychological and pedagogical documentation and psychological examining techniques to substantiate the proposed typology of communicative activities.

Results. The structural-functional model of communicative activities was substantiated, which included the following components: motivational, inter-subjective, semantic and reflective.

The systematization of the obtained empirical data served as a basis for developing a classification of communicative activities in preschool age. Preschoolers with developmental delay were characterized by mainly motivationally deficient and mentally deficient types of communicative activities, thus the shortcomings of their communicative activities were due to insufficiently formed motivation and thinking, respectively.

We have proved that the stable dominance of the mentally deficient communicative type before and after forming experiment shows that children with developmental delay can be characterized by persistently underdeveloped mechanisms of both implicit and explicit mentalization, due to the specifics of their developmental disorders. However, the results of the forming experiment give grounds to talk about slow, however, positive dynamics in this mechanism formation.

The promising areas of further research in the context of this problem are the study on conscious communicative activity genesis at schoolchildren with developmental delay.

Keywords: preschoolers, developmental delay, communicative activity, classification, technology

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Типология коммуникативной деятельности как основа технологии ее формирования у дошкольников с задержкой психического развития

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Резюме

Цель. Обосновать в теоретическом и экспериментальном плане типологию коммуникативной деятельности дошкольников с задержкой психического развития и обосновать технологию (основные направления) ее формирования в указанной группе дошкольников.

Материалы и методы. Эксперимент (констатирующий и формирующий) с использованием беседы, анализа продуктов деятельности, анализа медико-психолого-педагогической документации, психодиагностических методик для обоснования типологии коммуникативной деятельности.

Результаты. Обоснована структурно-функциональная модель коммуникативной деятельности, которая содержит следующие компоненты: мотивационный, интерсубъективный, смысловой, рефлексивный. Систематизация результатов эмпирического исследования послужила основой для разработки типологии коммуникативной деятельности в дошкольном возрасте. Установлено, что для дошкольников с ЗПР характерно преобладание детей с мотивационно-дефицитарным и ментально-дефицитарным типами формирования коммуникативной деятельности, при которых недостатки коммуникативной деятельности обусловлены несовершенными мотивационными и смысловыми единицами соответственно. Доказано, что устойчивое преобладание ментально-дефицитарного типа коммуникативной деятельности до и после тестирования показывает, что дети с ЗПР характеризуются стойким недоразвитием механизмов как имплицитной, так и эксплицитной ментализации, что связано со спецификой нарушений их развития. Однако результаты апробации дают основание констатировать медленную, но положительную динамику формирования этого механизма.

В контексте данной проблемы перспективным направлением дальнейших исследований является изучение генезиса осознанной коммуникативной деятельности у младших школьников с задержкой психического развития.

Ключевые слова: дошкольники, задержка психического развития, коммуникативная деятельность, типология, технология

■ INTRODUCTION

The problem of personality belongs to the fundamental theoretical and methodological issues of clinical psychology. It should be studied due to its social significance, because a personality as an individual's social quality is formed during his/her socialisation. Effective strategies of psychological influence on children to their successful socialization and social adaptation to the requirements of modern society are searched within theoretical and practical studies on personality formation.

The problem of personality formation is especially important in the context of socialization, social adaptation and integration of children with mental or physical disabilities. We should note that developmental disorders affect the content, intensity and quality of such children's interpersonal interactions with others, and such interactions are the main mechanism for their personality formation. The specificity of developmental disorders leads to special conditions of children's interactions with others. In this context, developmental delay (hereinafter DD) should be studied separately due to the complex nature of this disorder and its impact on children's interpersonal interaction with others, primarily due to difficulties arising during their communication. Against such background, the quality of communication is determined by DD children's communication skills.

Only certain aspects of DD preschoolers' communicative activities were studied (Dmitrieva, 2005 [6]; Nodelman and Shevchenko, 2007 [14]; Popovicheva, 2004 [15], etc.); such selectivity did not allow forming a holistic scientific view of this phenomenon and, thus, developing the effective technologies of psychological influence for communicative activity optimization by taking into account the specifics of developmental delay.

Therefore, communicative activities should be classified to outline effective technologies of their formation in DD preschoolers. That is why the aim of our research is to substantiate theoretically and experimentally types of DD preschoolers' communicative activities and a corresponding technology (a main directions) of their formation in such preschoolers.

The aim is specified in the following research tasks:

- 1) to determine within the framework of the ascertaining experiment the types of DD preschoolers' communicative activities;
- 2) to substantiate theoretically and to test experimentally the technology forming DD preschoolers' communicative activities.

■ RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Experiments (ascertaining and formative) were carried out with the use of special conversations, analysis of activity products and medical, psychological and pedagogical documentation and the following methods of psychological examination substantiating the proposed classification of communicative activities:

- the motivational component was studied using Geometric Shapes Test (Beskova, Thostova, 2005) [2] and Gromova's Kingdom-State technique (2003) [5];
- the inter-subjective component was studied using Lisina's method revealing the motives of children's interaction with adults (2009) [11]; the method of subjective assessment of children's interpersonal relationships proposed by N. Semago and M. Semago (2007) (the applied questions revealed the roles of the family, the loved ones and friends) [16]; Yurieva's method identifying the types of children's dialogic interaction in the joint visual and play activities (2006) [23];

- the semantic component was studied using the method of Choosing a Partner proposed by A. Ulanova (2015) [20]; the method of Predicting Another Person's Behaviour developed by Sergienko, Lebedeva, Prusakova (2009) [18] and their method of Understanding mental causality; Talanova's method of narratives (2011) [19];
- the reflective component at the level of communicative activities with the personalized Other was studied using the method Me with My Favourite Toy modified by Vasina (2006) [4]; Minyurova's method of Human Contour (1995) [13]; Vasina's Contour of a Favourite Toy method (2006) [4]; the questionnaire applied to parents (or educators) to identify the phenomenon of an imaginary companion proposed by Chesnokova, Yaremchuk (2002) [21]; by interviewing a child about his/her imaginary companion according Taylor, Cartwright & Carlson (1993) [29], the modification proposed by Chesnokova, Yaremchuk (2002) [21]; the reflective component at the level of communicative activities with the Other in culture was studied by applying Shakarova's method for analysing communications during a game based on the animated series Smeshariki (Funny balls) (2012) [22]; the Method of Pictogram in Dyachenko's modification (1996) [7]; Kuczynsky's Dialogues Analysing Method (1988) [10]; Mavrina's Cubes with Pictures Method (2000) [12]; Lion method proposed by Zabramna, Borovik (2003) [8]; Flower-Seven-Colours method in Semenova's modification (2010) [17].

The following mathematical and statistical methods were used: qualitative and quantitative analysis of empirical indicators using Mann – Whitney U-test to establish intergroup differences. All calculations were performed using the statistical software package SPSS 20.0 for Windows.

■ RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Akopov (2010) [1], Bodalov (1996) [3], Kagan (1988) [9], Kuchinsky (1988) [10] examined communicative activities in the context of inter-subjective and intra-subjective interactions. This gives grounds to determine the four-component structure of a communicative activity, which includes such interconnected components: a partner (a subject or an object) – a communicative activity (internally/externally directed or combined) – abilities and mechanisms of a conscious (semantic or reflective) communicative activity – a partner (a subject or an object).

Basing on the performed theoretical analysis, we developed a structural-functional model of an communicative activity consisting of the following components: the motivational one, related to the boundaries of the self and guiding an individual's activities at all stages of his/her development; the inter-subjective component, manifested in a child's inter-subjective interaction with the Other in society (with adults or peers); the semantic one, providing implicit and explicit mentalization; the reflective component, realized in intra-subjective interactions with the personalized Other, parasocial interactions with the Other in culture or inter-subjective relationship with the Other in culture (in child-adult groups) (I. Omelchenko, 2018) [27].

Thus, according to the performed theoretical analysis, a unified view on links between the concepts of communication, converse and communicative activity has not been developed still. At the current stage of problem development, a communication activity is interpreted as an activity whose subject communicates with another person, a communication partner with the aim to obtain cognitive knowledge of others and,

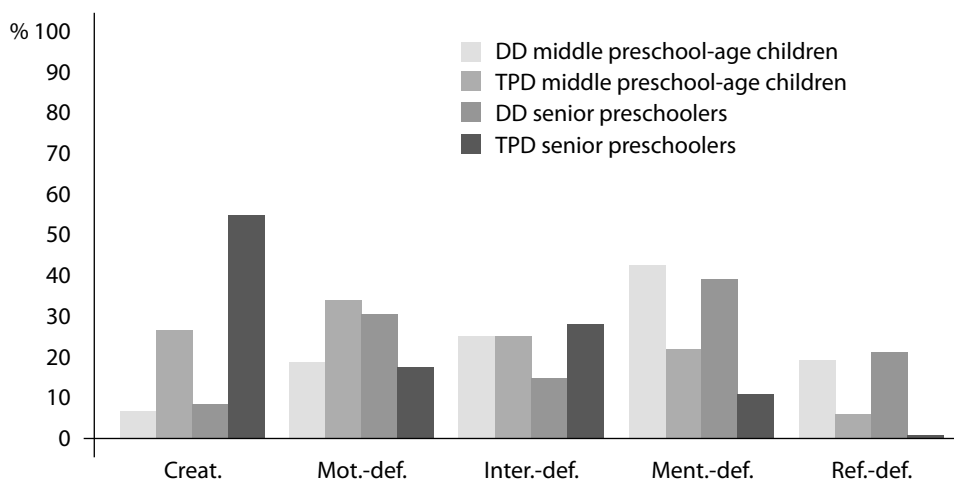
through them, of Self and Self-evaluation. A communicative activity is provided by several functions (motivational-intentional, epistemological-affective, reflective-semantic and reflective-value) depending on a formed communicative activity as a holistic phenomenon and its individual structural components.

Basing on the generalized results obtained at the theoretical stage, we developed conceptual and methodological bases for research on DD preschoolers' communicative activities, using the existential-subjective approach (Becker-Weidman, 2016 [24]; Lyons-Ruth, 2006 [25]; Tomasello, 2008 [30]; Meltzoff, 1990 [26]; Stern, 1985 [28]).

The study sample consisted of 583 people, including: 291 preschool children, of which 173 were DD preschoolers (85 middle preschool-age children and 88 senior preschoolers) and 118 preschoolers with typical psychophysical development (TPD) (58 middle preschool-age children and 60 senior preschoolers); 291 parents (or people who substituted them), of whom 173 were raising DD children (85 were raising middle preschool-age children and 88 had senior preschoolers) and 118 parents of TPD preschool children (58 were raising middle preschool-age children and 60 had senior preschoolers).

Basing on the generalization of the obtained empirical data, we revealed types of preschoolers' communicative activities. We differentiated two main types of communicative activities: creative-productive and deficient. The creative-productive type is characterized by formed all components of communicative activities: inter-subjective, intra-subjective and parasocial. The deficient type is characterized by underdeveloped components of communicative activities. In turn, we classified four subtypes in the deficit type depending on the most deeply unformed component: motivationally deficient, inter-subjective-deficient, mentally deficient and reflexive-deficient.

The obtained empirical data give grounds to state (Figure) that DD children were mainly characterized by the deficient type of communicative activities.



Typology of communicative activities of DD and TPD middle- and senior preschool age children (in %)

Notes: Creat. – creative-productive; Mot.-def. – motivationally deficient. Inter.-def. – inter-subjective-deficient; Ment.-def. – mental deficient; Ref.-def. – reflexive-deficient.

We found that TPD children had mainly the creative-productive type, but only 4.7% of DD middle preschool-age children and 5.7% DD senior preschoolers were characterized by this type. Among the deficient subtypes of communicative activities, the mentally deficient and motivationally deficient subtypes predominated. Both subtypes were characterized by significant difficulties in communication due to insufficiently formed understanding of the Other and inadequate feeling of the Other, underdeveloped reflection-semantic and motivational-intentional functions of communicative activities.

The performed ascertaining experiment showed that DD preschoolers mainly had deficient types of communicative activities with various communicative difficulties because their motivational-intentional, epistemological-affective, reflective-semantic and reflective-value functions were insufficient. At the same time, comparisons of DD children of middle and senior preschool age gave grounds to state that there were not any noticeable positive dynamics in formation of communicative activity components during preschool age. Thus, without special psychological intervention, DD children's communicative activity components are formed with a significant delay. Therefore, it is especially important to develop a system of purposeful psychological measures to optimize formation of DD preschoolers' communicative activities.

The developed technology was based on a set of actions forming some components of DD children's communicative activities via the impact on the content and organization of inter-subjective interactions of children with the Other in society, parasocial interactions with the Other in culture, intra-subjective interaction with the personalized Other (implicit and explicit), inter-subjective relationship with the Other in culture (in child-adult groups), as well as ensuring productive communication in the family, so that helping parents to understand their children's communicative difficulties and to master adequate strategies to respond to such difficulties.

The methodological basis for the proposed technology was a set of interrelated strategic and tactical principles. The used strategic principles were: post-non-classical, paradigmatic ones and application of many approaches; value-semantic orientation; subject orientation; internalization-exteriorization; unity of consciousness and activities; focus on a peer; clear boundaries of interaction; an adult's anticipatory initiative; formation of communicative activities in a game and through reliance on subjective attitude to peers; awareness and reflection. The used tactical principles were: modelling of content, methods and tools; psychological and pedagogical support of children's personal inclusion into correctional and developmental activities; dialogue in interactions.

The formative influence on DD preschoolers' communicative activities was practically implemented within two areas: correctional-developmental and educational-consultative.

The correctional-developmental influences were implemented in several stages.

At the first stage, the space of inter-subjective interactions with the Other in society (adults and peers) was developed in games and via artistic-productive activities. The methods used at this stage were: didactic games with elements of competition; exercises to develop sign communication; games for relaxation; psychological and didactic games and exercises developing language etiquette; joint productive activities with an educator and peers; social and communicative training.

At the second stage, parasocial and inter-subjective interaction with the Other in culture was developed through parasocial interaction with a cultural product (an

animated character, reproduction of a picture, musical and literary pieces). The methods used at this stage were: warming with a two-stroke game; musical etudes; an imaginary journey according to a proposed picture; personification of inanimate objects; interactive microphone; conversations, polylogues basing on literary works; dialogues and polylogues basing on cartoons.

At the third stage, the space of intra-subjective interaction with the personalized Other (a favourite toy or an imaginary companion) was developed. The methods used at this stage were: the puppet therapy; identification with a doll or a favourite toy; game therapy; a mirror imaging of a child's real behaviour with improvised directing games; inventing compliments; virtual (imaginary) dialogues, etc.

The aim of the fourth stage was to help understand causes of the Other's behaviour and anticipate it. The methods used at this stage were: games, exercises and projective drawing, psychogymnastic etudes aimed to express different emotions, a cube with emotions, joint discussions of various situations and thematic pictures, thematic conversations.

At the fifth stage, general cultural and group values were promoted during joint activities with adults and peers; awareness of the sociogenic value of the Other was developed; the values of cooperation were presented. The methods used at this stage were: thematic lessons, conversations on ethical issues; dynamic minutes; games; thematic drawing; watching cartoons that showed examples of the value of the Other; polylogues; psychological etudes and exercises; folk round-dance games, etc.

The educational-consultative work was implemented in parallel with this correctional-developmental work. The following forms of work were used: lectures, group consultations, problem focusing seminars, workshops, trainings, and speeches at parent meetings.

The approbation of the proposed experimental technology forming communicative activities revealed qualitative shifts for all components of communicative activities in both middle and senior DD preschoolers.

Thus, DD children from the experimental group showed better formation of all components in comparison with control group children. As for motivational component, the number of used behavioural strategies was increased and their use to establish contacts with others became more flexible. As for inter-subjective component, the number of preschoolers whose forms of communication corresponded to the age developmental norms grew. As for semantic component, understanding of reasons for others' behaviour increased gradually, and children predicted better communication partners' actions. As for reflective component, children developed the ability to humanize a toy and create an imaginary companion for a game.

The results of approbation of the proposed experimental technology revealed positive dynamics, namely: the number of children with a creative-productive type of communicative activity had increased (Table). This indicated improved motivational orientation (due to increased flexibility of contacts), formed inter-subjective interactions with adults and peers, developed mechanisms for cooperation (mutual understanding, coordination, external dialogue), formed practical and non-situational motives for communication, implicit and explicit mentalization, existing intra-subjective and parasocial types of interactions (in particular, developed internalizing identification and reflexive decentration in communicative relationship with a favourite toy or an imaginary partner, improved ability to combine different positions in the field of consciousness and different roles in parasocial interactions with cartoon characters), formed inter-subjective

Comparative results for DD preschoolers about the distribution of communicative activity types after the formative experiment (in% of the total number)

Formed types of communicative activities in DD preschoolers	Middle preschool age, exper. group (EG 1)	Middle preschool age, contr. group (CG 1)	Senior preschool age, exper. group (EG 2)	Senior preschool age, contr. group (CG 2)
Creative-productive type	15	5	25	10
Motivationally deficient type	20	10	20	10
Inter-subjective-deficient type	20	25	15	25
Mentally deficient type	30	30	25	30
Reflective-deficient type	15	30	15	25

communicative relationship with the Other in culture by symbolic means, developed verbalized internal dialogue and cognitive and social-personal decentration.

In addition to the approbation results, we revealed the redistribution of examined children between deficient subtypes. In particular, the number of children with motivationally deficient type of communicative activities increased and, accordingly, the number of children with inter-subjective-deficient and reflection-deficient types reduced. It means that children's intra-subjective and inter-subjective boundaries were insufficiently stable and fragmented, but, at the same time, children from the experimental group showed increased flexibility in their choice of a behavioural strategy in contacts (EG1 vs. CG1 – $U=150,000$ at $p=0.040$; EG2 vs. CG2 – $U=126,500$ at $p=0.034$). At the same time, the decreased number of children with inter-subjective-deficient type revealed some specifics depending on the age sub-stages. Thus, middle preschool-age children improved their attitudes towards their educator ($U=122,000$ at $p=0.029$) and peers ($U=112,500$ at $p=0.014$); while senior preschoolers improved attitudes towards their both parents ($U=121,500$ at $p=0.027$) and peers ($U=93,500$ at $p=0.003$). In addition, the decreased number of DD children with the reflexive-deficient type revealed age specificity. In particular, such decrease in middle preschool-age children was connected: with the improved ability to humanization of a toy ($U=127,000$ at $p=0.016$); with a type of a favourite toy ($U=130,000$ at $p=0.014$); the formed ability to model a game based on an animated plot ($U=126,000$ at $p=0.027$). And, respectively, the decreased number of senior preschoolers with reflective-deficient type was due to the improvement of: humanization of a toy ($U=104,000$ at $p=0.003$); functional purpose of a favourite toy from the child's position ($U=117,500$ at $p=0.017$); a favourite toy type ($U=116,000$ at $p=0.007$); existing identification with a favourite toy ($U=110,000$ at $p=0.005$); ability to model a game based on an animated plot ($U=124,000$ at $p=0.032$); social and personal decentration ($U=63,000$ at $p=0.000$)).

The dominance of the mentally deficient type of communicative activities in both examined groups showed that DD children were characterized by persistent underdevelopment of implicit mentalization (assessment of partners' mental properties and recognition of emotions and mental causes of emotions) and explicit mentalization (underdeveloped understanding of moral and ethical aspects of the Other's behaviour). At the same time, the approbation revealed some positive dynamics within this deficient type shown by the children from the experimental group. In particular, these children showed relatively better understanding of the causes of the Other's behaviour ($U=133,500$ at $p=0.047$ for middle preschool age children and $U=129,000$ at $p=0.039$ for senior

preschoolers), better ability to predict the Other's behaviour ($U=133,500$ at $p=0.047$ and $U=109,000$ at $p=0.009$). This means that a longer targeted intervention forming qualitative characteristics of intra-contact and inter-contact, teaching adequate strategies for building contacts, developing a mentalization mechanism, both implicit and explicit, can provide qualitative changes in preschoolers' communicative activities.

Thus, the approbation proved the effectiveness of the author's technique of forming communicative activities in DD preschoolers.

■ CONCLUSIONS

Leaning on the outlined research tasks, we performed the analytical comparison of the theoretical and experimental research and drew the following conclusions:

1. Basing on the performed theoretical analysis, we developed a structural-functional model of an communicative activity with the following components: the motivational one, related to the boundaries of the self and guiding an individual's activities at all stages of his/her development; the inter-subjective component, manifested in a child's inter-subjective interaction with the Other in society (with adults or peers); the semantic one, providing implicit and explicit mentalization; the reflective component, realized in intra-subjective interactions with the personalized Other, parasocial interactions with the Other in culture or inter-subjective relationship with the Other in culture (in child-adult group).
2. The systematization of the obtained empirical data served as a basis for developing a typology of communicative activities in preschool age. We differentiated two main types of communicative activities - creative-productive and deficient. The creative-productive type of communicative activities is characterized by flexibility and a wide range of behavioural strategies for establishing contacts, formed inter-subjective interaction with adults and peers, developed mechanisms of cooperation, formed practical and non-situational motives for communication, implicit and explicit mentalization, developed mechanisms of internalizing identification and reflective decentration in a communicative relationship with a favourite toy or an imaginary partner, the ability to combine different roles in the field of consciousness. The deficient type is characterized by underdeveloped components of communicative activity. In turn, we classified four subtypes in the deficit type depending on the most deeply unformed component: motivationally deficient, inter-subjective-deficient, mentally-deficient and reflexive-deficient.

The obtained empirical data give grounds to state that preschoolers with developmental delay were characterized by mainly motivationally deficient and mentally deficient types of communicative activities, thus the shortcomings of their communicative activities were due to insufficiently formed motivation and thinking, respectively.

Children with motivationally deficient type of communicative activities were characterized by instable and fragmented intra-subjective and inter-subjective boundaries; frequent difficulties in interaction due to the peculiarities of inter-subjective interaction; low communicative initiative and focus.

Mentally deficient type of communicative activities is manifested in difficulties of communicative forecasting, misunderstanding of behaviour causes, poor mentalization. Such children often get into conflict situations because they cannot predict results of their actions or actions of others, are poorly oriented in the generally accepted norms and rules

of conduct. Poor inter-subjective interaction is characterized by negative understanding of others, insufficient coordination during interactions and unformed ability for external dialogue manifested in the predominant coactive interaction; violations in the reflection-value function of communicative activities. In particular, the inter-subjective type of interaction with the Other in culture is characterized by underdeveloped symbolization, verbalized internal dialogue, cognitive or social and personal decentration.

3. The technology forming DD preschoolers' communicative activity was developed. According to the data obtained from the formative experiment, a positive trend was revealed: the number of DD children with the creative-productive type of communicative activities grew.

After testing the technology forming DD preschoolers' communicative activities, we revealed the redistribution of examined children between deficient subtypes. In particular, the number of children with motivationally deficient type of communicative activities increased and, accordingly, the number of children with inter-subjective-deficient and reflection-deficient types reduced.

We have proved that the stable dominance of the mentally deficient communicative type before and after forming experiment shows that children with developmental delay can be characterized by persistently underdeveloped mechanisms of both implicit and explicit mentalization, due to the specifics of their developmental disorders. However, the results of the forming experiment give grounds to talk about slow, however, positive dynamics in this mechanism formation.

The promising areas of further research in the context of this problem are the study on conscious communicative activity genesis at schoolchildren with developmental delay.

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