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Methods and techniques of teaching english applied in the kindergarten and in the primary school

1. Introduction

The effective teaching of foreign languages to kindergarten and primary school children is currently the educational priority of the modern societies in Europe and in the world. In many countries special conditions are created to familiarize pupils with language and cultural diversity in Europe and work is undertaken to provide the continuity in language learning during the whole process of teaching at school. Also in Poland, the compulsory teaching of English was introduced to the core curriculum 3 years ago and it starts from the stage of kindergarten and primary school education.

However, in order to effectively implement teaching English at such early stages of education, it is worth remembering that the teachers providing instruction or the ones who would like to teach children English should realize which most effective methods they should apply and which difficulties they can encounter at work, because teaching children is only effective when it takes into account their developmental characteristics.

Children learn in a different way than older learners, their contact with a foreign language should be perceived by them as a fantastic adventure in which they would like to participate. All forms connected with movement such as rhymes, songs, play, language and movement games, roleplays during which drawings or mascots can be used are the most effective forms of teaching from child's point of view.

2. Working with pre – school children

Defining this stage of child's development as the time of very dynamic simultaneous transformations is in favour of starting foreign language instruction

at earlier age. Stimulating the development is the biggest task of the environment where the child spends time. It mainly refers to the school environment where providing children with knowledge and language skills increases memory capacity, influences the development of cognitive processes whereas the suitable methods and techniques and the influence on many senses support motor development and stimulate sensory perception of a child [1].

Pre-school children undergo enormous transformations in their physical, emotional, social, cognitive and intellectual development. These transformations occur gradually. Within the same age group, there are often significant individual differences concerning the development of particular children. The very important element of these transformations is the period of concentration of a pre-school child, which gradually rises with time. Therefore, the foreign language classes for children aged 3 should only last 15-20 minutes, however in case of 5-year-old children they can be lengthened to 30 minutes[2].

Introducing elements of a foreign language to a group of children constitutes a great challenge faced by the teacher. However, children learn willingly and in a natural way for them – that is through play. It is commonly known that if learning brings pleasure – and play is such – it becomes more effective. Children are curious about the world and owing to it, they eagerly learn about foreign cultures, about the life of their peers in other countries. They also willingly learn some songs, poems, rhymes and participate in movement games and play. All of these are extremely significant in learning English.

The child cannot motivate itself to learn; therefore there is a need to provide elements which will encourage the child to learn. These are numerous praises, smile and good atmosphere during the classes, great fun, attractiveness of the games and pictures, alternating passive and active forms of activities and also, some kind of exaggeration – singing loudly, pretending by the teacher to be surprised by for example vanishing of the flashcard, funny movements and amusing facial expressions[3].

According to Agnieszka Kostrzewska, the most important rules of procedure applied by the teacher during the classes preparing children to use the foreign language are:

- teaching the language always needs to relate to something specific – a subject, a phenomenon or a situation;
- during the process of teaching, the pictures or objects which a child can see, touch or hear at a given moment should be used;

[1] Sikora-Banasik D., *Wczesnoszkolne nauczanie języków obcych. Zarys teorii i praktyki*, Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, Warszawa 2009, s. 5.

[2] Szpotowicz M., Szulc-Kurpaska M., *Język angielski w wychowaniu przedszkolnym. Program nauczania 3, 4, i 5-latków*, Oxford University Press, 2014, s. 5.

[3] Kostrzewska A., *Teczka materiałów do nauczania języka angielskiego w przedszkolu, zgodna z nową podstawą programową*, Forum, Poznań 2015, s. 1-5.

- case inflection of nouns and verbs at any time is made by example; the child is only given the ready-made sentences, nobody explains why they are formed in one or the other way.

It is important not to impose either repetition or speaking English on children. Every child starts speaking a foreign language when it is ready to do so. At the beginning of working with children, the teacher should restrain himself or herself from correcting mistakes. Only when the group feels more comfortable during the classes containing the elements of a foreign language, may the teacher increase the number of the corrected mistakes. It should be always done with a smile, in a friendly manner, not reprimanding the child but simply showing or submitting the correct form or the way of making the given sentence[4].

Excessive expectations and requirements, not noticing the child's learning achievements for a longer period of time, unjust punishments and reprimands, forms of pressure, restrictions, too critical or stressing forms of evaluation, negative emotions such as boredom, fatigue, tiredness, anxiousness, fear, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, etc. result in passivity, discouragement, sometimes aggression, and consequently lead to slow disappearance of interest in learning a foreign language[5].

3. Methods of teaching English used in kindergartens and in early primary school education

Before discussing the best for children methods used to teach English we should pay attention to the fact that people – also children – show various abilities and learn about the reality in the way which is right for them. The ways of learning about the surroundings and everyday functioning of people are reflected in Howard Gardner's concept of eight types of intelligence. From the point of view of a foreign language teacher, the most significant of them all are three: the kinaesthetic, the musical and the visual – spatial ones. It is extremely significant while working with children because these three types of intelligence can be easily distinguished in a group of children and the kind of the dominant ability within the range of these three types of intelligence determines the way how the child learns the best.

For example, children showing the well-developed kinaesthetic intelligence like to be in constant movement, they can be easily distracted, they learn by dancing, physical exercise; they also like mid-class activities in form of rhymes which involve showing. These are the energetic, lively children, eager to participate in the activities on condition that a great number of movement games are provided. Children with the best developed visual and spatial abilities can be characterized by good visual memory. They can be also characterized by sensitivity to colours, number

[4] Ibidem, Rozdział 1, 1.3, s. 2.

[5] Iluk J., *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?,*Gnome, Katowice 2002, s. 62.

of elements, images and also the particular will to play cards and memory games whereas the children with developed musical intelligence can be characterized as sensitive to sound. Such children like singing songs, playing the musical instruments, rhyming, reading books aloud.

Due to the fact that in case of many people in the kindergaten group it is impossible to determine one dominant type of intelligence during the classes with the elements of English, the task of the teacher is to adapt the course of classes in such a way as to include elements which will encourage each child to participate.

Therefore, every single lesson should contain:

- at least two songs – the welcoming one and the one at the end of the lesson;
- a few rhymes as the mid-class activities;
- movement games or simple physical exercises, f. ex. touching the parts of the body or furniture in the classroom;
- games with the use of picture cards – flashcards, memory games or board games;
- games involving the powers of observation[6].

4. TPR (The Total Physical Response Method)

The TPR method assumes that the foreign language can be acquired in the easiest way when both hemispheres are simultaneously stimulated – the right one responsible for movement, and the left one – which deals with the language. Stimulating both hemispheres influences the efficiency of language acquisition, and what follows it – carrying out the process of teaching.

Teaching based on TPR consists in the fact that the teacher gives instructions in a foreign language, and the learners respond using body movements or gestures and the teacher reinforces his or her instructions by using body language. The instructions are executed without words. Teacher's enthusiasm and positive reinforcements such as: the presence of numerous praises, smile and positive energy are essential here. Children are mainly supposed to listen and perform teacher's instructions, though they may also give instructions to the rest of the group. This method develops the ability to listen.

5. MSA (The Multi-Sensory Approach)

The multi-sensory approach is not only the way to learn a foreign language but it also supports the general development of a child and teaches in a way that

[6] Ibidem, s. Rozdział 2 s. 1, 2.

seems to be the most natural for children. Children learn about the environment by using taste, smell and touch, visual and hearing sensations. In this way, each child gets the general information about the world. The multi-sensory approach enables children to use the senses in a conscious way. Owing to it, children are sensitive to such values as beauty, good manners, safety while playing. The child who is taught with the use of all senses extends its concentration span, relaxes and stimulates curiosity about the world. Multi-sensory games to be used during the foreign language classes are:

- Mixed puppet clown: being given a signal by the teacher or one of the children, the rest of the group members touch different parts of the body: they touch the head with their hands and next they touch their fingers with their feet and so on;
- The bag with puzzles – the teacher places different objects learned during the classes in the bag. The child touches the object in the bag and guesses what it is;
- What can you hear? The children's task is to guess the source of the performed sounds;
- Flying figures – children draw a known letter, a geometric figure or a sign in the air or on the back of a classmate being close to them;
- Playing colours – participants of the game stand in a circle, the teacher sets which colour or word is forbidden (and after hearing which a child cannot catch the thrown ball). All children take turns to throw the ball to other participants of the game;
- The game during which children try various tastes, group them, get to know about hard vegetables and fruit, the soft ones, the ones which are juicy or less juicy, the sour or the sweet ones, salty dishes and the ones which are very spicy.

6. CA (The Communicative Approach)

This method uses the natural context for learning the language by the children. It uses the fact that we learn the language the fastest being forced to use it and when we are surrounded by it. This method emphasizes communication with another person, that is the use of expressions in a foreign language on everyday basis, in all social situations which take place during the day. This method promotes speaking in a foreign language, pays attention to the fact that we should not care about the mistakes.

However, we should remember that younger school children love drawing, playing, singing, looking at images and listening to stories. Using these elements in the process of teaching stimulates language development and shows the children the possibility how to immediately use the new language code to perform specific tasks.

It provides the learners with the contact with the authentic language and the language communication situation is similar to the natural one[7].

While incorporating elements of a foreign language with the use of the communication method, children perform standard tasks and fill out worksheets and the teacher complements these contents by:

- roleplaying, acting out dialogues;
- listening to authentic recordings in a foreign language: radio news, CDs, audiobooks;
- reading books adapted to the age, leaflets, brochures, newspapers;
- starting communication with the children in simple situations which occur on everyday basis: making requests, apologizing, expressing preferences concerning games or food;
- listening to the mother tongue together with the foreign language – 'hamburger' technique which consists in saying the expression in English, next in Polish and once again in English: the child knows what the given expression means and at the same time it revises it in English twice;
- 'playing with a foreign language' with the use of card games, board games and movement games.

There are a few ways of working with the communication method while teaching the youngest children. These are:

- storytelling (telling stores or reading fairy tales);
- singing rhymes;
- movement games;
- drama forms;
- project work.

7. Audio-lingual Method

Here, the particularly useful thing is repeating after the role model (a teacher or a recording), in group or individually, repeating phrases, words or groups of sentences a few times in order to form some language habits (*drills*) and learning some poems, rhythmical counting games, rhymes (*jazz chants*) and songs by heart. All of it aims at facilitating fluency of speech or the correct pronunciation or intonation. It is the method which facilitates both the ability to listen and speak[8].

[7] Pamuła M., *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych w kształceniu zintegrowanym*, Fraszka Edukacyjna, Warszawa 2004, s. 43.

[8] Ibidem, Rozdział 2: *Zestawienie metod nauczania języka angielskiego rekomendowanych przez ekspertów*.

8. Forms of work used by the English language teacher in the kindergarten and in the early primary school education

8.1. Global reading

It consists in creating labels for global reading. Children learn how to recognize and read the word on the basis of its global, overall image. In order to use the method of this type, the teacher should prepare labels – the younger the children, the bigger the wording. The teacher together with children may define the objects in the classroom using the labels at the beginning of the school year or as they are introduced; a good idea is also to define chairs and furniture or children's lockers and shelves in the classroom with children's names.

8.2. Games, poems and songs

At this age, it is the main way to remember the language. Children are sensitive to music and rhythm, most of them like singing. Therefore, it is worth using the songs or rhymes (jazz chants) to teach expressions or sentences. Each line of a song should be accompanied by a gesture or a body movement. In order to do so, melody can be combined with movements of fingers, arms, touching, turning around in a circle, jumping, stamping feet or changing places.

Rhyming together is an excellent way to integrate the group. Due to the work with rhymes (jazz chants) and counting games, teachers improve children's language and mathematical skills developing the sense of order and proper sequence; they also exercise their sensitiveness to melody, rhythm, stress as well as the general knowledge about the world.

8.3. Telling stories and reading fairy tales

Telling or listening to fairy tales, stories, etc. in the early childhood positively influences the intellectual development of children and decides about their further success in school education. Fairy tales develop the language, imagination, fantasy, the ability to think and assess.

This form introduces the atmosphere which facilitates focusing attention. Then learners sit in a circle on the floor or the carpet. At the beginning, fairy tales are used to develop the ability of listening and comprehension when it is the teacher who reads or tells the fairy tale. With time, children can be encouraged to get involved in telling stories by using gestures or body movements and also uttering the repeated expressions or words. Listening to fairy tales and looking at pictures make children interested in the books and they get the pleasure from them, whereas the older kindergarten children become gradually interested in reading.

8.4. Drama

This method consists in being involved in a roleplay, acting out scenes, plays and improvisation. The technique which uses the elements of drama is taking advantage of a puppet or a toy to communicate with the children, to introduce new vocabulary or to exercise with it. Drama teaches how to be open-minded and active, to cooperate with others, to communicate and how to work in a team. It also develops imagination, allows children to express emotions and strengthens self-confidence. However, it should be noted here that not all the children willingly perform in front of others and they should not be forced to take part in such performances.

8.5. Visualisation and relaxation exercises

It concerns creating situations when children imagine themselves in other surroundings or in a different place. The teacher describes the children where they are, how they feel in English and children try to imagine it. Next, they draw what they imagined or they give the words which they remember from teacher's description. This type of exercises gives children an opportunity to listen and children develop their imagination. The relaxing atmosphere of such exercises reduces resistance connected with speaking.

8.6. Art classes

Such classes enable integration with the kindergarten classes in accordance with the recommendations of the new core curriculum and they provide an excellent context to learn a language. Activities of such type make an effort to meet the natural activity of children and enable them to learn by performing. Making some art motivates children to talk about their works of art and to listen to others. It is also used to recap new vocabulary and expressions, and due to its attractive form, it helps to memorize them. This method allows the teacher to have individual contact with the learners.

8.7. Play

While playing, children satisfy the natural need to move, they learn how to express their emotions and they develop cooperation with other children. Through play, children learn about the world and develop their imagination. During the play, they learn globally engaging senses, emotions and mind. The play also creates an opportunity to learn actively by performing some activity. These can be the well-

known to children Polish games (then the English language is added to them), authentic games originating from Anglo-Saxon countries or the games adjusted to the aims of teaching foreign languages.

8.8. Music

Music develops sound sensitivity and facilitates remembering sounds. It allows children to learn the correct pronunciation and acquire all expressions in a foreign language. Well-known melodies serve best. Properly selected music also has a calming effect on children, introduces the relaxing atmosphere and changes the mood. In order to apply music, you can use the sounds of nature or instrumental music. Classical music helps to develop sensitivity and creative activity in children. Classical or instrumental music may serve as a background for introducing vocabulary or expressions and listening exercises. Folk music from the English speaking countries enriches movement games and dance. The use of musical instruments in the process of teaching a foreign language is not only a chance to learn their names but also to recognize sounds which are produced by them. Instruments can be additionally used to tap out the syllables or to change the stages of the lesson[9].

9. Examples of games and plays used in teaching English to pre-school children[10]

9.1. Cops and robbers

The teacher divides children into two groups. One group is in the middle of a circle made of a rope on the carpet in the middle of a classroom. The second group is outside the circle keeping the distance from it. The teacher arranges image cards presenting the practised words in different places in the classroom and explains that when he or she says one of the words presented in the cards, 'thieves', that is the children standing in the middle of the circle are to run to the correct card, take it and get back to the circle as quickly as possible. In the meantime, 'policemen' are trying to touch the person holding the card. If they manage to do it before this person gets into the circle, the image card comes back to its place. In both cases, that is if the 'thief' manages to get back to the circle or if 'policemen' take back the card, children have to say what the card presents.

[9] Szpotowicz M., Szulc-Kurpaska M., *Język angielski w wychowaniu przedszkolnym. Program nauczania 3, 4, i 5-latków*, Oxford University Press, 2014, s. 11, 12.

[10] Ibidem, s. 12-14.

9.2. Spider and flies

The teacher or one of the children plays out the role of a 'spider' and the rest of the children are 'flies'. Flies can 'fly' freely in the classroom (the music can be played in the background). When the teacher or the child who is a 'spider' calls: *Spider catches*!, all other children are to stand still. If any of them moves, the child is caught by the 'spider' and is to answer the question concerning the currently learned vocabulary or expressions in English. If the child answers correctly, it is let free. If not, the 'spider' catches it into its net and it cannot 'fly' any more.

9.3. Hot and cold

The teacher asks one child to go out of the classroom. The other child hides the image card illustrating the learned word. The child who got out of the classroom comes back and looks for the card. All the other children help the child find the card by saying: *It's a …* silently when the child looking for the card is far away from the card and louder and louder when the child approaches it.

9.4. Simon says…

The image cards illustrating the taught vocabulary are placed on the walls all over the classroom. Children are to run to the right flashcard only when they hear the teacher's instruction *Run to…* which follows the expression: *Simon says…* If the teacher does not say: *Simon says…*, at the beginning, the children are to freeze in their tracks. The other variant of this activity is executing instructions ending in the word *please!* The children only run to the card if the teacher says: *Go to…, please!*

9.5. True/false guessing game

The teacher asks the children to stand one by one in a row. He or she places two cards in one line in some distance from one another in front of the children. One card presents the sign √ (tick = true), and the second **X** (cross = false). The teacher shows the image cards presenting taught vocabulary and calls it: *It's a…* Children are to jump towards the correct card depending whether the teacher calls the card correctly or not.

9.6. Chinese Whispers

The teacher places various objects which names children are to revise in the corner of the classroom. The children sit in a row facing the objects. The teacher whispers

the name of one object to the first child and the child is to whisper the word to the next child, etc. When the last child hears the word said by a classmate, the child is to run up to the pile of objects in the corner of the classroom and choose the right one. Next, the child comes back to the row with the object and gives it to the previous child saying: *Here you are!* The child who receives the object replies: *Thank you!* and gives it to the next child saying: *Here you are!* This way, the given object gets to the teacher and he or she confirms whether he or she meant this object.

The examples of games and plays, taken from *The portfolio of materials for teaching English in the kindergarten in accordance with the new core curriculum (Teczka materiałów do nauczania języka angielskiego w przedszkolu, zgodnej z nową podstawą programową)*[11]:

- Acting out roles, theme-oriented games, roleplays – we need objects characteristic of a given situation: animals in the zoo, the sets to play at the doctor's, at the shop or at the marketplace;
- Mysterious box – the element of the classes which appears whenever new vocabulary is introduced can be a box with a flap in such a place where the child is not able to see what is hidden inside. All the children from the group need to touch the objects placed in the box in turn (one object per one child at any one time) and guess what it is by touching the object;
- What is missing? – presentation of a few objects, covering the eyes of the children and taking one of the objects and then asking the children to guess what is missing;
- *What's on my mind?* – the teacher presents a few objects to the children, using words describes one of them in terms of shape, colour, size, taste, etc. The task for the children is to guess which of the objects is being described by the teacher;
- *Skittles* – a game which consists in attaching the pictures to the skittles and the attempts to spike them by children. They can spike the word which the teacher demanded or the other skittles in random, giving the names of the words which they managed to turn down with the skittle;
- Puns – miming the word without the use of speech and guessing by the rest of the children what is presented by a given person. Children can be also divided into two teams;
- *I spy with my little eye…* – the teacher arranges the scattered on the floor cards or objects and the children have to guess which of the elements is being described by the teacher. The teacher describes the object in such a way that it is possible for children to recognize it: *I spy with my little eye… something small and green*!

[11] Kostrzewska A., *Teczka materiałów do nauczania języka angielskiego w przedszkolu, zgodna z nową podstawą programową*, Forum, Poznań 2015, Rozdział 3 *Komunikacja z grupą języku angielskim*.

- What fairy tale is it? – the teacher plays a recording of a fairy tale to the children or presents pictures with the characteristic elements one by one. Next, the children give the title (in English);
- The games which children like a lot are card and memory games: memory, bingo, lottery and also *snakes and ladders*. These are the games which are commonly known by the children;
- The game *Let'smilk the cow!* – the teacher keeps both hands with widely open fingers in front of him/ her. Each child catches one finger (in case of a numerous group we need to appoint one or two extra 'cows' from among the children). Next he/she says: *Milk is blue / yellow / red*… Nothing happens until the teacher shouts out *white*, then the children leave the fingers and run away and the 'cow' is supposed to chase them. Obviously, the caught child is a 'cow' in the next part of the game.
  Apart from revising the colours, any part of vocabulary (toys, food, everyday objects) can be revised in such a way, even some specific sentence constructions;
- Board games known to children in Polish, for ex. Dominoes, *Memory Game,* The Joker. Many of this type of games are available to the larners in a foreign language version and some of them can be prepared by the teacher with just little effort.

10. Teaching English to early primary school children

Talking about the pupils in grades I-III of the primary school, that is children aged 6 – 9, there is a need to characterize their basic behaviour patterns and their ways of learning. The characteristics given below were divided into two groups: constant characteristics (typical of children in grades I, II and III) and the dynamic characteristics (changing in the period from I to III grade)[12]. Constant characteristics:

- they perceive the world as a whole – it is also seen in case of language acquisition – they learn whole expressions without analysing their contents and they understand a lot from the context, not necessarily knowing all the words;
- they are curious about the world in a natural way and open to new situations, they are ready to learn a lot of things, including the language;
- they learn by acting – making artistic works, acting out roleplays, having direct contact with nature – engaging all their bodies;
- they have a great need for acceptance and being part of a group.

[12] Szpotowicz M., Szulc-Kurpaska M., *Język angielski w nauczaniu zintegrowanym. Program nauczania języka angielskiego dla klas I-III szkoły podstawowej*., Oxford University Press, 2009, s. 7.

Dynamic characteristics:

- they are ready to get to know new things and phenomena from the nearest surroundings 'here' and 'now' (grade I); with time, the range of interests is getting bigger and bigger (grades II and III);
- they do not have any restraints from copying the others, speaking, performing and accepting roles (grade I, II);
- they gradually become shy and avoid performing in front of the class and participating in movement activities (grade III);
- due to the fact that the process of mother tongue acquisition has not finished yet, acquiring the second language may in many respects remind acquiring the first language (grade I);
- at first, similarly as in case of the first language, children often need some 'silent period' to listen to real-life language and as preparation for speaking (grade I);
- they are also sensitive to criticism and emotionally instable in the process of shaping their personality, because they have not developed the self-critical thinking ability and the ability to self-assess and to assess others (grade I);
- however with time, they develop the sense of justice and become critical of the teacher and other learners (grades II, III);
- they have short attention span and they are quickly discouraged from longer lasting activities (grade I);
- they gradually extend the concentration span on the performed activity and their perseverance increases (grade II, III);
- at the beginning they are not ready to work in a team and prefer to work on their own or with the teacher (grade I);
- with time, they develop the ability to cooperate (pair work, working in small groups), (grades II, III);
- they quickly learn new words and expressions but they also quickly forget them, although after a longer period of time, they can remind themselves a lot of previously learned things (grade I);
- they do not have the developed habits or learning strategies because they learn unconsciously to a great extent (grade I);
- they start to distinguish the difference between facts and fiction (grades II, III).

The significant thing is also the fact that the teacher of English in the early primary school not only makes pupils sensitive to the language but also to its culture and due to discovering the culture of the other people, pays attention to the child's own culture, the sense of belonging to the same nation or ethnical

identity. The teacher also provides learners with universal values such as friendship or love, for example by selecting books, stories or parts of cartoons[13].

11. Forms of work used during English classes in the early primary school education

Due to a wide variety of the offered activities during the classes (musical, artistic, movement ones, reading, completing the worksheets, etc.), it is worth arranging the classroom in such a way as to facilitate the organization of classes. The traditional way of desks arrangement is not the best solution. The teacher tends to work with only some part of the group, and the children sitting further away do not fully participate in the lesson; it is difficult to run the movement game because of the lack of space and listening to a fairy tale or a story sitting at desks becomes an activity of little attractiveness. Because of that, arranging desks in a horseshoe or in groups of desks seems to be the most effective solution.

Young learners do not only need new incentives, movement and changes but also something totally the opposite: stability as well as the common procedures which will make them feel confident and safe. There is a need to introduce poems which will start and finish the language classes. Apart from the routine poems commencing and finishing the lesson, the teacher should also take care of other permanent components which will indicate some frames of the lesson. They will be as repetitive as not to bore the learners but rather to make the children feel stable and safe. Routines are formed in order to ensure time – space orientation for the pupils and to reduce stress connected with a new situation in which the communication tool is the language incomprehensible to the child[14].

Drawing, painting, making plasticine figures or modelling are the activities often used during the language classes. Also, the musical activities well settled during many language classes.

Games and fun activities are a significant moment in foreign languages teaching. During this form of activity, thinking, perceptiveness, the ability to focus attention or to solve problems as well as the ability to work in a group are developed. Games and fun are also of therapeutic function. Participating in a game reduces tensions, allows the children to release stress and deal with the failures, facilitates adaptation to new conditions which are created by school, supports other teacher's activities undertaken in order to reduce child's developmental deficits. Games and fun activities carried out in a natural way during the classes become some kind of a bridge between childhood and school[15].

[13] Pamuła M., *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych w kształceniu zintegrowanym*, Fraszka Edukacyjna, Warszawa 2004, s. 62.

[14] Ibidem, s. 61-63.

[15] Ibidem, s. 89.

Magdalena Szpotowicz and Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska write in their English language curriculum for primary school learners in grades 1-3 that most of the groups of learners, especially the ones learning at state schools are diversified in many terms. Therefore, it is essential for the teacher to skilfully assess the individual differences concerning the language level of particular learners and properly react to it. The diversification of learners in a group should be followed by the individual style of teaching:

- the teacher plans activities in two phases (the easier part is for all and the more difficult one for the more gifted learners or the ones who know the language better);
- the teacher prepares two versions of the same activity;
- the teacher assigns children different roles and tasks depending on their abilities, interests or predispositions;
- learners who are faster or better can be encouraged by the teacher to help other learners after finishing their work;
- the silent period can last longer in case of learners who are not still ready to speak[16].

12. Examples of games and fun activities in English for children in the early primary school

12.1. King of the beasts

One child becomes King of the Beasts. The other ones receive cards with numbers or pictures of the animals (5-7 the same repeated animals). Being given a signal, children disperse all over classroom and hide. The King calls some number. The child called answers with the sound uttered by the animal whose picture the child received. The King needs to guess what kind of animal it is. If the King guesses – the child gets out of the hiding place and becomes the King, if not – the King calls another number.

12.2. Treasure chest (*Word Bank*)

Learners are encouraged to make their own 'treasure chests'. Every time a new word appears – they write it down on a piece of paper and draw a picture to accompany it. Children can collect the words in envelopes or boxes. Then, they often look at them and at the same time they refresh the vocabulary.

[16] Szpotowicz M., Szulc-Kurpaska M., *Język angielski w nauczaniu zintegrowanym. Program nauczania języka angielskiego dla klas I-III szkoły podstawowej*, Oxford University Press, 2009, s. 16.

12.3. Rhyme Time

It is enough to give the word and ask the learners to list the words rhyming with the initial word, for example *cat: fat, that, mat, pat, hat,* etc. We can also give learners the riddle the answer to which will be the correct rhyme, f. ex. *What do you read that rhymes with cook?, What do you wear that rhymes with cat?, What fruit do you eat that rhymes with hair?, Where do you sleep that rhymes with red?* Asking questions, the teacher needs to use gestures to make it easier for the learners to understand the questions.

12.4. Crazy Dancer

If the children start to fidget and are restless during the lesson, let us take a short break for physical exercises. The teacher turns on rhythmic music and gives some commands like: jump, run, stretch, clap your hands, etc. Such an exercise becomes a great time – filler activity. It prevents fatigue and boredom.

12.5. Mirrors

Before the game, the teacher explains to children in Polish that they are to change into mirrors in the game. The teacher performs some activity or points at some part of the body; he or she may also pull a funny face (sad, cheerful, etc.). While doing so, the teacher repeats the name of the activity, chanting the name of the part of the body, etc. Children repeat the movements after the teacher; however they cannot say anything because mirrors do not speak. This game can be also played in pairs. The teacher explains the rules of the game in Polish. He or she says that the task for the children is to touch each other with the part of the body which is said by the teacher. The teacher tells the name of the part of the body in a foreign language a couple of times.

12.6. Look at me

The game consists in repeating the sequence of movements copying the teacher or the appointed child. The teacher says: '*Look at me! I'm (a lion)*'. The teacher turns into the given animal, repeating its name all the time. Being signalled by the teacher – *Now you*! or *Join in*! – children start copying the teacher and repeat the given word[17].

[17] Kotarba-Kańczugowska M., *Gry i zabawy (z) językiem obcym, czyli kilka słów o tym, jak unikać monotonii metodycznej* [W:] Sikora-Banasik D. (red. nauk.), *Wczesnoszkolne nauczanie języków obcych. Zarys teorii i praktyki,* Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, Warszawa 2009, s. 205-212.

13. Techniques and materials used to teach English in the kindergarten and in the primary school education

Below there are listed the teaching techniques described by Magdalena Szpotowicz and Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska in their co-written syllabuses: *The English language in the kindergarten. The syllabus for 3-, 4- and 5-year old children* and *The English language in the integrated teaching. The syllabus for teaching English to the primary school learners in grades I-III.* Some of the techniques for teaching vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and speaking are the same in case of the kindergarten children and learners in grades I-III. The remaining techniques, only typical of the kindergarten or the primary school were given below the ones which are common to all children. The techniques were arranged starting from the easiest to the more complex ones or the ones used at the further stages of education in the kindergarten or at school.

Techniques for teaching vocabulary:

- presenting words with the use of audio-visual aids (cards, boards, posters, photographs, everyday objects used in the kindergarten or at school – it is important for them to be colourful and to look attractive; these can be also toys in the kindergarten);
- storing the newly learned vocabulary by the children in dictionaries (pictures or stickers glued in the special notebook);
- frequent asking children questions about the earlier learned words with the use of pictures, photographs, flashcards or additionally in the kindergarten – toys or other objects;
- the use of the known words in new language contexts, f. ex. in new structures or functions;
- introducing new vocabulary while reading, listening or discussing fairy tales or stories;
- expanding vocabulary from a particular theme;
- the use of memory games such as *chain drill*, f. ex. *I like bananas and…* (each child repeats the products mentioned by previously speaking children and adds own product at the end).

In the kindergarten, the additional technique for teaching vocabulary is storing objects found or brought by the children from home in the baskets or boxes (in order to revise vocabulary, recognize and name objects).

Pronunciation teaching techniques:

- repeating one word a couple of times after the recording or the teacher (in the kindergarten – the hand puppet);
- repeating the expression or the sentence (to record the right intonation);

- showing the words which rhyme to the children and teaching them the words which rhyme and encouraging them to look for such pairs of words.

In the kindergarten, the lyrics of songs and poems are additionally repeated, sung and learned by heart by the children (practising intonation and pronunciation). However, at school teachers practise recognizing individual sounds in words with children).

Techniques used for teaching listening:

- listening and following teacher's instructions;
- listening to fairy tales, recordings which accompany picture stories or songs and answering teacher's questions;
- encouraging learners to predict the content of the listening text;
- listening for general understanding of a fairy tale or a story.

At school, the technique of listening for detailed information is also used.

Techniques applied to teaching speaking:

- repeating the sentences after the role model (a teacher or a recording);
- asking other participants questions while working in a group.

In the kindergarten, speaking is taught by singing songs and reciting poems as well as answering routine questions asked by the teacher. Whereas at school, the following techniques are additionally used:

- using set phrases and expressions on students' own during group work in order to get true information, f. ex. *What's your name?*;
- talking about yourself;
- describing pictures;
- telling a story on the basis of the series of pictures;
- telling or summarizing a fairy tale or a story.

In the primary school, grammar, reading and writing in English are also taught. Pre-school children are too little to practise these skills.

Techniques used for teaching grammar:

- frequent repetition of the set phrases and language expressions, f. ex. in poems, in rhyming activities (*chants*), stories;
- stimulating with the use of pictures, colours (f. ex. highlighting parts of the sentences with different colours);
- rearranging jumbled words to make sentences.

Techniques used for teaching reading:

- reading single words aloud by recognizing the written form of the word and associating it with its sound equivalent;
- reading roles in a picture story aloud;
- reading a short text aloud;
- silent reading for comprehension and answering questions connected with the text.

Techniques used for teaching writing:

- writing by tracing lines (grade I) starting from single letters;
- word spelling games;
- rewriting words and simple sentences;
- describing pictures with the use of single words;
- doing filling in the gaps exercises (filling in separate words, expressions and sentences);
- writing short texts on the basis of a given model.

Preparing children to be self-reliant as far as foreign language learning is concerned seems to be particularly important. Therefore, even at the first stage of learning in the kindergarten and later at school, it is recommended to develop certain self-study habits which will be developed at later stages of education. The technique facilitating the development of self-study skills which is applied both in the kindergarten and at school is starting and keeping own dictionaries (the picture ones in the kindergarten in case of 5- or 6- year - old children) and vocabulary notebooks.In the primary school, the other techniques for developing self-study skills are:

- mutual checking of exercises and comparing answers;
- asking each other about the newly learned words;
- using picture dictionaries;
- reading graded readers on pupils' own (for volunteers);
- play areas for mastering language skills;
- planning own work (f. ex. choosing one's homework).

Children attending kindergarten like playing and running around the classroom, however they can be easily distracted while performing the task together with others and they stop participating in the classes. In order to help children focus and keep up with the tasks, the teacher may introduce the following techniques disciplining children and focusing attention (kindergarten):

- creating a contract between the teacher and the pupils which will define the code of conduct during the classes. In order to do this, children's handprints

or fingerprints are used under the captions or pictograms presenting the list of rules. When the child breaks one of the rules, the teacher immediately reacts reminding the child of violating the rules and showing the child's 'signature' on the contract;

- sad or smiling faces can be awarded to a child on a special board exclusively used during English classes and the type of face depends on child's behaviour;
- when the children are to finish working in groups or pairs and become quiet, the teacher raises his or her right arm and makes a gesture imitating zipping the mouth. Then, all children raise their right arms up;
- the teacher creates the mysterious atmosphere to make children interested in the new exercise (makes a mysterious face expression, whispers: *Listen!*, touches the ear with the hand, shows a new object, f. ex. the closed box, pretends to cast spells, etc.);
- the teacher uses the sound signal (bell, musical instrument);
- the teacher changes the type of activity (movement, static and movement activities in turn);
- the teacher uses short, routine songs, signals, poems, f. ex. to make children quiet, to make them sit in the circle on the floor or at the table. At the beginning of a lesson children may for instance queue to board the plane in order to fly to the land of English. When they are to sit at the tables, they may form a train – in order to get on it to get to the tables.

Techniques used to develop cognitive predispositions and abilities (primary school):

- grouping objects according to colour, shape, size and semantic group;
- arranging in a sequence: days of the week, months of the year, seasons of the year, daily activities; sizes: big, medium, small; numbers 1 to 10;
- finding shapes (circle, square, rectangle, wheel) in the picture;
- drawing mirror reflections of for instance a butterfly, an apple, a heart;
- matching pairs, f. ex. animals (mother and baby animals), words of the opposite meaning, flashcards and wordcards;
- finding cause and effect connections, f. ex. arranging pictures from a story in the right sequence;
- exercising memory, f. ex. memory games;
- creative thinking, f. ex. drawing the playground where the given play stations are made from school equipment;
- analysis and synthesis, f. ex. analysis: exercises like find the object which is the odd one out, synthesis: exercises like: arrange puzzles and name what they present.

14. Materials for teaching English in kindergartens and in early primary school education

Teaching aids used in the process of foreign language teaching serve different functions. The most important of them can be the motivational one, that is arousing curiosity, interest, willingness and readiness to learn. Moreover, teaching aids move the child closer to the experienced new reality due to which they are of cognitive character. The educating function of teaching aids contributes to developing cognitive abilities in children and it supports both solving theoretical and practical problems by them and applying the acquired knowledge in practice. Teaching aids shape suitable attitudes, opinions and views and owing to it, they play the educational role. On the other hand, due to the controlling function they enable teachers to verify knowledge and assess the level of the acquired respective abilities[18]. Therefore, the key task of the visual aids is make it easier to experience reality, make the process of teaching more attractive and improve it.

At the stage of teaching in the kindergarten or in the early grades of a primary school, the use of teaching aids is necessary due to specific and imaginary thinking of children at that age. The educational content of the modern language course for children is rich and consists of[19]:

- student's book, usually containing a CD (sometimes an activity book is attached to the student's book);
- an activity book (frequently with a CD – ROM);
- teacher's book with course contents, materials for copying, tests, class audio CDs;
- posters, boards, big illustrations, photographs;
- flashcards for presenting vocabulary;
- picture cards for stories/ roleplays (*story cards*);
- wordcards;
- picture dictionary;
- film DVD;
- resources for an interactive board;
- hand puppet which is usually the main character in a book;
- parents – teacher cooperation notebook/ guide for parents.

At the stage of kindergarten and early primary school education, additional teaching aids should be applied apart from the elements mentioned above. These are f. ex.: board games, Klanza sheet, Cuisenaire's rods, interactive educational programmes or home-grown materials prepared by teachers or learners.

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[18] Jaros I., Raulinajtys A., *Środki dydaktyczne wykorzystywane w nauczaniu dzieci* [W:] Sikora-Banasik D. (red. nauk.), *Wczesnoszkolne nauczanie języków obcych. Zarys teorii i praktyki*, Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, Warszawa 2009, s. 215.

[19] Ibidem, s. 216.

Hand puppets play and teach, inspire and provide children, parents and teachers with many ideas to spend time in an interesting way. The hand puppet makes games played by children more attractive, being actively involved in them. It can recite poems, sing songs, tell stories and therefore hand puppets are indispensable while acting out scenes from the adored fairy tales or made up stories. Hand puppets help children develop their imagination and creativity, practise speaking and the ability to tell stories. Playing with hand puppets in a group stimulates the social development of a child because, on the one hand, puppets encourage communication and cooperation with peers and on the other hand, they consolidate a sense of self-confidence in relation to others. During the foreign language classes, the hand puppet becomes teacher's assistant. Learners who are encouraged to communicate in a foreign language are eager to do so. Owing to the hand puppet, there is nice atmosphere during the lesson and children become positive about the foreign language and learning it. The hand puppet also helps the teacher to sustain discipline during the classes.

The animation sheet is a teaching aid which is of great interest to little children. These are triangular, colourful pieces of light cloth sewn in shape of a circle with a diameter of 3 to 7 metres and lace-edged with the tape containing grip grasps for the children to handle them. The possibilities of the sheet's use are enormous. It proves to be very useful for games facilitating mutual learning about each other and integrating the group, activities aiming at practising reflex and perceptiveness, activities consisting in guessing or activities involving music. The example of an activity with the sheet: the sheet is on the floor whereas the children go around it in accordance with the rhythm of music. When the music stops, learners are to look for one object or a toy in the classroom which is the same colour as the sheet next to which the child stops and then child is to place this object on the sheet of the same colour and name the object in a foreign language.

Cuisenaire's rods, also known as colourful numbers or numbers in colours are colourful, wooden or plastic cuboids of the bottom area of 1 cm^2 and the length from 1 to 10 cm. Rods of the same colour are the same length. Only two characteristic features – colour and length make them different. Rods can be excellent to teach vocabulary covering such lexical areas as for example: the alphabet, colours, numbers, telling the time, parts of the body, family relationships, rooms and furniture, animals. They also facilitate acquiring various skills without formal learning of grammar but only teaching implicit such grammar aspects as: personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, prepositions, articles, numerals, nouns, adjectives, verbs, word order in an English sentence and many others. The activities with rods are like a game and they make use of children activities (f. ex. hot and cold game or what colour is the rod).

The choice of teaching aids depends on the assumed goals of a lesson, the applied methods and techniques, learners' age and the access to the teaching aids at school or in the kindergarten.

Teaching aids used in the kindergarten also include:

- toys, objects (such as packaging, food products, everyday objects);
- art and craft materials: paints, big cardboard boxes, colourful paper, scissors, glue, etc.;
- books to look at and read with the teacher (*big books and readers*);
- recordings of songs and poems;
- stories;
- recordings which accompany picture stories.

At school, apart from student's book and the activity book the following materials are used:

- maps for one-time or permanent exposure;
- authentic materials (such as packaging, tickets, brochures, photographs, etc.);
- art and craft materials (such as: paints, big cardboard boxes, colourful paper);
- picture dictionaries or bilingual ones for older children.

The basic teaching aids in the kindergarten and in the primary school are a CD player and a display board. The other useful and frequently used aids are: a DVD player, a drawing board, a computer with the Internet access allowing the teacher to prepare many activities at home and work with the whole class on the task displayed with the multimedia projector or an interactive board.

15. Summary

As mentioned in the introduction, children taught in the kindergarten or in the primary school should be supported in their development and the applied methods should be adjusted to the forms of activity typical of the age of the children. It is essential for a child to be actively involved in communication with the world in order to learn about the surroundings by performing some action or discovering. At this age, children are naturally curious about the world and they are eager to learn, which should be used, however remembering about teaching in a form of a game and about the range of children's interests. Such kind of teacher's engagement develops the positive motivation to continue learning a foreign language[20].

The teacher taking up the job of an English language teacher in the kindergarten or in early grades of the primary school should consider well if he or she has the right attitude to children, predispositions, knowledge how to organize the process

[20] Szpotowicz M., Szulc-Kurpaska M., *Język angielski w nauczaniu zintegrowanym. Program nauczania języka angielskiego dla klas I-III szkoły podstawowej*., Oxford University Press, 2009, s. 4.

of teaching to make it bring the best results. If the person does not have them, then the person should not work with children. For a child, the fact that the child likes the teacher means that the child likes the subject. The atmosphere created by the teacher in the classroom, his or her personality and activities he or she conducts condition whether the child will like the foreign language. Therefore, the attitude to children and the skilful teaching seem to be the most important in this job.

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Methods and techniques of teaching english applied in the kindergarten and in the primary school

Abstract: Foreign languages teaching methodology, especially the methodology of teaching English has been dynamically developing in Poland and in the world for many years. It is mainly connected with the fact that even the youngest children learn this language in the kindergarten or in the early grades of the primary school. This situation imposes constructing new methods, techniques and modes of work for teachers teaching English to children aged 3 to 9 as well as providing innovative teaching aids due to which learning will be possible and effective. This fact also results in the need to learn by the teacher about the psychopedagogical developmental conditions of children who the teacher will work with because as proved in this article children at the mentioned stage of education develop and learn in a different way than their older colleagues.

Keywords: teaching English, teaching children, learning methods, kindergarten, primary school