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## Differentiated approach to teaching play activity to children of infant and preschool age with a hearing disorder

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According to the Law of the Republic of Belarus on special education, the state policy in the sphere of special education of persons with peculiarities of psychophysical development is focused on their social adaptation and creation of the necessary conditions.

One of the principal means of socialization of children of infant and preschool age in conditions of auditory deprivation is development of their play activity. "Children's play, according to L.S. Vygotsky, - is aimed at their future activity, but mainly at social activity. Children see the activity of adults surrounding them, imitate it and transfer it into play; it is while playing that children master basic social relations and prepare themselves to future social development" [2].

Given that the nature and origins of play are socio-historical, children's real life serves as a basic condition of occurrence and development of their play activity [2, 10]. The basic play contents of infants with typical development are reflection of children's of social experience, their orientation in the material side of the human activity.

The data of special psychological and educational literature confirm that the general developmental directions of children with a hearing disorder coincide with those of normally hearing children. However, significant qualitative and quantitative peculiarities in the development of their cognitive activity, motor sphere, etc are pointed out [6, 8, 9]. Deaf and poorly hearing children have a very vague idea about objects, people and phenomena around them: they cannot name them and have difficulty in distinguishing them from a group of heterogeneous and homogeneous objects, they can hardly recognize them in a changed situation, they do not distinguish objects by their functional purpose, sometimes they cannot match a

real subject with its picture. Due to the limited social experience such children lag behind in the development of their play activity.

According to the psychological and educational and methodical literature, the major preconditions of transition to role play as the key type of pre-schooler's activity are the following: generalization and transfer of actions, sophistication of their structure, use of replacement objects, interaction of children while playing and assuming a certain role [3, 5, 7]. In connection with it, we organized an experiment, aimed at a complex research of play activity of untrained children with a hearing disorder.

The ascertaining experiment included four stages:

- 1) Revealing the nature of children's independent play activity;
- 2) Individual study of children's play activity in specially organized conditions:
  - while manipulating toys representing story characters, located in close proximity to the child;
  - while using toys representing story characters and building material, located in close proximity to the child;
  - while giving children the opportunity to choose play material available in the classroom on their own;
- 3) Defining the character of children's manipulation with objects according to their functional purpose, since, according to D.B. Elkonin, the occurrence of role play is genetically related to the formation of object operations in the early childhood under the guidance of an adult [10];
- 4) Revealing the children's ability to use replacement objects when they do not have representative toys they know from past experience.

According to the results of our complex research, it is possible to distinguish three levels of play activity development of children with a hearing disorder. **The first level** is characterized by lack of interest in toys and absence of play actions. **The second level** can be characterized by unstable interest in play material, manipulative method of play actions, poor emotional and verbal play contents. **The third level** presupposes unstable, undifferentiated interest in toys, object-reflective or story-reflective play actions, and poor emotional and verbal support of the play. At the same time, the research revealed quite a high correlation between the age of children and the method of play actions they use (which, as we know, is a determining attribute of play development). It allows us to make a conclusion that play activity of children with a hearing disorder develops more slowly in comparison with that of hearing children, the directions of this development, however, coincide.

Hence, we come to the necessity of perfection of the educational process of play formation, based on the differentiated approach in teaching deaf and poorly hearing children, depending on the revealed state of their play activity, which includes:

- a complex study of the state of children's play activity upon their entrance to a preschool educational institution;

- the use of programmes of different levels aimed at the development of play activity, developed for the selected groups children taking into consideration the state of their play activity at the beginning of preschool training;
- day-to-day and regular monitoring of the state of the children's play activity for the purpose of correction of the teaching programme.

While working out technological aspects of correctional teaching, we singled out principal directions of the development of play activity of children with a hearing disorder:

- 1) Enrichment of the children's idea of the world around them as the main condition of their play activity development;
- 2) Development of play interest;
- 3) Stage-by-stage formation of more and more complex methods of play actions in view of the actual zone of play activity;
- 4) Formation of the ability to act both in the real and pretend ways within the framework of each method;
- 5) Gradual formation of play interaction with peers;
- 6) Formation of the ability to assume a certain role.

The contents of correctional work presuppose stage-by-stage formation of play activity components in view of the determined level of play development. The work with children who have reached only the first level of play development starts with the first stage. The teaching of children on the second and third levels of play development starts with the second stage. The classes should be preceded by special work directed at development of children's idea of the world around them. One of the main conditions of work is constant motivated conversation with children.

*The first stage. The development of play interest.*

Psychological and educational researches [5, 7] specify that one of the necessary conditions of occurrence of play is interest, the child's emotional attitude to toys. According to

A.V. Zaporozhets, the development of pretend play is closely connected with the nature of the emotional attitude to this activity in general, to the particular toys, to the operations with them and to the adult [4].

The data of the special pedagogical literature confirm that children of infant and preschool age with a hearing disorder are not yet capable of arbitrary, voluntary efforts, which is explained by insufficient concentration, involuntariness of attention, purposelessness of perception [6, 8, 9]. Therefore, in our opinion, it is especially important first of all to arouse interest in a toy, positive attitude to it, the feeling of joy and happiness from its perception.

Our tasks are as follows: to arouse and stimulate interest in toys representing story characters, play operations, demonstrated stories, which gradually become more and more complicated; to form the ability to come into emotional contact with a toy; to develop the ability to focus and redirect attention; to bring up careful attitude to a toy.

The basic method of teaching is illustrative, which includes demonstration of toys; demonstration of operations with various toys; demonstration of enacted simple stories.

According to the researchers, while selecting toys it is necessary to take into account their subjects, the degree of generalization of the image and their size [1, 5, 7]. Therefore play material is introduced in a certain system: from pretend toys to realistic toys; from big bright toys to those smaller in size. As the main condition of the arousal and development of children's cognitive interest is novelty of the object or conditions of its presentation, it is recommended to present toys, firstly, in different order (a doll - a teddy bear - a dog – a car; a doll - a doll - a doll (different image solutions); and, secondly, from different places (from behind a screen, from behind a cupboard, from behind the back of a chair, etc.).

*The second stage. The formation of object-reflective play activity.*

Teaching play activity at the second stage includes the formation of the following children's skills:

- To use toys according to their functional purpose;
- To transfer operations adequately, firstly, to a similar toy that is, however, different in some attributes; and secondly, to another toy, functionally suitable for performance of the given operation;
- To use not figuratively presented play material as replacement toys;
- To enter into elementary interaction with a peer as a playmate.

According to it there have been tentatively distinguished three directions of work at the given stage:

1. Teaching play operations with toys (with a gradual transition to generalizations);
2. Formation of play operations with replacement objects;
3. Formation of elementary play interaction.

The use of methodical techniques at the given stage of teaching depends on the revealed state of play activity. There is supposed to be a transition from actions based on imitation or a sample to actions based on deferred imitation and a verbal instruction.

Thus the basic methodical technique of teaching children on the second level of play development is imitative actions. An adult performs play operations before the child and stimulates the child to reproduce them with the same toy. Several classes are held, which are aimed to form the skill to operate with this toy, after that the operations are transferred to another toy. Only after such preparatory work children are offered to choose one out of several identical toys. While teaching children on the third level of play development, it is recommended to start training with operations by sample. An adult performs a play operation and stimulates a pre-schooler to transfer it to a similar toy on their own.

Already at this stage the first notions of replacement objects are formed on the basis of demonstration, in particular, the idea that another object can be used instead of a toy, if it is functionally suitable.

There is supposed to be work directed at the child's perception of a peer as a playmate and the formation of play interaction between children. The formation of two types of object play interaction is envisaged: 'symmetrical', which presupposes imitative actions by children; and 'asymmetrical', which presupposes continuation and completion of each other's actions. Toys stimulating children to imitative actions are used, such as balls, baby carriages, cars, carts, etc. An adult interacts with every child, and then helps them turn to a peer playmate, if necessary, using joint actions and demonstration. The development of children's play interaction is formed at first while operating a common object, and then we are supposed to teach children not simply to imitate a peer's initiative action, but to carry it on and supplement it according to its meaning.

*The third stage. The formation of story-reflective play.*

At the final stage precise continuity of work related to introduction to the surrounding world and play teaching classes should be provided. The principal forms of work aimed at introduction to the surrounding world are specially organized classes, as well as watching elementary actions of adults and other children in everyday life, during daily routine. One of the most important conditions is active manipulation with objects by children, adequate participation in adults' work, which promotes the enrichment of the child's personal experience, the creation of conditions for its conscious transfer to play, both during the training and during the independent activity.

The basic organizational form of play activity teaching is play classes.

The work includes four periods:

Period I - enacting stories comprising one event.

Period II - representing stories consisting of several consecutive actions.

Period III - representing a chain of play actions within the framework of one story, entering into elementary interaction with a doll as a play partner.

Period IV – uniting the stories into a logical chain.

Such organization of teaching, based on the preliminary study of the state of play activity and providing a differentiated approach to its formation, promotes the creation of conditions required for children's transition to the next stage of play activity development - the role-play stage, which is the leading type of the pre-schooler's activity.

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