

## The Study Of Communication Skills In Children With Speech Pathology

By

**Anna Ivanovna Akhmetzyanova<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor Kazan (Volga) Federal University, Kazan, 420008, Russia

[<sup>1</sup>aahmetzy@yandex.ru](mailto:aahmetzy@yandex.ru)

**Tatiana Vasilyevna Artemyeva<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor Kazan (Volga) Federal University, Kazan, 420008, Russia

[<sup>2</sup>artetanya@yandex.ru](mailto:artetanya@yandex.ru)

### Abstract:

Communication skills are developed in preschool-age children in the process of interpersonal interaction, however, when this development is impaired, one observes a low level of formation of speech communication, children's inability to anticipate (predict) their own behavior and the actions of other children and adults in situations of interaction in the future.

The study aims to advance our knowledge of communication skills of children with speech pathology, their ability to predict behavior in situations of interaction.

To undertake an empirical study, a set of diagnostic techniques was selected. The methods for identifying communication skills were as follows: "Method of expert evaluation of the child's communicative behavior" (N. E. Veraksa); the method by A. M. Shchetinina and M. A. Nikiforova "Map of observations of the manifestations of communicative abilities in children of preschool age", the technique "Emotional faces" (N. Ya. Semago), structural and functional components of prediction were examined using the technique "Prognostic stories" (A. I. Akhmetzyanova, T. V. Artemyeva). Thirty preschool children with speech pathology were recruited for this study.

It was revealed that verbal skills in children with speech pathology were not fully developed, preschoolers of the nosological group did not have a sufficient level of verbal communication, which is conditioned by the structure of their speech defect. Children with speech pathology have insufficient experience in interpersonal communication, which makes it difficult to predict situations of interaction in the future.

The conducted research would be of great help in making up programs for the development of speech and communication skills in children with speech disorders.

**Keywords:** communication skills, interaction, children, preschool age, speech pathology.

## Introduction

The period of preschool childhood is an important stage in the formation of communication skills, the formation of adaptive behavior, including the communicative and social competences necessary for life in society [2, 5]. Only when interacting with other people does such a complex process as socialization take place, however, children with developmental disorders often find themselves isolated from their peers and adults, which hinders communication skills formation, interaction with other people [19, 20, 21], an important condition in interpersonal communication is the ability to forestall future events [17, 18]. The study of communicative and predictive features in preschoolers with developmental disabilities allows us to determine the conditions necessary for socialization. Since it is the speech-communicative function that makes it possible to verbalize actions, views, feelings fixed in speech models [1, 2, 3], we define it as a key function in the study of communication in preschool-age children with severe speech disturbance. This is due to the primacy of the speech abnormality which affects the development of children's psyche and contributes to accentuation of such negative qualities as isolation, passivity, negativism [6, 8]. The ability to predict is actively developed precisely at preschool age, however, thinking about the future is one of the specific problems for children of this age. It is difficult for preschoolers to reason and think about what will happen next, and in accordance with this, make any decisions. Scientists have determined that talking about the future contributes to the development of a predictive capability. Research is being conducted aimed to define the role of prediction in child development [14].

The study led by F. Ferretti (2018) has revealed little social interaction experience among older preschoolers to verbalize possible future events. Based on the study it appears that it is difficult for children to think through and say a motivated answer, as well as to provide an explanation for their statement [12]. S. Y. Shin and K. A. Leech believe that specialists and parents of preschoolers should support learning from social experience. Scientists offer to jointly compile stories about the future, to detail them for development of speech-language competencies and cognitive skills [14, 16]. Scientists at the University of Iowa say that children suffering from severe speech deficiencies have communication difficulty and impairment in developing social skills, which contributes to the emergence of deviant behavior in adolescence [15].

Specialists investigated the interpersonal interaction of children with severe speech impairments with their peers in the context of inclusive kindergarten groups. Scientists have revealed a significant decrease in social contacts in preschoolers with speech pathology and their preference for children who have the same speech status. At the same time, 80% of the subjects showed a high level of anxiety due to the difficulties in comprehension and expression when interacting with peers without speech pathology [11].

Despite the social significance of this problem, research on the communication skills of children with speech pathology is not widely conducted, there are few studies that are aimed at studying the interaction skills of children with speech disorders in future situations.

## **2. Organization of the Study**

### **2.1. The Sample**

The study of communication skills was organized on the basis of a preschool educational institution with a compensatory focus (Russia). The sample consisted of 30 children aged 5-7 years with the medical report of general developmental disorders of speech (I-III level), of whom 16 boys and 14 girls took part in the study. Of them, 9 subjects had level III of general speech deficiency (dysarthria), level II (motor alalia) in 2 preschoolers, level I (motor alalia) in 2 children. Before the diagnostic examination, the voluntary informed consent of the parents (or legal representatives) of the children to use the results of the study for scientific purposes was obtained. An undergraduate of the Institute of Psychology and Education of the Kazan Federal University, Yuliya Korobina, assisted in studying children.

The first meetings with preschoolers were necessary to establish a confidential emotional contact between a specialist and children. Diagnostics was organized in the first half of the day in the consulting room of a speech therapist. Two or three meetings with each child sufficed for the study.

### **2.2. Research Methods**

- The technique “Prognostic stories” (A. I. Akhmetzyanova, T. V. Artemyeva) was used to examine the structural and functional components of prediction [2].
- The techniques “Emotional faces” by N. Y. Semago made it possible to study the ability of preschool children with speech pathology to identify emotional states, recognize and name emotions [9].
- “Method of expert evaluation of the child’s communicative behavior” by N. Y. Veraksa was chosen to determine the level of development of children’s communication skills, understanding of tasks by preschoolers in different situations of interaction [4].
- The method “Map of observations of the manifestations of communicative abilities in children of preschool age” (A. M. Shchetinina, M. A. Nikiforova) intends to determine the level of development of communicative skills of children with speech pathology [10].

## 2.3. Research Hypothesis

We assume that speech and communication skills are not well formed in children with speech deficiency. It is difficult for them to predict (anticipate) future situations of interaction.

## 2.4. Objective

To study the level of formation of speech and communication skills, prediction (anticipation) of future situations of interaction in children with speech pathology.

## 3. Results

The results of the empirical study were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Subscription statistical program.

### 3.1 Analysis of Communicative Skills in Children with Speech Pathology

**Table 1**

Indicators of Formation of Communicative Skills of Children with Speech Pathology

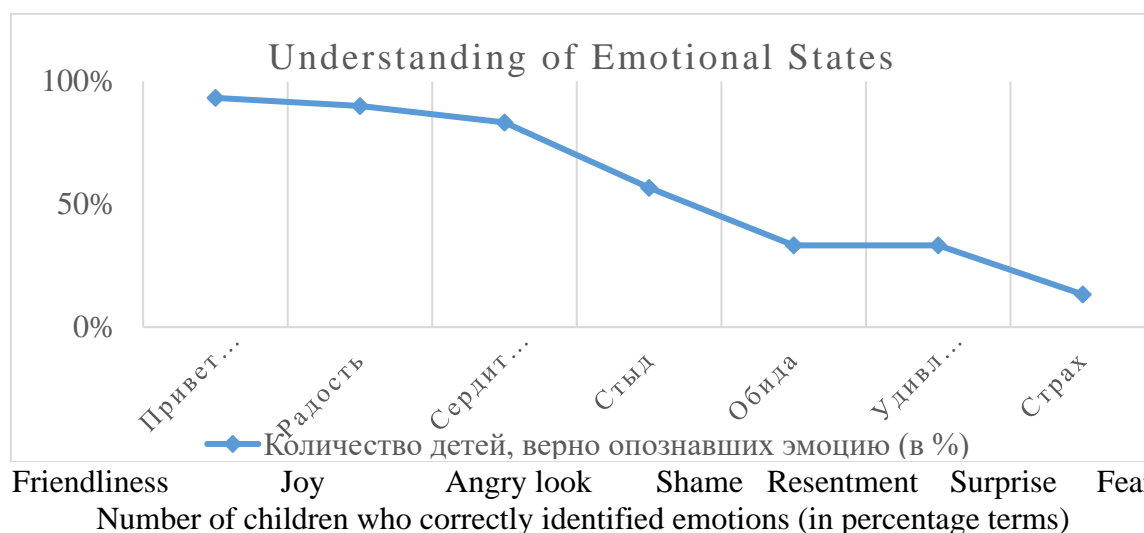
Methods	Method indicators	Minimum min	Maximum max	Mean M	Standard deviation SD
“Method of expert evaluation of the child’s communicative behavior” by N.E. Veraksa	Understanding tasks in interaction situations	2	3	2,77	0,43
	Understanding peers’ emotional states	2	3	2,57	0,50
	Attitude to adults	1	3	2,17	0,59
	Attitude to peers	2	3	2,40	0,50
	Empathy	4	11	7,30	2,02
“Map of observations of the manifestations of communicative abilities in children of preschool age” by A. M. Shchetinina, M. A. Nikiforova	Benevolence	5	16	8,77	2,45
	Immediacy, authenticity, sincerity	4	14	7,13	2,16
	Being communication open	2	7	4,07	0,91
	Confrontation	2	7	3,50	1,43
“Emotional faces” by N. Y. Semago	Initiative	2	7	4,27	1,34
	Organizational skills	3	6	3,90	0,80
	Perceptual Skills	2	7	4,80	1,67
	Operational Skills	5	9	6,67	1,32
	Broad indicators	29	84	50,40	11,54
	Insight into emotions	2	6	4,03	0,99

An expert assessment of the communicative behavior of preschoolers allows us to say that children with severe speech disorders most often understand the tasks set by adults ( $M = 2.77$ ). Difficulties in understanding simple tasks occur in preschoolers with the first level of speech deficiency, children with a higher level often find it difficult to follow two-step instructions, which is caused by phonemic hearing impairment with general speech developmental disorders. Understanding the emotional states of peers is also available for preschoolers with severe speech disorders ( $M = 2.57$ ), however, it is difficult for children to designate emotions due to their meager vocabulary and restricted grammar.

Communication skills in children with speech pathology were at a low level ( $M=50.4$ ). It is more difficult for preschoolers with speech underdevelopment to interact with peers than with adults. So, for example, at the first level of underdevelopment, children often make their requests with the help of onomatopoeic words or word outlines, and preference is also given to paralinguistic means of communication – gestures. Since communicating in words that do not resemble native speech is difficult for other preschoolers to perceive, children with severe speech disorders are often misunderstood and ignored. At the second and third levels of underdevelopment, it is difficult for preschoolers to grammatically correctly build statements, most often they use simple and unextended sentences, they do not always clearly and consistently express their thoughts.

The study of the ability to adequately recognize and designate emotions (see Fig. 1.) made it possible to identify emotional states that children with speech pathology most often recognize and name.

We have found that among children with speech underdevelopment, the most recognizable emotion is the emotion of friendliness, when preschoolers name it, the attributive dictionary prevails: “funny”, “good”, “smiling”, “joyful”.



**Figure 1.** Quantitative Indicators of Understanding of Emotional States by Children with Speech Pathology (%)

When identifying sheer joy, preschoolers are dominated by using predicative vocabulary: “rejoices at”, “has fun”, “laughs”. Angry look is defined by preschoolers as “grudge”, “bad mood”, “angry”, “gloomy”. Shame/guilt is characterized by such lexical substitutions as “sad”, less often “thoughtful”. The emotion of surprise is defined by preschoolers with severe speech disorder as joy. Only 13.33% of the subjects were able to choose speech and language means to determine the emotion of fear.

When studying the structural and functional components of prediction, it was revealed that the average level of development of speech-communicative ( $M=6.73$ ) and regulatory ( $M=11.07$ ) functions indicated that respondents exercised arbitrary control of their predictions, understood generally accepted norms and values, and, accordingly, could express their thoughts using separate speech and language means, which is due to the communicative abilities of children. Cognitive decline in predicting determines the difficulty of anticipating further events and statements.

Preschool children with speech pathology describe future events quite well, however, the analysis of empirical data shows that such structural components as prediction of statements ( $M = 11.30$ ) and emotions ( $M = 3.60$ ) are not sufficiently developed in them, children experience certain difficulties in making forecasts.

Forecasts of preschoolers are focused on realistic events ( $M=6$ ). For example, in the "Child-Adult" (organized activity) sphere, preschoolers having listened to a story in which children, having returned to kindergarten from a walk, put their clothes in lockers, a 5-year-old girl made a forecast using the following statement: "Then the teacher said: "You need to carefully fold things and hang your jacket"; a 6-year-old boy predicted as follows: "She said that we needed to put them in a locker like all children did". Preschool children's predictions were focused on their age and social situation of development. Children most often said that the character of the story would put his things in the locker, and in the answers where the character did not put his clothes away, the most common situation was that the teacher would scold or punish the character for scattered things: "She will be punished, she will be turned away" or "The teacher told Mishunya off." Most of the independent answers of children represent simple unextended sentences, for example, "will clean up", "They ate", "Hangs things", while the phonetic side is grossly violated in preschoolers, there are substitutions, mixes and distortion of sounds in speech. Rare predictions were verbally detailed and grammatically structured answers, for example: "Then the teacher came up and said: "Give me a pencil, please." She sharpened it and gave it to Manyunya", "The teacher asked Manyunya to pick up things and put them neatly in the locker", etc. Insufficient verbalization of predictions in preschool children with speech pathology is explained by the restricted means of communication due to speech disorders. The presence of fairly common and grammatically structured answers is the result of corrective work by specialists with children in special educational institutions.

## **4. Discussion**

The conducted empirical study allows us to say that children with speech pathology quite realistically predict events, however, their predictions are insufficiently detailed and are presented in the form of simple unextended sentences or individual words. As a result of diagnosing the understanding of emotional states, it has been revealed that it is difficult for children with severe speech disorders to recognize and designate emotions, on the basis of this, difficulties arise in anticipating their own and others' emotional states. A study by a group of foreign scientists (2021) confirms that children with speech pathology have difficulty in understanding and regulating emotions, as well as understanding various social situations, as a result of which they have problems concerning interaction with peers [15]. This is explained by the fact that preschoolers with speech pathology often cannot understand the intentions of their peers due to the difficulties of phonemic perception, so some children can use non-verbal communication in the process of interaction, children who do not have



speech disorders can perceive such behavior as negative, hostile, therefore, negative reactions are possible from their peers towards preschoolers with speech pathology.

A study by J.A. Harrigan (1984) indicated that children of preschool and primary school age found it easier to recognize emotions than verbalize them [13]. Similar results were obtained in a study by E.V. Kuftyak [7].

## Summary

The study has revealed that children with speech pathology have insufficiently well-formed communication skills, they are rarely the first to begin a dialogue, it is difficult for them to keep up the conversation due to a limited vocabulary, so preschoolers do not accumulate sufficient experience in interpersonal communication. Speech pathology has a significant impact on the occurrence of communication difficulties in children, the primary speech defect violates the mechanisms of prediction. It is difficult for children with speech pathology to anticipate statements, emotions and actions in relation to themselves and other people; build different variants for a conceivable future.

Despite the difficulties in verbalizing answers, preschoolers with severe speech impairments realistically predict events, while their predictions are often not detailed and are represented by simple unextended sentences or individual words, word outlines. When making a prognosis, children follow socially approved, socially accepted behavior, make predominantly positive prognoses.

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