PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

ACTIVE LISTENING TO LITERARY TEXTS IN FOURTH-YEAR CHILDREN: COGNITIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE DIMENSIONS

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The contemporary transformations of preschool education in Ukraine, as outlined in the State Standard of Preschool Education (2021) [1], identify communicative and speech competencies as key vectors of personal development. While traditional methodology focused primarily on expressive speech (active vocabulary and sound pronunciation) [4], the modern approach emphasizes receptive speech activity – listening and comprehension – which serves as the ontogenetic foundation for the emergence of coherent speech, thinking, and socialization [5; 9]. The fourth year of life marks a critical transition from situational perception to the contextual understanding of speech [4]. The primary instrument of this transformation is imaginative literature, provided that passive "listening-as-presence" is transformed into active, subject-to-subject listening [3; 8].

The origins of the concept of active listening lie in humanistic psychology (C. Rogers [12], T. Gordon [11]), where it is interpreted as an empathetic, interactive process. In child psycholinguistics and language pedagogy, active listening is viewed as a three-component psychological mechanism combining working memory, the mechanism of anticipation (probabilistic prediction), and the semantic compression of text [5; 9]. Studies by international researchers (Z. Z. Shafik, M. B. Rakhima) demonstrate that active listening is a structured skill requiring purposeful pedagogical guidance [13].

In early childhood cognitive development, text perception involves internal mental modeling. According to J. Piaget and B. Inhelder [7], children in their fourth year operate within the preoperational stage characterized by cognitive egocentrism, whereby they process narrative events primarily through personal, emotional experience. Therefore, active listening requires structured pedagogical support that engages the child's imaginative and emotional spheres to bridge individual experience with narrative context.

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The Ukrainian psycho-pedagogical and linguodidactic school offers an in-depth interdisciplinary analysis of how preschoolers perceive the artistic word:

− **Psycholinguistic dimension (L. Kalmykova, N. Kharchenko).** It has been established that listening is the primary and fundamental form of speech activity. Researchers have demonstrated that a four-year-old child's perception of a text is not a passive background process but an internal mental effort involving the decoding of semantic codes – a process that precedes the child's own spoken utterance [5; 9].

− **Linguodidactic concept (A. Bohush, N. Havrysh).** Researchers have characterized the perception of a literary work as a component of artistic-speech competence. Drawing on the work of A. Bohush, effective listening integrates cognitive (understanding the plot), emotional-aesthetic (empathy with characters), and reflective (personal evaluation) dimensions. N. Havrysh's proprietary methodology demonstrates the need to shift from reproductive reading to creative collaboration and co-creation between the educator and the child [3].

− **Cognitive and narrative approaches (I. Bila, N. Chepeleva).** Drawing on Jean Piaget's classical tenets regarding the preoperational stage and cognitive "egocentrism" [7], as well as the ideas of Jerome Bruner, I. Bila demonstrated that perception in preschoolers is action-oriented and linked to the "internal modeling" of images [2]. N. Chepeleva emphasizes the narrative nature of perception, wherein the child acts as an active co-creator of narrative reality [10].

− **The personality-oriented and social dimension (O. Kononko, T. Pirozhenko).** The researchers view active listening as a tool for socialization and subject-to-subject interaction [6; 8]. According to T. Pirozhenko, during the listening process, a literary work becomes a specific "imaginary communication partner", teaching the child to recognize the motives behind actions and to empathize [8].

The perception of literary texts by children in their fourth year of life is characterized by the tight integration of affective and cognitive components:

1. **Emotional Sphere.** Four-year-old's exhibit high empathy and emotional contagion. Emotional response serves as the primary trigger for attention; children become active, imaginative participants in story plots, expressing immediate non-verbal and verbal reactions to character actions [4].

2. **Cognitive Sphere.** Cognitive processing is governed by involuntary attention and memory, with continuous concentration limited to approximately 10-15 minutes [4]. Thinking develops from the visual-action stage to the visual-image stage [7]. Since abstract analysis is not yet available, reproductive and creative imagination play a key role in decoding the text [2].

Literary works intended for children in their fourth year of life (folk and original animal tales, poetry, short folklore forms, and picture books) serve as a unique communicative environment [3]. The developmental potential of the book is realized through emotional-motivational, cognitive-decoding, and communicative-reflective functions [3; 8].

To systematically implement active listening, traditional monologue reading must be replaced with interactive methodologies across three distinct phases:

1. **Pre-text Phase**: creating motivation through sensory triggers, mystery items, or visual cues that focus involuntary attention [3].
2. **Text Phase (Active Reading)**: utilizing motor commentary (physical imitation of character actions), sound play (vocal imitation), and pause forecasting (stopping before key plot points to allow children to predict upcoming words or actions) [3; 9].
3. **Post-text Phase**: engaging children in dialogic reading using alternative choice-based questions, visual-spatial identification tasks, and creative role-play activities [3; 13].

Active listening in fourth-year children is an integrative receptive speech skill that does not form spontaneously. It requires systematic, interactive pedagogical facilitation grounded in age-appropriate literary selection and dialogic reading strategies. By embedding active listening practices into early childhood education, educators foster children's cognitive modeling, emotional empathy, and communicative readiness.

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