

Psychodrama as a Means of Teaching Gifted Children English Language as a Second One

The area of language acquisition seems to be much developed. For years scholars have been looking for the methods to ease the process and to make it more efficient. However, there are numerous factors that influence the way the language is established in the mind of those speakers who are interested in foreign language learning. In our particular case, we deal with the problem of language acquisition by gifted children, whose uniqueness is undisputable. However, alternative methods of language teaching are under consideration as they are believed to influence the ease and speed with which the language is organised into a system and becomes fluent. Thus, psychodrama techniques are believed to be fruitful and sufficient. Topic achievement presupposes the definition of giftedness and observation of the peculiarities of psychodrama as a teaching method that results in language acquisition.

The first thing that requires precise consideration is the term ‘gifted child’ which in the literature is often perceived as ‘talented child’. However, D. Bogoiavlenska, Iu. Hilbukh, N. Leites, V. Panov, O. Savenlov, etc distinguish between these two notions. Their idea is that the first is used to denote the uniqueness of a kid that makes him or her different from the rest, while the latter is general and relates to the majority of children as all humans are talented in a particular area. Moreover, while gifted children are those whose scholastic skills and IQ level are high, talented ones are the children who demonstrate exceptional abilities in art, music, dancing, athletic kinds of sport, such as skating, diving and tennis (E. Winner, 2008, p. 7).

N. Karpenko understands the term ‘gifted child’ as a united, multifaceted dynamic psychological system that summarizes the individual development of a kid (Карпенко Н. А., 2010, p. 233-235). The term ‘gifted’ is reserved for children who are academically gifted or demonstrate the solid knowledge of language (both oral and written), mathematics and problem solving. The majority of scientists who are interested in this particular aspect (J. Guilford, J. Renzulli, K. Tekeks) offer to individualise the process with the belief that individual cooperation between the teacher and a child is the best of the possible alternatives. However, O. Muzyka assumes that gifted children lack in social adaptability, having difficulties in contacting. Gifted children can easily fit into their peer groups. It happens that chronologically identical they feel intellectually superior to the rest of their mates thus become lonely, isolated or rejected by the group. The matter is that they feel comfortable with the like-minded company, which is very occasional for the children. However, it does not mean they are unable to cooperate with others. The lack of understanding

results in the conflict that occurs inside the child, tearing him or her apart by the desire to simultaneously resemble 'normal' children and to stand out from the majority. The consequence of this is, in most cases, the loss of giftedness. According to J. Renzulli, giftedness means intellectual development (child should be of the level of intelligence higher than an average one), perseverance (incentives to fulfil the assignment) and creativity. In our study we perceive 'gifted children' as those who are highly potential that increases the desire to research actively and act creatively in various areas. Thus, we agree to idea of D. Bogoiavlenska, O. Matiushkin and V. Iurkevych who see gifted children as those who are able to generalise unusual ideas and to find creative solutions as they poses an independent factor in the general structure of giftedness.

Theoretical analysis of the literature makes it possible to conclude that gifted child is the one who realises and easily presents his or her skills and abilities, even though they are widely believed to be good at everything they try. B. Teplov in his studies proves that giftedness can be reflected in only one particular activity. Thus, the level of giftedness can become clear only after the activity is done and the results that are achieved or general success are taking place. M. Iankovchuk uses the term 'altodonic personality' (lat. 'altus'- high, 'donus'- gift) while referring to a gifted child. The researcher views the gift not as the phenomenon which is given to all individuals, but as the ability to self-realise in any chosen activity (M. M. ЯНКОВЧУК, 2008, p. 310-316). The most important motive of the behaviour of such kids is the level of happiness that they experience after their skills and abilities are fruitfully applied.

The main peculiarity of gifted children is that they are able to process colossal information rapidly. The difference between the ways the information is perceived by usual kids and those gifted is that the conventional way of small portions material organization is not applicable to the latter. Moreover, these manageable portions make those gifted feel frustrated and stressed that barely brings any fruitful result. The main characteristic of the success is the presence of challenging and complex activity (M. Sutherland, 2008, p. 2). The term 'challenge' is understood by us as the stimulating activity which presents a child with difficulties that are to be overcome. Thus, the happiness is the natural consequence of the successfully maintained activity.

In the educational situation, according to V. Koshy, challenging activity for gifted children includes three factors: anything which is done should relate to the children's interests, which positively influences their motivation and back them up in their attempts to do their best. Secondly, the work is to be meaningful, so that the participants clearly understand its essence. Moreover, the difficulty should coincide with the child's abilities, as cognitively demanding level will make them instantly give up and easy tasks bear no points in realisation, leading to boredom and frustration (V. Koshy, 2002, p. 37). Actually, this aspect is kept in mind in our research as well as the idea that gifted learner's ability is influenced by life experience and interactions with others in the process of cooperating while learning.

Challenging activity for gifted children requires enough space and available materials, free choice and tranquil setting, which can be realised by means of

music. Learners need to be involved in their learning. Moreover, gifted children need to use their energy and enthusiasm to explore and experiment. Thus, while learning children are oriented on emotional, personal and social development; communication, language and literature expansion; expressive, aesthetic and creative development; physical movement and development etc. (M. Sutherland, 2008, p. 49).

Psychodrama is understood as a method that is exclusively fitting second language acquisition. It is a method of free activity that presupposes the use and realization of one's creativity. Gifted children are those whose basic characteristics are high intellectual curiosity, vivid imagination, great empathy and sensitivity display, excellent verbal ability, high level of creativity, rapid learning abilities and the ability to concentrate lengthily on the activities they like. These peculiarities fully correspond with the basic characteristics of psychodrama, which is aimed at the development of creativity, spontaneity and freedom.

On the one hand, the forms of the method are concerned with the deeper understanding of oneself which makes the cognitive basis of self-realization and is followed by the feeling of full satisfaction. Moreover, it is psychodrama that is said to be a group therapy oriented on individual problems solution. It can be explained by the fact that the main challenge for the gifted children is the absence of adaptation and the impossibility of self-realisation under the usual conditions of their lives. It is much discussed by such Ukrainian scholars as O. Barysheva, T. Bilgildeieva, N. Korchakova, V. Zarytska who believe that the group and communication determine the development of personality of gifted children. By this it is meant that individualism hinders the progression, while cooperation and mutual understanding accelerate the development.

According to Lillian Katz, the goals for effective learning are knowledge, skills, disposition and feelings. Traditionally, teachers and educators tend to refer to the first two items more than to the final two. However, we believe disposition and feelings are highly influential in the whole process of learning, especially they are important for the development of gifted children. Disposition is closely connected to the way child sees him or herself, to their beliefs about what they can or cannot achieve in any particular activity. Because of its therapeutic nature psychodrama relieves spontaneity and helps to evoke feelings.

According to psychodramatist M. Levandovska, the spontaneity and realization enable one's creative and adequate adaptation to life. In our case, it is about the way gifted child accustom to the social surrounding he or she exists in. Spontaneity, she says, induces creative reactions in various life situations (А.Г. Лидерс, 2011, p. 50). On the basis of J. Moreno's works G. Leuts states that blocking of spontaneity leads to neurosis of creativity, consequently causes passiveness. Thus, no matter how intellectual and skillful one is, he or she is unable to involve and demonstrate them. Integration of spontaneity leads to creativity (Г. Лейтц, 2007, p. 128-129). E. de Bono in her works underlines the list of traditional and nontraditional sources of creativity (E. de Bono, 2005, p. 416). Psychodrama is based on improvisation. Psychodramatic play is oriented

not on the problem, but on the ways it can be dealt with. Such play is accompanied by enormous satisfaction, which is vital in the cooperation with gifted children.

Iu. Zhukova in her researches states about the inability to stimulate the artistry in the processes where creativity is blocked (Ю. Л. Жукова). Such activity is doomed to bring no success. The researcher assumes that in most cases both in the family and in school it is the result that is stimulated, but not the level of satisfaction that the activity results in. Except for the spontaneity, which is the basic characteristic of psychodrama, tele (mutual empathy), catharsis and insight are those of no less importance, all of which brings satisfaction and feeling of achievement.

Another aspect to be considered is the importance of narration. J. Bruner expressed the idea that while narrating one can understand him or herself and the peculiarities of the world in which they find themselves. Concerning psychodrama, narration can be realised by means of actions, so that the story is told by means of gestures, movements and behaviour. Narratives seem to be important in the areas of interpersonal relationships, social and personal comfort and learning. Thus, narrating about themselves, gifted children can easily air their fears and imaginations, creating alternative narratives.

Psychodrama is a means of giftedness optimization. According to A. Ihinger and V. Holl, it presupposes active inclusion of children in the activity and the increase of their interest in group cooperation that positively influence socialisation process (A. Айхингер, В. Холл, 2003, p. 256). Moreover the play, which makes the basis of psychodrama, makes children be interested in the activity they take part in, makes them satisfied and increases the level of giftedness.

Moreover, psychodrama is not only a powerful method of psychotherapy, but an appropriate form for personal growth. It has strengths as a medium of education (P. Wilkins, 1999, p. 5). It helps in learning and teaching literacy, which is seen as an intellectual, social and cultural competence. Literacy is not simply an ability to speak, read and write, but the way children understand the sense of speech and communicate. By this, playing creates the context for language use, providing reasons for communication. In this type of activity students are oriented on the accomplishment of the task rather than exact word use (G. Ladousse, 1987, p. 9). There are two ways to use drama in educational purposes: drama as it is and psychodrama, which is considered in our work. The main difference which is viewed as vital and decisive for educational context is that the first is performed on the basis of script and is directive by its nature as the teacher controls the playing; the latter is free, relies entirely on the feelings and desires of the main hero, protagonist, and presupposes the model, presented by a teacher, at the very preliminary stage when the level of language is limited. However, psychodramatic action is possible under the condition that the teacher is aware of the peculiarities of the method, being not only an educational instructor, but the therapist.

Role play, which is the main psychodramatic technique, resembles the role play used as teaching devise. The layout of psychodrama (warming up, enactment and sharing) fully corresponds to the structure of the traditional class

of language acquisition, when the atmosphere of speaking is set, the material is practised and further revised. However, the psychodramatic role play contains the phase of sharing when the protagonist is expected to share the feelings and ideas experienced throughout the play. Not less important are the rest of psychodrama techniques, such as role reversal, doubling, both permanent and spontaneous, mirroring, as they help to view oneself by means of other people representation, positively influencing person's reflection, influencing cooperation.

According to Ellis and Piaget, play is seen as the tool for cognitive development and learning. Amid the essential aspects of play are the thinking process and social interaction. Moreover, while playing children are taught to separate the meaning from the object so that they get involved in connotative meaning formation. The engagement in psychodramatic play leads to the ability to encode information in words. Thus, psychodrama realised by means of second language develops the level of language as it is used to plan how to play episodes, describe the play events and to carry out the roles. Psychodrama makes it possible for the gifted children to experiment with syntax and vocabulary, influencing the ideas and actions of other participants. Children are at liberty to act at any time or in any place, speaking as any person in any situation. In the situation of here and now children apply and practice language.

The objectives of the second language acquisition by means of psychodrama are the increase of confidence of children's presentation, fluency of speech, creation of meaningful communication contexts and generation of group relationships. Among these the most demanding is speaking activity which is expected to be on fluent or complex enough to express one's ideas. In teaching gifted children English as a second language it is not enough to rely exclusively on the words as the majority of the activities for the young learners should include movements. Moreover, playing with language becomes natural, similar to the way the native language is acquired. By means of play the spoken word is often accompanied by other clues additional to meaning, such as movements, emotions, facial expressions, etc. On the other hand, the main problem with the understanding of second language is that it limits the expression of ideas and thoughts as it demands the knowledge of the vocabulary unit. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities to practise English language use outside the classroom demands its active practising inside. So far, natural talk, presented by children, is preferred. Traditional way of teaching English includes the corrections of the mistakes. By this it is meant that teachers, in most cases, appreciate their students producing grammatically correct language. In this case two problems take place – child's fear of mistake and the lack of vocabulary knowledge, both of which can hinder the process of language acquisition. However, free oral activity, which the psychodramatic role play is, helps to express oneself, no matter how accurate the performance is. Naturally, corrections occur, but at the latter stages of language acquisition. If the student hesitates with the word identification, the teacher is expected to respond even in the middle of the role play. Moreover, at the very preliminary stage of language acquisition the number of English words easily retrieved by the child is

very limited. However, gifted kids, whose memory is assessed as exclusive rather than typical, tend to remember the majority of words introduced during the play. It means that once the word is introduced, it is remembered by gifted kids for a long period of time.

In most cases English language acquisition by means of psychodrama includes the play of puppets or other toys which is monodramatic technique. It can be explained by the fact that the toy positively influences the ease with which the kid communicates and interacts during the play. Moreover, the kid who is unable to communicate freely with other children feels better while acting from the position of the toy. By the words like 'Hello, I am Teddy. I like swimming. And what is your name?' children can contact with other children in the group. However, every member of the group can relate to the toy, animated by the teacher, so that children ask various questions and practise the application of basic grammatical rules. The assignment of this type demands the model given by the teacher. Interacting by means of dialogues in the role plays children are expected to pretend being somebody else, which is a tricky technique for those who experience difficulties in making contacts.

It is known that children learn much from the opportunity to role play in the situations that are not real, but imagined. In such role play they are abstracting from their real knowledge to establish an unreal world in which they interact and operate actively and effectively (P. Baldwin, K. Fleming, 2003, p. 7) Role playing enables children's experimenting with the real world ideas in the imaginary and unreal setting. The language that is used is fluent, purposeful and generative as it is embedded in context (G. Bolton, D. Heathcote, 1999, p. 4). However, depending on the experience of a child and the ability to assimilate it, children are to go through the structured to open type role playing. Beginners can start by learning a simple dialogue and acting it in pairs. The teacher can present a sentence-to-sentence dialogue and ask children to repeat after him or her. If the level of English is just above basic, the dialogue can be spontaneous and of the simple nature. The gradation of language acquisition will be accompanied by the changes in the assignment, such as items substitution, information inclusion, etc. The later stage of role play performance is the introduction of the setting, when the general situation is explained but not presented in cues. This type of assignment helps students be aware of the possible response, know how to transform the text and speech, how to use the bits of language while providing adequate reply, not only on the verbal level answer the questions but by means of intonation, tone, facial expression, etc. The most involving for the gifted child is the small chat activity which includes friendly talks about the things that occupy children's attention at that particular moment.

Thus, by means of collaborative work in psychodrama gifted children's English language acquisition proves that cooperating with other members in the group gifted children establish an observational learning. However, thinking, investigating and problem-solving skills are developed as well. Gifted kids readily relate to the adults as their cognitive abilities go ahead of those of their peers. Unless the learning setting is secure, gifted children can find it difficult to continue learning journey. The dispositions of efficient activity

are enthusiasm of a child, who approaches the activity while being confident, perseverance which is an ability to continue the assignment, self-motivation, curiosity, experimentation, social abilities such as cooperation, respect of others, acceptance, etc. If the abilities and needs of a gifted child are accepted and highly valued, not only the identity of a child but his or her linguistic abilities are further developed. Such deliberate teaching activity results in the ability of a child to concentrate on the same activity for a long period of time, to operate large vocabularies, not typical of their age, to be interested in a wide range of topics, to ask questions and to reason, to present their own ideas, to understand the subtleties of language which identify the fluency of language use. Thus psychodrama helps gifted children to develop their insight, to understand themselves and the world in which they live, to cooperate with peers. Additionally, realised by means of second language, psychodrama leads to the development of English language fluency. It results in the expansion of vocabulary and establishment of grammatical hints. Mainly, it is because the language is activated in the authentic and meaningful communicative situations.

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