

Sand play: Speech Development of Preschool Children

Z. Matsiuk*, M. Fenko

Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University in Volyn, Department of Philology and Methodology
in the Primary Education Pedagogical Institute

*Corresponding author. E-mail: zorienka@mail.ru

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Abstract. The communicative capability of preschool children plays a significant role in an integrated and multifaceted educational system of children's development and makes a unique set of individual properties and features which are connected with the speech-related, intellectual, emotional, and creative areas of the individual. If children are isolated from full-fledged communicative interaction with others during their preschool years, it has a negative impact on their intellectual and linguistic development. Thus it is very important to study and develop communicative and speech skills from an early age. The search for effective methods to develop communicative competence in preschool children has led to the selection of alternative technologies, in particular the usage of sand therapy, for working with children.

Keywords: Sand play, Children, communicative, method, preschool children, technologies.

In recent years, scientists have discovered the therapeutic and prophylactic effectiveness of sand play technology. The search for effective methods to develop communicative competence in preschool children has led to the selection of alternative technologies, in particular the usage of sand therapy, for working with children, because of the fact that working with sand makes it possible to create a stimulating environment. In sand games preschoolers gain experience in resolving conflicts independently, they overcome difficulties together, they get to know themselves and their peers, and they gain experience in interpersonal communication.

One of the primary objectives of a preschool institution is to set up an educational process which not only maintains a high level of intellectual performance, but which also improves the pupils' health. The teachers can introduce a variety of therapeutic and prophylactic measures which are both innovative and beneficial for the health. At the same time it is important to take into account the individual traits of the children.

Educators and psychologists are actively introducing sand games in their work with children of various ages. Sand therapy is a technique which had its origins in the Jungian analytical approach, and which is based on working with the symbolic meaning of the unconscious as a source of inner growth and development.

Sand play constitutes a unique means of communicating with both the outside world and the inner world; it is a way to relieve internal stress and to open new paths of development. Sand games give children an opportunity to feel confident and capable: they are creating something new, and aren't afraid of breaking things that are old, or of changing things. In the sandpit, optimal conditions are created for developing children's creative potential, for activating their spatial imagination and their figurative and logical thinking, and for honing their fine motor skills. During the course of group games preschoolers become aware of moral and ethical norms, and form a harmonious picture of the world [1, p. 21].

Sand is one of the first natural materials with which children become acquainted, and sand games are something ordinary for any child who goes out for a walk. Sand play is a universal thing, exciting and interesting for children of any age. With sand, children build an personal and unique world of their own in miniature, and become totally involved in the game, emotionally, psychologically and physically [1, p. 21] [4, p. 26–35].

It is logical to start working with sand using games which develop tactile kinesthetic sensitivity and fine motor skills: "Fingers, palms, fists – you are my friends and helpers." We receive tactile and kinesthetic impressions through sensory receptors on the skin. They are closely connected with mental operations, and with their help we obtain our perceptions of the world.

Transferring traditional educational and developmental tasks to the sandpit brings an additional result. Motivation to attend classes is increased substantially, and there is an intensive and harmonious development in cognitive processes. In view of the fact that sand has a marvellous capacity to dissipate negative mental energy, the psychological and emotional state of a child becomes more harmonious in the course of the educational process.

Educators use games and exercises in working both with individuals and with subgroups of children. The classes are conducted in several stages: working on the surface of the sand; working with the hands buried in the sand; games conducted on the surface of wet sand; and creating constructions with wet sand [5, p. 207].

It can be beneficial to suggest to the children that they make prints on the sand with the inside and the outside of their hands. They can hold their hands on the sand, pressing downward gently and listening to their feelings. The teacher begins the game by saying, "It feels nice. I can feel the coolness of the sand. When I move my hands, I can feel each grain of sand with my fingers and with the palms of my hands. What do you feel?" The children share their feelings and impressions one after another [1].

Sand games give children a chance to feel confident and capable: they are creating new things, and they aren't afraid of breaking old things or of changing something. Ideal conditions are created for the development of child's creative potential, increasing their spatial imagination and their figurative and logical thinking, and providing practical enhancement of their fine motor skills. Moreover, in the process of group games, preschoolers become aware of moral and ethical norms, and a harmonized image of the world is formed in their minds [3, p. 18].

In terms of the implementation of innovative and prophylactic technology sand play technology, research into the results of the mutual activities of teachers with children demonstrate that there is a harmonious and intensive development of tactile sensations, cognitive processes, and speech and motor skills, and an increased desire to learn new things.

Sand therapy is different from other forms of art-related therapy in terms of the simplicity of the manipulations, the possibility of inventing new forms, and the brevity of the existence of the images that are created. The possibility of easily destroying and rebuilding sand compositions, and of developing new themes again and again, gives the work the appearance of a certain kind of ritual [4, p. 26–35].

For the children, one of the most effective types of work involves drawing on sand and drawing with coloured sand. This is not just a kind of entertainment or game, or an opportunity to recreate the surrounding world. Drawing contributes to the harmonious development of the child and the formation of the basic personality traits of independence and creativity; it develops fine motor skills, and as a result there is an enhancement of verbal and mental abilities. The hand movement coordination of the preschoolers is improved: the children's fingers come to have more strength, agility and dexterity. In addition, drawing improves memory, attentiveness and concentration. Painting on sand is actually one of the oldest methods of painting, whereas painting *with* sand is one of the newest in relative terms. It is possible to draw on sand with a stick, a stone or with any other suitable object. However, the most reasonable way is to draw with the fingers. Children really enjoy lessons of this kind [2].

By means of the sand games children master the norms and rules of behaviour and communication in society quickly and in an intelligent manner. A culture of interpersonal communication is formed, developing a sense of what is delicate, polite, or sociable. Through the sand game children develop feelings of trust, acceptance and success. Playing with sand improves the children's mood, arouses joyful emotions of joy and encourages activity.

Lessons and storytelling that take the form of a game promote the formation of social skills and shape the emotional world of preschoolers. The main goal of the game is to impart experience in problem-solving situations between fairy tales characters. Children contemplate, experience extensive inner development, and acquire positive traits; they learn how to behave and communicate properly by imitating fairy-tale and real-life heroes.

It is possible to act out a fairy tale in the sand. Children love unusual stories that broaden their knowledge and horizons, pointing to the existence of a fantasy world as well as the real world. Through stories (especially folk tales) directed to the hearts of children and not distorted by the influence of modern civilization, children gain knowledge about individuals, their problems and the tools for solving them.

It is desirable to use sand games as an interactive method for developing preschoolers' spoken language skills. In the sandbox, additional emphasis is directed towards tactile sensitivity, and "manual intelligence" is formed in children as they play in the sandpit. For this reason, transferring traditional learning and developmental issues to the sandpit produces an additional effect. Motivation for the lessons is increased substantially, and its all-round development is more harmonious.

The utilization of the sandpit can thus be recognized as the most effective method for working with preschool children. An inadequately developed verbal apparatus, an insufficiency of basic conceptions or developmental delay can make it quite difficult for children to express their real emotional experience, so this technology fills a useful place. Non-verbal expression occurring by the medium of various objects, sand, water, and construction or plastic materials create the most natural setting for preschoolers, which is especially significant when children have specific language disabilities. Every figure they select represents a personage which is capable of interacting with other characters. Children think up things that these characters say or do; sometimes they may ask the teacher to join them in the game and follow the part of some character. In all these cases, children perceive themselves as the owner and or the stage manager of their own little world that is located on the 'sheet' of sand. Things that have been hidden in the depths of the children's minds are embodied in the characters of the game as they move and express their feelings and thoughts. Playing with figures in the sand is especially effective in working with children who are unable to express their feelings. Children with low self-esteem or with a greater measure of anxiety or shyness are usually eager to select figures and transfer their attention to them.

The sand-play method is an unusual technique, thanks to which children construct their personal miniature world out of sand and tiny figures. As they play, children express in the sand something that is occurring spontaneously in their minds. During the sand games a mysterious universe emerges before the preschoolers, within which they form an individual and unique world that was previously unknown to them. When this method was implemented in practice, we observed that it not only contributed to the effective development of the children's capacity for imagination, but that it also helped preschoolers to develop communication skills, to enrich their vocabulary, and to develop verbal communication and creative ability in a variety of situations.

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Сендплей: речевое развитие детей дошкольного возраста
3. С. Мацюк, М. Я. Фенко

Аннотация. В целостной и многогранной образовательной системе развития ребенка важную роль играет коммуникативно-речевая компетентность дошкольника, которая составляет уникальный комплекс индивидуальных свойств и особенностей, связанных с речевой, интеллектуальной, эмоциональной, творческой сфер личности. Если ребенок изолирован от полноценного речевого общения в дошкольные годы, это отрицательно сказывается на его дальнейшем умственном и речевом развитии. Поэтому очень важно изучать и развивать коммуникативно-речевые умения с раннего возраста. Поиск эффективных методов развития коммуникативно-речевой компетентности детей дошкольного возраста обусловил выбор нетрадиционных технологий, в частности использование песочной терапии в работе с детьми.

Ключевые слова: сендплей, ребенок, дети дошкольного возраста, коммуникация, метод, технология.