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SPEECH DEVELOPMENT IN ONTOGENESIS: SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCIPLINE

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Abstract.

Speech development in ontogenesis is a complex, multifaceted process that reflects the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors throughout an individual's life. This article examines the stages of speech formation from early infancy to later developmental periods, highlighting key theoretical approaches in linguistics, psychology, and pedagogy. Special attention is given to the subject and objectives of the discipline that studies speech development, including its role in identifying typical and atypical patterns of language acquisition. The research emphasizes the importance of early diagnosis, prevention, and correction of speech disorders, as well as the integration of interdisciplinary methods in studying speech ontogenesis. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how speech competence is formed and its significance in cognitive and social development.

Keywords: speech development, ontogenesis, language acquisition, child development, speech disorders, communication skills, linguistics, psycholinguistics, early diagnosis, pedagogy.

Speech development in ontogenesis is a scientific field that studies the origin and causes of speech disorders. It examines the causes, mechanisms, symptoms, progression, and structure of impairments in speech activity. For this reason, it is classified as a branch of special pedagogy. This course is one of the fundamental disciplines studied by students in the relevant field of education. It is known as "Speech Development in Norm and Pathology." The curriculum addresses the goals, object, content, and methods of this discipline, as well as its application in speech therapy (logopedic) practice. It also includes scientific research methods such as observation, experimentation, comparison, analysis, synthesis, and generalization. The main goal of the discipline is to form students' understanding of the stages of ontogenetic speech development in children and the закономерности (regularities) of native language acquisition.

The objectives of the discipline include developing students' ability to:

- implement educational and corrective processes based on the psychophysiological, age-related, and individual characteristics of individuals with speech impairments;
- apply knowledge from defectology, pedagogy, psychology, linguistics, and medical-biological sciences in professional practice;
- formulate and solve research problems in their field.

Within the framework of this course, students are expected to acquire knowledge about:

- the main stages of speech ontogenesis;
- physiological, psychological, and linguistic parameters of oral speech;
- age-related dynamics of speech and language mechanism formation in children;

- the evolution of children's awareness of their own speech.

They should also develop practical skills such as:

- independent use of key scientific terminology;
- application of linguistic methods to analyze preschool children's speech activity;
- identification of reliable diagnostic and prognostic indicators of speech development;
- communication with children at different stages of speech ontogenesis;
- assessment of children's speech development characteristics;
- professional work with children's speech materials;
- differentiation between speech norms and pathologies.

Normativity is one of the central and most important features of the literary language. Without normativity, the multifunctionality, general acceptability, and obligatoriness of the literary language cannot be realized. Only a language that has achieved true normativity can fully perform its communicative functions within society. In linguistics, the concept of "norm" is understood in two ways: first, as generally accepted and established language rules; second, as codified rules presented in grammars, dictionaries, and authoritative literary works.

Normativity is a necessary condition for the existence of a literary language. All linguistic units—sounds, words, phrases, affixes, and syntactic structures—must follow accepted rules during speech production. Violation of these rules is considered a deviation from the norm. Thus, a literary language consists of a system of normative tools, possibilities, and rules governing their use. The initial stages of speech ontogenesis are directly related to the maturation of the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral speech apparatus. Each developmental stage includes important physiological and psychological factors that contribute to speech formation. Vocal reactions during the first year of life—such as crying, cooing, gurgling, and early syllables—are natural mechanisms that support the formation of the speech functional system. These processes depend not only on physiological maturation but also on socio-communicative experience, emotional responses, and sensory development.

Speech development in infancy, especially during the first year, is accelerated by the maturation of the cerebral cortex and subcortical structures, the strengthening of afferent and efferent neural connections, and the improvement of auditory processing. Crying in the first weeks of life serves not only as an expression of physiological needs but also as an early communicative signal conveyed through intonation. The timbre, intensity, rhythm, and duration of crying form a primary signaling system that reflects the infant's condition, needs, and emotional state. By 2–3 months, crying becomes more intonationally varied. During this period, motor coordination remains unstable, and infants begin to influence interaction through crying—for example, reacting to the removal of visual stimuli or reduced communication. The enrichment of intonation marks the emergence of communicative function, closely linked with motor development.

At 2–3 months, infants enter the stage of gurgling, actively using their voice. During this period, sounds resembling vowel phonemes and some consonants appear. These include vowel-

like sounds (a, u, e, o, i), labial consonants (p, m, b) associated with sucking, and posterior lingual sounds (g, k, x) related to swallowing. This stage is characterized by increased communicative need and improved sensorimotor coordination. Alongside signals of discomfort, infants begin to produce sounds expressing calmness and joy. Between 4–6 months, the babbling stage begins, coinciding with the development of sitting ability. Babbling involves the formation of syllabic structures, increased complexity of the articulatory apparatus, and functional integration of brain systems. Infants begin to produce sounds both spontaneously and intentionally, laying the foundation for syllabic speech and the emergence of first words. The sound stream becomes more structured, resembling syllables, and the psychophysiological mechanisms of syllable formation develop. From around 8 months, a reduction in non-native language sounds is observed, indicating phonemic development. Infants actively process the speech they hear, learning to distinguish phonemes. The phonetic system of the native language becomes consolidated in auditory memory, and speech production increasingly reflects the surrounding linguistic environment. By 10–12 months, children begin to reproduce the rhythm and intonation patterns of their native language and attempt verbal communication. Intonation gains communicative significance, and simple phonetic structures are combined with speech rhythm. This stage is crucial for semantic development, the integration of speech with gestures, and the emergence of first words.

Individual differences in speech development, including those between boys and girls, are influenced by factors such as neurophysiological maturation, temperament, sensory experience, and communicative environment. Girls often demonstrate earlier speech development due to faster maturation of auditory-analytical systems and a stronger tendency toward communication, whereas boys may develop speech somewhat later.

Pre-speech vocalizations in the first year gradually form the functional system of speech, providing the foundation for phonetic, phonemic, articulatory, and communicative competencies. These vocalizations are organized rhythmically, resembling adult speech patterns, although they do not yet correspond to real meanings. This transitional stage is usually brief, as children soon begin to produce their first meaningful words. The development of speech comprehension parallels the development of expressive speech. By 7–8 months, infants begin to respond appropriately to words accompanied by gestures. Research also indicates gender differences in gesture development, with girls typically producing their first words around 8–9 months and boys around 11–12 months.

Conclusion

In conclusion, speech development in ontogenesis is a complex and essential process that reflects both normal and pathological aspects of human communication. The discipline plays a significant role in preparing specialists capable of analyzing, diagnosing, and correcting speech disorders. Understanding the theoretical foundations and practical applications of this field contributes to improving educational and corrective practices. Ultimately, mastery of speech development principles enhances both professional competence and the overall quality of communication in society.

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