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Prerequisites of implementation of teaching foreign languages to young learners in the Republic of Kazakhstan

In the modern system of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan the issue of teaching foreign languages at early age is becoming more actual. The changes of economical, political and social conditions of life of Kazakhstan people and modernization of economics, international cooperation and political dialogue force parents to look for new possibilities for learning foreign languages from early age. In spite of big quantity of works devoted to this issue many questions are remain still without scientific and practical solution. In this article is considered the state reforms, programs and projects in sphere of education aimed at formation of polylingual culture of modern citizen of Kazakhstan and also pedagogical and psychological conditions for successful implementation of teaching foreign languages at early age.

Key words: English language, teaching English to young learners, EFL (English as foreign language), teaching, psychological characteristics, system of education, polylingual culture, implementation, primary education, cognitive abilities.

*Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.*

Benjamin Franklin

As English has become the dominant, international, common language in the world, it has also become one of the components of tertiary, secondary, primary and even pre-school education in the EFL teaching contexts. Thus, the concept of young learners has started to cover a larger age range than it did 2 or 3 decades ago. This change can clearly be seen in the quality and quantity of coursebooks written for different ages and levels of young English language learners, and the publications made in this area. Moreover, it also brings a demand for competent English language teachers to teach (very) young language learners [1]. Ironically, today in the Republic of Kazakhstan all English language teachers of young learners teaching in the primary education or in some cases pre-school education (kindergarten and nursery) have never been a young foreign language learner themselves or never experienced being a student in a young learner English class. Besides, not all teachers with an ELT diploma had taken a special course, training or education on teaching English to young learners during their undergraduate education.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan progressive development and modernization of education are possible due to understanding the country leaders of need and importance of development of the human capital and full support at initiation and carrying out reforms in education.

Since 2005 in Kazakhstan the following state programs were developed and accepted:

- A state program of development of technical and professional education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2008–2012 [1],
- National cultural project «Trinity of Languages» [2],
- A state program of a development of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005–2010 [3],
- The Children of Kazakhstan program for 2007–2011 [4],
- The program for providing children with preschool education of «Balapang» for 2010–2014 [5],
- A state program of a development of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 [6].

The realization of the international grant of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan of «Bolashak» giving opportunity to gifted young Kazakhstan citizens to get an education at the best universities of the world became an essential contribution to development of the human capital of the country also. The international experience confirms that investments into the human capital, and, in particular, in education, since the early childhood to mature age, promote progress in the sphere of economy and in society.

Teaching English to young learners in Kazakhstan is an integral part of programs of polylingual education within the national cultural project «Trinity of Languages». Introduction a tree-language education at elementary school is reasoned by the experimental data of modern science testifying to intensity of informative processes of formation of language competence at school students of elementary grades. Besides especially didactic aspect, trekhyazychy forms feeling of an invariance and firmness of ethnic characteristics, psychological and intellectual openness to other languages and cultures that is an important element in education and training of younger generation in the modern globalized world in the identity of school students. Realization of an educational program of three-language education meets priorities of language policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan and is aimed at formation of polylingual culture of the modern citizen of Kazakhstan. Practice of teaching languages at elementary school confirms high extent of assimilation of a foreign language and formation of motivation to further studying of languages [7].

Increase of value of early training is among universal tendencies. It in turn demands realization of the following problems of the State program of a development of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020:

- updating of the content of preschool education and training;
- ensuring full coverage of children with high-quality preschool education and training
- ensuring full coverage of children with high-quality preschool education and training, equal access for children to various programs of preschool education and training for their preparation for school;
- implementation of transition to 12-year model of training with updating of the content of education which will be aimed at formation at comprehensive schools intellectual, physically and spiritually developed citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan [6].

Thus, the special attention is paid to value of preschool and initial school education and training within which basic values and background knowledge are put. It is scientifically proved that the early grade level is rather effective for development of foreign languages. This fact is considered in problems of the State program of a development of education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020.

Realization of the tasks set in this program in part «Updating of the content of preschool education and training» have the following prospects:

- to promote reduction in uniform system of fragmentary acquired practice of early training in foreign languages and foreign experience;
- to provide system scientific and methodical maintenance of activity of subjects of early training in foreign languages;
- to guarantee a continuity of foreign-language education and continuity of educational programs, and also development of a cross-cultural and communicative paradigm of modern language education;
- to cause high quality and efficiency of formation of the polylanguage personality as one of essential factors of development of intellectual potential of the country [7].

As it was already told, according to this program primary foreign-language education is the first step of new 12-year school. After all efficiency of learning of foreign language since early years is confirmed by theoretical calculations of many foreign and domestic scientists. In particular, it is proved that the most optimum age to start studying of foreign language is from 5 to 8 years when the system of native language is rather acquired by the child and to new language the conscious relation develops. At this age still there aren't enough stamps of speech behavior, and also there is no fear of communication in foreign language.

As the concept «teaching English to young learners» suggests, age plays a crucial role in what to teach and how to teach it, since a young learner class is different from an adult and/or a teenager class in terms of the learners' language learning needs, the language competences emphasized, and the cognitive skills addressed. That's why, it is highly important to show the differences of these three learner groups keeping in mind the fact that every learner is unique and such lists can only reflect generalizations [8]. The data is shown in table 1 «Psychological peculiarities of different learners groups».

Psychological peculiarities of different learners groups

Young Children	Adolescents	Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They respond although they do not understand. – They learn from everything around them: they learn indirectly rather than directly. – They understand mostly when they see, hear, touch and interact rather than from explanations. – Abstract concepts are difficult to deal with. – They generally display a curiosity about the world and an enthusiasm for learning a language. – They like talking about themselves and respond to learning that uses their lives as the main topic. – They love discovering things, making or drawing things, using their imagination, moving from one place to another, solving puzzles. – They have a short attention span; they can easily get bored after 5–10 minutes. – Teachers should have a rich repertoire of activities to help young children receive information from a variety of sources and plan a range of activities for a given time period. – Teachers should work with students individually or in groups — Teachers need to be aware of the students' interests to motivate them. – The classroom should be colorful and bright with enough room for different activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Despite their success in language learning, they are seen like problematic students. – They commit passionately when they are engaged – Most of them start to understand the need for learning. – Attention span is longer as a result of intellectual development. — They can talk about abstract issues to a certain point. – They can use many different ways of studying and practicing language. – They search for identity and self-esteem; thus they need to feel good about themselves and valued. – They need teacher and peer approval and are sensitive to criticism of their own age group. – Teachers should link teaching to their everyday interests and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They can engage with abstract thought — They have a whole range of (positive or negative) life and learning experiences. – They have expectations about the learning process and they have their own patterns of learning – They are more disciplined than the other age groups and know how to struggle on despite boredom – Unlike other groups, they know why they are learning and what they want to have at the end. – They sustain a level of motivation even for a distant goal, which is difficult for the other groups. – They can be critical of teaching methods or they may feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar methods. – Older ones worry that their intellectual powers diminish by age. – They have a longer concentration span to continue an activity than the other groups. – Teachers should consider their (positive or negative) learning experiences.

As one year of age makes a huge difference among children, the generalizations made for young learners may need more detailed analysis and some subcategorization. Although different sources classify young learners taken into account different ages or grade levels, the following grouping reflects the EFL teaching environment and the learners of English in the primary education in the Republic of Kazakhstan (table 2).

Table 2

Classification of young learners

Very Young Learners	Young Learners	Older/ Late Young Learners
1	2	3
Age: 3–6 years old	Age: 7–9 years old	Age: 10–12 years old
Grade: Pre-school Education	Grade: 1 st – 3 rd grade	Grade: 4 th–6 th grade
<i>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</i> Listening & Speaking Vocabulary Items (concrete & familiar objects) No Grammar Teaching or metalanguage (can't analyze language but may be exposed to chunks through songs, classroom language) No reading & writing (may recognize letters or short words)	<i>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</i> Listening & Speaking Vocabulary Items (concrete & familiar and new objects) New in Reading and Writing (word to sentence level) No Grammar Teaching or metalanguage (chunks through songs and classroom language)	<i>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</i> Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing Vocabulary Items (concrete & abstract) Grammar (inductive)

1	2	3
<p><i>Characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Low concentration span but easily excited *High motivation; active involvement *Love talking but problems in sharing *Short memory: Learn slowly Forget easily *Repetition and revision is necessary *Limited motor skills (using a pen and scissors) but kinesthetic and energetic *Learn holistically *Love stories, fantasy, imagination, art, drawing and coloring 	<p><i>Characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Low concentration span: Wide variety of activities needed *Short memory: frequent revision is needed *Logical-analytical: Asking questions *Problems in sharing in group work * Developing confidence in expressing themselves * Developing world knowledge *Limited motor skills (left-right) *Reasonable amount of input *Love stories, fantasy, imagination, drawing & coloring 	<p><i>Characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Longer attention span but still children *Taking learning seriously *World knowledge *More cooperation in groups and in pairs *Developed social, motor and intellectual skills *Learning strategies are used and developing

Obvious is also that fact that early studying of foreign language has not only intellectual, but and educational value. Children receive bases of knowledge of foreign language, culture, traditions and life, arts and crafts creativity. Early training develops the child, his language, cross-cultural and social competences, the child becomes more open, active. Studying of foreign language promotes development of flexibility in communication and confidence in itself. Children develop cognitive abilities through own knowledge of the surrounding world, etc.

In addition, researches and experience of the leading universities of the USA and Canada showed that at bilingual children cognitive abilities develop better, than at monolingual. Live and open character of bilingual children, ability to the decision multitasks, high adaptability and positive perception of life — the remarkable qualities necessary for the person for full-fledged life in our prompt and changeable world. Therefore, for Kazakhstan as the countries with the bilingual environment effective realization of early language training is guaranteed.

It is possible to give experience of introduction of early training in a foreign language in preschool institutions of the city of Karaganda as a positive example (Erfolg training center, kindergartens of «Altynay», «Akniyet», «Malinka», et al.) within the joint international project of E.A. Buketov Karaganda state university and Goethe — Institute which is realized since 2012. Productivity of implementation of the project for these 2 years is that:

- the new programs the practician including a component of early training are created;
- there is an adoption deed of the «Development of Skills of Speaking in Early Training in German» project executed by the student Popova Yu.V. during passing of work practice;
- separate aspects of problems of early teaching foreign languages are investigated within degree, master and doctor's theses;
- scientific and applied articles on subject of early teaching foreign languages are published;
- 4 training seminars for 40 hours by the animator Goethe institute in Karaganda are held, about 50 students and teachers of faculty are captured;
- experience was reflected within a seminar of «Bilderbücher im Fremdsprachenunterricht» in the XV national congress of teachers of German 09.11.2013g. in Almaty, a master class «Early teaching foreign languages» on the international lingvo-methodical school «Innovations in Training Foreign Languages» on the basis of Novosibirsk state pedagogical university in March, 2014 and at the Regional seminar on problems of early training in German in Minsk (Belarus), June, 2014.
- also is held work in respect of the international cooperation with the Chelyabinsk State university (Russia) and with the Euroasian university is conducted (Slovakia).

So, considering theoretical and practical practices of former decades, modern tendencies and requirements of time, it is necessary to recognize that early language education becomes necessary for our society. Therefore, the solution of the tasks providing the maximum comfort and efficiency of this stage in a context of continuous language education has to become the perspective direction of methodical science and practice.

For this purpose it is necessary to undertake the following of a measure for realization of early language education:

- to develop standard legal support of process of language formation of the Republic of Kazakhstan (standard training programs and plans, regulations on the organization of language education at an early grade level, long-term and short-term plans of a phased transition on early language education);
- to revise the content of education, namely, to develop educational and methodical complexes of disciplines in the conditions of transition to 12 years' education according to levels of proficiency in a foreign language according to the European standards taking into account national specifics and content of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- to provide possibility of retraining and training of teachers of foreign languages according to a new educational paradigm;
- to consider possibility of obligatory introduction in educational process of higher education institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan of the courses «Technique of Teaching a Foreign Language at an Early Grade Level» with the subsequent passing of work (pedagogical) practice trained in all links of education (the preschool — school).

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Қазақстан Республикасында шетел тілін ерте жастан оқытуды енгізу алғышарттары

Қазақстан Республикасы заманауи білім беру жүйесінде шетел тілін ерте жастан оқыту мәселесі өзекті мәселелердің бірі болып отыр. Қазақстандықтардың экономикалық, саяси, әлеуметтік өмір сүру жағдайларының өзгерістері, атап айтқанда, экономиканы жетілдірілуі, халықаралық ынтымақтастық және саяси диалог ата-аналар мен педагогтарды шетел тілін ерте жастан оқытудың жана мүмкіндіктерін іздеуге ынталандырады. Қарастырылып отырған мәселеге көптеген жұмыстар жүргізілгеніне қарамастан, мәселелер өзінің ғылыми және тәжірибелік шешімін тапқан жоқ. Мақалада Қазақстанның қазіргі заманға сай азаматының полилингвалды мәдениет қалыптастыруға бағытталған мемлекеттік реформалар, білім жүйесіндегі бағдарламалар мен жобалар, сонымен қатар шетел тілін ерте жастан оқытуды сәтті түрде енгізудің педагогикалық, психологиялық және тағы басқа жағдайлары қарастырылған.

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Предпосылки внедрения раннего обучения иностранным языкам в Республике Казахстан

В статье рассматривается проблема раннего обучения иностранным языкам в современной системе образования Республики Казахстан. Несмотря на значительное количество работ по данной проблематике, многие вопросы все еще не получили должного научного и практического разрешения. Авторами проанализированы государственные программы и проекты по реализации раннего обучения иностранным языкам в сфере образования, нацеленные на формирование полилингвальной культуры современного гражданина Казахстана, а также выделены педагогические, психологические и другие условия для успешного внедрения раннего обучения иностранным языкам.