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SPECIFIC METHODS OF STUDYING COMMUNICATIVE UNIVERSAL LEARNING ACTIONS OF JUNIOR SCHOOLCHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Abstract. The article describes the essence of universal learning actions on the basis of analysis of such normative documents as the Concept of Development of Universal Learning Actions and the Federal State Educational Standard for Primary General Education (FSES PGE). Special attention is paid to the characteristic of communicative universal learning actions, specifically in primary school children with disabilities, attending inclusive education institutions. The aim of the study is to develop a methodology for the study of communicative universal learning actions in the children of this category, and to work out the criteria for determination of the level of their formation. The methodology is focused on the study of three groups of universal learning actions: first, actions aimed at transfer of information; second, actions related to knowledge about the rules of speech etiquette and the ability to apply them in specific situations of communication; third, actions related to the peculiarities of interaction between the subjects of the process of education in various activities. The article presents the results of a tested system of methods allowing characterization of the levels of formation of communicative universal learning actions in one of the categories of primary school children with disabilities, namely: students with cerebral palsy.

Keywords: universal learning actions; communicative universal learning actions; junior schoolchildren; children's palsy; CP; children with musculoskeletal disorders.

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Universal learning action (ULA) is a key notion in such normative documents as the Federal State Educational Standard for primary general education FSES PGE) and the Conception of Development of Universal Learning Actions [1; 2; 15]. Analysis of psycho-pedagogical literature has shown that this notion is considered from different points of view in the works of such scholars as A. G. Asmolov, G. V. Burmenskaya, I. A. Volodarskaya, O. A. Karabanova, S. V. Molchanov, N. G. Salmina and others. On the basis of the abovementioned documents and psycho-pedagogical literature, we can define the notion "universal learning actions" (ULA) as the ability of the subject to actively acquire new knowledge and skills, which serve as the basis for self-development and self-perfection, and ensure the opportunity of independent acquisition of the skill "to learn" [1; 2].

Communicative ULA dealt with in our study ensure social competence and consideration of the posi-

tion of other people; skills to listen and take part in dialogue; to integrate in the group of peers and build up effective interaction and cooperation with peers and adults [9; 12; 13]. It is necessary to note that junior preschool age is a sensitive period for the formation of communicative actions. It is especially important for the category of students with disabilities, for whom this kind of ULA is a basis for successful socialization. Under the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" (of December 29, 2012. № 273-FZ), the category "student with disability" is characterized as "a person with disorders of physical and/or psychological development, confirmed by the psycho-medico-pedagogical commission and preventing them from getting education without creation of special conditions [14, p. 4]. Our study focuses on such category of persons with disabilities as children with musculoskeletal disorders, which include children with cerebral palsy (CP).

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In accordance with the scientific works of D. I. Boyko and G. Zh. Mikerova, the given group of pupils can be characterized in the following way: a group with motor disorders which emerge as a result of damage of the motor systems of the brain and are manifested in lack or absence of control of the central nervous system over arbitrary movements, which leads to the low level of formation of communicative skills [3; 9]. Within the framework of general education, it is necessary to create special conditions for the formation of communicative ULA in such children. These conditions should include diagnostics of the level of formation of the said actions. At the stage of summative experiment of our research aimed at diagnostics of communicative ULA in children with CP, we worked out the corresponding methods, substantiated the assessment criteria, and presented the characteristic of the level of formation of the abovementioned ULA.

Based on the analysis of special literature (D. I. Boyko, N. N. Malofeyeva, O. S. Nikol'skaya, I. A. Neyasova), we have singled out the skills ensuring the formation of the communicative ULA in persons with disabilities, including students with children's CP: establishment of cooperation in learning; formulation of questions; management of partner's behavior; skill to express one's thoughts clearly and in full in

correspondence with the tasks and conditions of communication, etc. [3; 7; 8; 10]. These skills were differentiated into three groups: 1) actions aimed at transfer of information; 2) actions related to knowledge about the rules of speech etiquette and the ability to apply them in specific situations of communication by junior schoolchildren with CP; 3) actions related to the peculiarities of interaction between the subjects of the process of education, and specifically junior schoolchildren with CP in various activities. Now we will dwell on the characteristics of the methods used to study the abovementioned groups of skills.

To study the ULA of *Group 1*, we have chosen *the method of "Left and right sides"* (according to J. Piaget) [11, pp. 62-64]. Observation was conducted during individual interview oriented towards the abovementioned method. Those tested were offered the following sequence of tasks: 1. "Show me your right hand. And now the left one. Show me your right leg. And now the left one" (the task is performed with the child sitting or standing facing the experimenter). Another instruction may be as follows: "Show me my right hand. And now the left one. Show me my right leg. And now the left one." 2. Coins and pencils are laid out on the table before the child (the coin to the left of the pencil looking from

the child). The experimenter asks the question: "Is the pencil to the left, or to the right? And what about the coin?" 3. The child sits opposite the adult, who has a coin in the right hand, and a pencil in the left one. The experimenter asks the question: "Is the coin in left hand, or in the right one? And the pencil?" Proceeding from the analysis of psycho-pedagogical literature (J. Piaget, A. G. Asmolov, G. V. Burmenskaya, I. A. Volodarskaya and other researchers), the following *criteria* were chosen to assess the results obtained: comparison of the characteristics or qualities of objects with the specificity of spatial position of the observer; coordination of different spatial positions; ability to give a clear and complete answer to the question of the interlocutor [2; 11]. Taking these criteria into consideration, we distinguished the following *levels* of task completion: *low level* (the child answers the questions and performs the actions offered by the experimenter "incorrectly" in all tasks: does not take into account the differences between their position and that of another person, incorrectly compares the qualities of objects from the point of view of the observer, does not give full answers to the experimenter's questions); *intermediate level* (the child gives correct answers in two tasks only: they identify the sides correctly from their own position, but cannot take into account the position of

the partner; can give short answers to the questions of the experimenter); *high level* (the child completes all tasks correctly; takes into account the difference in the position of another person, compares the qualities of objects from the point of view of different observers, gives complete answers to the experimenter's questions).

The ULA of *Group 2* were studied using the adapted method of N. E. Veraksa [5, pp. 85-86]. The diagnostic material includes three submethods, according to which the child is asked to look at series of pictures showing adults and children. In the instruction, the experimenter asks the child to choose the picture showing the correct answer and put a cross in the circle next to it. *The assessment criteria* may be presented in the following way: skills to perceive and analyze the emotional state of other people and to compare it with their own one; presence of knowledge about generally accepted norms and means of expression of attitude towards peers and adults; independence in choosing answer; ability to explain the answer (formulated drawing on the works by N. E. Veraksa, A. G. Asmolov and others). With regard to these criteria, the following *levels* were singled out: *low level* (at the given level, the development of communicative skills is evaluated on the scale from 0 to 5 points; the children do not perform the tasks of

any of the methods, or perform the tasks of one method only, and make mistakes into the bargain); *intermediary level* (at the given level, the development of communicative skills is evaluated on the scale from 6 to 10 points; the children perform the tasks of the first two submethods correctly); *high level* (at the given level, the development of communicative skills is evaluated on the scale from 12 to 16 points; the children perform all tasks of the three submethods correctly).

The ULA of *Group 3* were diagnosed with help of the method of *observation*. It was carried out at the lesson during which the experimenter could record the behavior of the children with CP under conditions of direct interaction between the child and the teacher and the peers. Analysis of the results obtained was conducted according to the following *criteria*: wish to get in contact with peers and adults; skills to organize communication including the ability to listen to the interlocutor and sympathize with them; knowledge of the norms and rules to be observed in communication with other people; knowledge of the norms and rules of behavior at the lesson; ability to adequately react to the teacher's comments and refrain from aggression towards the surrounding people (the indicators have been formulated drawing on the works of such authors as A. G. As-

molov, D. I. Boyko, E. A. Trofimchuk) [1; 3; 13]. With regard to these criteria, the following *levels* of acquisition of ULA were singled out: *high level* (the child can quietly sit at the lesson without interfering with the neighbor or misbehaving themselves; the child quietly reacts to the teacher's comments without displaying aggression; understands instructions to the tasks in the subject; if they need help, they ask the teacher or neighbor for it independently; can sustain dialogue with the teacher or peers); *intermediate level* (the child has problems with establishing contact with the teacher; in some cases cannot control themselves, can shout out answer without putting up the hand, or push the neighbor by chance – which may be a consequence of misbehavior. On the whole, the child is quiet, learns without showing aggression or apathy; can give one word answers to the questions of the teacher or peers); *low level* (the child is anxious at the lesson, keeps asking to repeat the material or may be inhibited and display apathy; is hardly ready to contact peers, can manifest unmotivated aggression or fear).

The given method was tested in the course of experimental work. 20 schoolchildren with the diagnosis “spastic diplegia of moderate degree”, selected on the basis of psycho-medico-pedagogical commission certificates, took part in the

experiment. 10 children comprised the experimental group (EG), and 10 pupils made up the control group (CG). Now we are going to dwell on the characteristic of the level of formation of communicative ULA in junior schoolchildren with CP.

In the course of testing with the method of “Left and right sides” (according to J. Piaget), the experiment participants of both the EG and the CG showed practically the same results. 50% of those tested in both groups did not cope with the task: the junior schoolchildren failed to answer a single question, or complete a single task. The same number of the subjects (50%) were referred by us to the category of those with the intermediary level of formation of the skill to transfer information. This part of the experiment participants managed to complete two tasks out of four. The following difficulties were recorded: the junior schoolchildren with CP could not quickly orient themselves in the questions asked, gave only one word answers, and displayed no initiative in communication.

The following results were obtained while performing tasks of the second experimental series (according to the method of N. E. Veraksa): the schoolchildren with CP of both the EG and the CG have the intermediary (30%) and low (70%) level of formation of the actions associated with the acquisition of knowledge about the rules of speech eti-

quette and the skills to use them in concrete situations of communication. We believe that the problems might have been brought about by the fact that children with CP have movement coordination disorders; that is why it is difficult for such children to put a cross in the corresponding circle and to adequately characterize the actions of other people. *Intermediate level* was demonstrated by 30% of the participants of both groups. They matched the action with the task correctly, but performed the task slowly, which prevented them from completing the task to the end. Those tested could analyze emotional state of other people and compare it with their own one, and they were able to explain their position. Many junior schoolchildren could not match emotions with pictures, as well as tasks with actions, and were rather anxious; often, they could not explain their position on the actions in the pictures and could not formulate a conclusion.

While performing tasks of the third experimental series, in which we studied actions associated with the specificity of interaction between the schoolchildren with CP and their peers in various kinds of activity, *high level* of formation of the given skills was not shown by any experiment participant of the EG and CG. This testifies to the fact that children with CP have problems with interaction with typical

peers. *Intermediate level* of development of ULA was demonstrated by 40% of those tested in both groups: the children are able to engage in dialogue with the teacher, ask classmates for help independently, but fail to understand the task in full; these children can hardly interact in group work, and do not show initiative. *Low level* of formation of the actions under study was recorded in 60% of the children of both EG and CG: the children are passive at the lesson, are not willing to establish contact with the pedagogue and peers, do not take part in group activity, can shout out the answer or begin to speak loudly without motivation, and display aggression.

Thus, the peculiarities of the study of the communicative universal learning actions of junior schoolchildren with disabilities can be presented in the following way:

1. It is necessary to understand the basic terminology (ULA represent generalized methods of action performance serving as a basis for orientation of schoolchildren across various subject areas ensuring the opportunity of independent acquisition of the skill to “learn”; the communicative ULA are actions granting social competence, conscious effort of the pupils to take into consideration the positions of other people, and the ability to build up effective interaction and cooperation with peers and adults).

2. In order to study the communicative universal learning actions of junior schoolchildren with disabilities it is necessary to adapt the methods existing in general education (we have adapted the method “Left and right sides” (according to J. Piaget), the method of N. E. Veraksa; we used observation to study the actions associated with the specificity of interaction between the subjects of education).

3. With the purpose of assessment of the results obtained, it is imperative to substantiate the criteria (we have singled out the assessment criteria of actions on transfer of information; on acquisition of the knowledge about the rules of speech etiquette and the skills to use them in various situations of communication; on the specificity of interaction between the subjects of education).

4. The results of our study of the given actions testify to the fact that in the area of transfer of information, the subjects of the experiment had a command of certain verbal means, could almost correctly give arguments in favor of their choice, and were able to conduct dialogue with the interlocutor and the experimenter. The children gave mostly short answers to the questions asked, and had problems with constructing complex sentences (for example, while constructing utterances, there were numerous pauses associated with the process of looking for the right words to say); they

often needed the experimenter's help, for instance, leading questions which allowed building up a constructive dialogue. Characterizing the peculiar features connected with acquisition of knowledge about the rules of speech etiquette, it should be noted that in their majority, the children possessed the knowledge concerning the familiar social or everyday reality, but they sometimes failed to use their knowledge adequately for solution of concrete practical problems, which speaks of poor formation of the corresponding skills. The process of interaction between the children with disabilities was also distinguished by certain specific features, for example, the children rarely expressed wish to exercise joint actions with their peers and did not show initiative; they were able to engage in dialogue both with adults and peers, but could not always perform the task because they did not understand the instruction; it was very seldom that they took part in group activity, and when they did, they were aggressive and spoke loudly.

5. It was found out in the course of diagnostics that junior schoolchildren with disabilities had intermediate and low levels of formation of communicative ULA. Thus, purposive rehabilitation-educational work of the teacher, psychologist and defectologist is necessary for the formation of these actions in the schoolchildren of this category.

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