

EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR OVERCOMING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTING

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17068189>

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges of communication competence among children with special educational needs in an inclusive education environment and explores effective methods for addressing them. Communication competence plays a crucial role in children's social integration and academic achievement. The analysis emphasizes the significance of individualized approaches in the development of communication competence.

Keywords

inclusive education, communication competence, individualized approach, educational integration, social interaction.

According to S.V. Alyokhina, *"The essence of inclusive education is that children are not divided into separate groups; rather, it ensures the right of diverse children to be in the same classroom and to receive education and upbringing together."*

The main challenges faced by children with special educational needs are restrictions in their connectedness with the world, limited mobility, difficulties in communication with peers and adults, as well as constrained opportunities for interaction with nature, access to cultural values, and even basic education.

As L.S. Vygotsky emphasized, *"Inclusive education is a pedagogical system that organically integrates special and general education. Its primary goal is to create conditions that help children overcome the social consequences of genetic and biological impairments in development. Through this, the possibility of socially compensating for existing physical disabilities emerges."*

Inclusive classrooms foster diversity and help students recognize that every individual has both strengths and weaknesses. Children with disabilities, like their peers, are capable of making significant contributions to the development of society if their potential is fully supported and nurtured. When children understand that *"being different is normal,"* they feel safe and comfortable. They develop the ability to

live in a diverse world, which enables them to become active citizens with a strong sense of social responsibility and readiness to contribute to the betterment of society.

Communication competence refers to the ability to master verbal and non-verbal means of communication, acquire social skills in interpersonal interaction, adhere to the norms of speech communication, and internalize the rules of communicative behavior. Isolation from social interaction, feelings of hopelessness, and limited access to meaningful aspects of life may lead to internal personal disturbances and partial loss of communication skills among children with special needs. They may believe that no one understands them, which causes mistrust in others, concealment of problems, and avoidance of communication. As a result, “special” children do not learn to interact effectively but rather withdraw from social contact.

The role of primary school teachers, resource specialists, psychologists, and parents is to organize group activities, engage in dialogue with the children, help them open up, and teach them to become full members of society without feeling socially excluded. The use of information technologies is essential for significantly enhancing the effectiveness of the educational process. For children with underdeveloped abstract and logical thinking, computers simultaneously serve as a teacher, a working tool, a visual aid, and a play environment. These resources make lessons more engaging and productive.

Key directions and methods for the systematic and comprehensive development of communication competence

1. Individualization:

- Designing personalized educational pathways that take into account each child’s unique needs.
- Setting communication goals that are realistic and aligned with the child’s actual capabilities.

2. Sensory and Structural Environment:

- Creating a pre-planned and structured environment that helps children orient themselves and feel safe.

3. Use of Assistive Tools:

- Employing alternative and augmentative means of communication such as PECS cards, sign language, communication boards, and specialized applications.
- Integrating multimedia technologies and interactive games into the learning process.

4. Active Communication:

- Organizing joint activities and play situations where children can learn to communicate with peers and adults.

- Using role-playing, discussions, and collaborative problem-solving methods to develop dialogic skills.

5. **Formation of Social Skills:**

- Developing the child's ability to initiate and maintain conversations, as well as to express needs and emotions effectively.

- Teaching skills of cooperation, active listening, and interpretation of non-verbal signals.

6. **Adult Support:**

- Providing consistent guidance and encouragement from teachers, resource specialists, psychologists, and parents to reinforce communication development.

- Every attempt at communication should be encouraged, even if it is not fully successful.

- Demonstrating patience and a positive attitude toward the child helps to increase self-confidence.

7. **Collaboration and Awareness:**

- Establishing cooperation with parents to ensure a unified approach in the development of communication skills.

- Organizing training sessions and consultations for parents and educators on effective strategies for supporting communication development.

Thus, in the process of fostering communication skills, it must always be remembered—by both adults and children—that the development of a sense of belonging to the classroom and the learning process among students with special educational needs significantly enhances social integration, improves academic outcomes, and contributes to the growth of mutual respect and self-confidence.

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