

OPINION
by Prof. Emilia Evgenieva, PhD

Subject: Dissertation work for the award of Education science degree "Doctor"
in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences,
professional direction 1.2 Pedagogy,
scientific specialty Special pedagogy

Dissertation topic: Optimizing English language learning for students with mild mental retardation in primary school age

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The topic of the present work is innovative and concerns important problems of the modern education system for students with mental retardation. It emphasizes the demands of the modern educational environment and the need to ensure a sufficient and functioning inclusive environment. In this sense, learning English is an important moment in this process of building socially active members of a society without exclusion.

The dissertation is presented on 180 pages, of which the actual text is 161 pages and 19 pages of appendices. The theoretical part is developed in two paragraphs on 50 pages, the experimental part and the quantitative analysis on the stages of the experiment are presented on 89 pages, the analysis of the results on 10 pages. In total, the text is structured in four paragraphs, introduction, conclusion, bibliography, appendix. There is a balance between the individual parts: theoretical, experimental, analytical.

The theoretical formulation is aimed at substantiating the specifics of foreign language learning for students with mental retardation. The author is faced with the task of clarifying a poorly developed problem for the learning process and adapting it to the conditions of the new reality of the new information society. This is probably the reason why, in the theoretical part, attention is paid to the basic assumptions on which the methods of teaching students with mental retardation are based since the middle of the 20th century, and the modern assumptions that begin to be constructed with the entry of information technologies into the lives of every member of society and in the education system. This makes it possible to single out a very non-standard interaction between the productions that develop on the border with the 21st century. It is noteworthy that attention has been paid to the conclusions of more than two decades of international research on reading comprehension. The emphasis in the theoretical presentation is on the functional literacy needed to provide a basic level of use of written text, especially foreign language text.

Against this background, the structure of the theoretical part does not follow the classical structure and represents an attempt to reconcile the problems that are manifested in the language education of modern children in two separate paragraphs, respectively:

"Theoretical and practical aspects of the education of students with mild mental

retardation" and "Working with text in the foreign language education of students with mild mental retardation".

The theoretical statements about the education of students with mental retardation are sought first in the clarification of some terminological statements. In a synthesized text, the very dynamic picture of changing the terminology and the dominants in it is presented, which also follows the dynamic change of the understanding of different people and their place in society. On this basis, the principles of planning and organization of learning and methodical approaches are clarified, in which models are sought that stimulate imitation and/or a metacognitive approach that stimulates curiosity about the possibilities of applying the learned language.

The part dedicated to working with text in foreign language learning is developed according to the logic of foreign language learning. It begins by clarifying the structure of the text in spoken communication and the discourse derived from it. Attention is paid to the concept of the text, giving rise to its extratextual character. Educational structures are set, which are generated by the constructs of the text in relation to narrative, descriptive, argumentative, regulatory elements, tailored to the specifics of the age of the learners. An analysis of the text-functional literacy relationship is made, taking into account the setting for reading comprehension. Last but not least, the influence of the text on building communicative competence is analyzed. The difficulties that may occur in learning a foreign language depending on the educational needs are also considered.

The structure of the empirical study meets the requirements for dissertation development. The formulated goal and hypotheses are supported by the system of research tasks and research methodology.

The goal is constructed on a specific text characteristic - the narrative, which makes the requested pedagogical technology significantly more visible and possible. Research-wise, it is correct to look in the hypothesis for the influence of working with key language structures, which are also one of the main markers of modern functional literacy. The key language structures in recent years have been developed extremely rapidly through the use of the data base in the information environment.

What makes an impression in the dissertation is:

1. The research battery, which is properly described and follows the logic of building the innovative model. To cover the possibilities of students with mental retardation, level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is adopted. Content-wise, the texts are tailored to the life experience of the students at the chosen age and in a volume that is manageable when reading - ninety words.
2. The experimental procedure carried out, which contains: ascertaining, training and closing stages.

The ascertaining stage is presented with the quantitative data from it and the didactic technology structured on their basis.

The educational experiment is presented with a description of the overall procedure performed by the teacher when using the developed didactic technology. In this way, it is possible to track the reaction and capabilities of the learners at each stage of the process. Quantitative data from the conducted research are presented.

3. The developed innovative model is presented descriptively and accordingly to the linguistic and communicative situation and the teaching strategy in English.

The fourth paragraph, which is titled data analysis, presents some of the statistical data from the study. The presented pedagogical technology is rich in results and is given more attention. What is shown in this part of the dissertation research is that:

1. The structured innovative model can serve as the basis of an accessible system for reducing the educational content in English for students with mental retardation.
2. The structural innovative model changes the idea of learning a foreign language and the formation of the corresponding key competence.

The abstract meets the text presentation requirements. On the second cover, the technical data from the dissertation can be presented - pages, tables and diagrams.

The contributions follow the logic of the research and the results obtained.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented in a dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" (PhD) to Violeta Halacheva in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction, 1.2. Pedagogy, doctoral program in Special Pedagogy

3/10/2022

Sofia Signature:

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