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## DEVELOPMENT OF SPATIAL ORIENTATION SKILLS IN SENIOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH DIDACTIC GAMES

Spatial orientation is a critically important component of children's overall development, especially during senior preschool age (5–6 years), when the foundations of cognitive and motor skills are intensively formed. These skills determine future success in learning and social adaptation. At this age, children actively develop the ability to perceive, understand, and manipulate spatial relationships between objects in their environment. Proper spatial orientation allows a child to better adapt to a changing environment, which is an essential condition for successful socialization and academic activities in school [1].

In senior preschool age, children begin to understand and use basic spatial concepts such as "above," "below," "left," "right," "in front," and "behind." This forms the foundation for the development of more complex spatial representations, such as the concepts of "distance," "depth," and "horizontal-vertical," which later enable them to navigate not only in a two-dimensional space (on a plane) but also in a three-dimensional one (including height and depth) [2].

Spatial orientation enables children to develop visual representations, recognize and classify shapes, understand spatial relationships, and determine the location of objects in space. This is crucial for imagination development as well as for complex cognitive processes such as abstract thinking.

The ability to navigate in space is closely related to the development of fine and gross motor skills, which are extremely important in preschool age. When children orient themselves in space, they develop movement coordination, the ability to correctly position themselves and objects in space, as well as the skills of moving and manipulating objects within certain coordinates. For example, playing games that require movement in specific directions promotes physical activity and enhances physical abilities [2].

Tasks requiring spatial movement, such as the game "Find the Exit", promote motor coordination development and teach the child how their movements affect the positioning of objects and people around them.

Spatial orientation is directly related to academic success in school, particularly in subjects such as geometry, mathematics, natural sciences, and language skills. Children with well-developed spatial awareness more easily acquire graphic skills, learn to work with maps, plans, and diagrams. They can better perceive information about the placement of objects on a page, such as understanding the orientation of letters, numbers, and symbols.

Furthermore, spatial skills are essential for developing logical thinking and mathematical abilities. Senior preschool children can understand relative quantities,

such as "more" or "less," "higher" or "lower," which serve as the foundation for mastering more complex mathematical concepts.

Spatial orientation is closely intertwined with the development of cognitive and social skills in senior preschoolers. Children who have strong spatial skills tend to interact better with their peers, understand their positions and movement directions, which contributes to the development of communication skills. They also adapt more quickly to new situations, such as changes in the environment or tasks requiring collective cooperation [1].

For example, in group games that require coordinated movements and interaction with others, children with good spatial orientation more easily find common ground with peers and complete tasks. It helps them develop important social skills such as cooperation, role distribution, and coordinated teamwork.

Developing spatial orientation skills is also crucial for fostering independence and self-confidence. When children can independently navigate their surroundings, they gain a sense of control over the situation, which promotes self-respect and psychological maturity. They feel more comfortable in new or unfamiliar situations, which is essential for their future development.

The modern educational process in preschool institutions is designed not only to impart knowledge but also to create conditions for the comprehensive development of a child's personality. The issue of forming spatial representations and spatial orientation skills in senior preschoolers is relevant, as these skills contribute to cognitive function development, stimulate creative thinking, imagination, abstract thinking, and prepare them for school. Among the main challenges in the educational process are the limitations of visual and tactile stimuli, insufficient attention to interactive learning methods, and the lack of consistency in using didactic tools to develop spatial orientation.

Didactic games help overcome these difficulties, as their primary goal is to form children's understanding of space and basic spatial concepts such as "left-right," "above-below," "under-over," and "front-back." Didactic games allow children to reinforce these concepts through practical tasks, enhance their motivation and interest in learning, develop communication skills, and foster cooperation abilities.

To effectively develop spatial orientation, it is recommended to incorporate didactic games as an element of joint activities between educators and children. Games focusing on spatial awareness can be conducted as part of lessons, outdoor activities, individual work, or as separate educational activities. The duration of didactic games for senior preschool children should not exceed 20–25 minutes, and their frequency can range from once to twice a week to ensure sustained interest in the learning process and accumulation of practical experience.

Didactic games can have various focuses depending on the educator's goals, for example:

• Understanding basic spatial concepts: The game "Turn Around – Make Friends with Left and Right" reinforces the concepts of "left" and "right."

• Mastering relative object positioning: Games such as "The Dance of Butterflies and Flowers" and "What Did the Hedgehog See?" help children understand the relative positioning of objects ("near," "in front," "behind").

• **Reinforcing intermediate directions**: In the game "Fairy Tale Routes," children follow "routes" using maps and diagrams, helping them form ideas about intermediate directions.

• Working with a plan or diagram: The game "Where is the Parrot Sitting?" teaches children to navigate using simple maps or diagrams.

• **Developing symmetry and spatial imagination**: The game "Build Symmetrically" allows children to create symmetrical constructions using Cuisenaire rods.

Examples of didactic games:

1. "Create a Picture". Children are given images of various objects (sun, clouds, trees, animals) that they must place on a sheet of paper according to the teacher's instructions. The task involves creating a composition based on spatial positioning, e.g. "Place the house in the middle of the sheet, and the sun in the upper right corner." This exercise develops orientation on a plane and understanding of spatial relationships.

2. "**Puppet Theater**". Children receive tickets with row and seat numbers and must place the figures of characters accordingly. This game teaches children to orient themselves using two coordinates (row and column) and to work with symbolic representations.

3. "**Observer**". Children are briefly shown an illustration with a plot composition, after which they answer questions about the placement of different objects. This activity develops memory, attentiveness, and the ability to retain spatial representations.

Thus, the use of didactic games in preschool education effectively fosters children's spatial representations and orientation skills. Implementing didactic games in various types of activities makes learning more engaging and accessible for children, enhances their motivation for interaction, and lays the foundation for successful learning at school.

## REFERENCES

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