

ACTIVE LEARNING METHODS IN DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SKILLS AT PRE-SCHOOL AGE: TEACHERS' ATTITUDES

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ABSTRACT

Strategic documents (Description of Pre-school Children's Achievements, 2014; State Strategy for Education in 2013–2022, 2014; Concept of Good School, 2015; Methodological Recommendations for Pre-school Education, 2015; etc) state the need to create conditions for children to actively work, investigate, create, discuss, and learn to solve problems, etc. This changes the classic approach to the quality and outcomes of pre-school education. The article analyses teachers' attitudes towards the possibilities for applying active learning methods in developing children's language skills at pre-school age. The findings of the qualitative research have revealed that pre-school teachers look for the most effective, child-friendly education methods and tools in order to ensure the success of children's language education and their optimal achievements according to the children's abilities. From a teacher's point of view, pre-school children whose teachers apply active learning methods have the following opportunities for language education: to think creatively, experience the joy of education, take responsibility, investigate and solve problems, work in pairs and/or groups, learn to believe in themselves, use media, develop responsible media usage habits, etc. The findings of the research reveal that children's language education possibilities using active learning methods are highly dependent on the teacher's competencies, creativity and willingness to work in a different, non-traditional way.

KEY WORDS: *active learning methods, language skills, teacher, pre-school age.*

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Introduction

Language is an important means of social communication and thinking (Augustinienė, Burinskienė, Kajokienė, 2013). Therefore, everything that happens with a child's spoken and written language before he or she starts school is important. Research logic (Trussell, Easterbrooks, 2013; Breaz, 2019) allows us to state that children with good language skills are able to understand, summarise and critically evaluate information, and formulate conclusions; they can reflect on the performance of the task, explain their creative ideas, communicate successfully, etc.

Foreign and Lithuanian researchers have written and analysed aspects of the development of language skills. S. Saparahayuningsih and B. L. Badeni (2019) and L. Liutvinienė (2021) defined the regularities of

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children's language, and speaking, writing and reading development. I. Jankauskienė and U. Rinkevičiūtė (2017), K. Savickytė (2018), S. Balčiūnienė (2018), and N. Bražienė and O. Šalkuvienė (2020) analysed how to develop children's spoken language skills. E. Valinskienė (2012), D. Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė and K. Vozbinaitė (2016), F. Locher and M. Fost (2019), and B. Celik (2020) tried to find out how to develop children's written language skills. S. Syafril, R. Susanti, R.E. Fiah *et al.* (2018), O. Novikovskaja (Новиковская, 2019), D. Francine (2020), and B. Dmitrieva (Дмитриева, 2020) *et al.* highlighted the peculiarities of fine motor skills training. D. Raubienė (2014) and D. Verseckienė (2017) wrote about articulatory apparatus training. E. Turauskienė (2019), A. Žičkevičienė and A. Bagdonas (2020), and L. Liutvinienė (2021) all noted the difficulties faced by parents and teachers in developing children's language skills. R. Braslauskienė and E. Turauskienė (2021) revealed pre-school teachers' opinions about developing the language skills of children with special educational needs during inclusive education.

When improving children's spoken language skills in pre-school, teachers perform the following activities: initiate language games, hold children-children and/or children-adult conversations, talk to children about words and sounds, encourage children to imitate animal and environmental sounds, read fiction to children, encourage them to extend and add more information to known stories, apply the method of dialogical reading, sing songs with demonstrative movements, and teach poems, create productions, initiate articulatory exercises, promote activities with information and communication technologies, encourage the study of technological possibilities, dictionaries and calendars, introduce language etiquette rules, etc (Jankauskienė, Rinkevičiūtė, 2017; Savickytė, 2018; Žičkevičienė, Bagdonas, 2020; Braslauskienė, Turauskienė, 2021). When developing children's written language skills, teachers apply the following activities: initiate various games and creative activities (suggest children paint, swipe, mix using brushes, fingers, earplugs, straws, prints, etc); encourage them to act using information and communication technologies; develop fine motor skills; teach the correct use of drawing and writing tools and scissors; encourage children to copy and write letters (Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, Vozbinaitė, 2016; Braslauskienė, Turauskienė, 2021), etc.

From the classic point of view, an important role in the process of language education is played by the teacher, who conveys the knowledge available to children by applying special methods, techniques and educational tools. From a modern point of view, in the process of language education, the teacher is the learner's facilitator, encouraging the child to imagine, be active, take risks, explore, doubt, and look for solutions to non-traditional problems and tasks. Therefore, teachers are increasingly using innovative, non-traditional, active teaching/learning methods, techniques and tools (Ciobanu, 2018). The importance of applying active learning methods is emphasised in documents, *Description of Pre-school Children's Achievements* (2014), *In State Education 2013–2022 in the Strategy* (2014), *The Concept of a Good School* (2015), *Methodological Recommendations for Pre-school Education* (2015), which state that in an educational institution the child must be given opportunities to act, try, investigate, experiment, improvise, observe the consequences of his/her actions, discuss, learn to solve problems, etc.

The documents mentioned and academic works actualise the importance of active teaching/learning methods, and discuss features of children's oral and written language education. However, there is a lack of possibilities for the application of active teaching/learning methods that directly examine research papers in developing children's language skills at pre-school age. Therefore, this article raises a scientific problem: in teachers' opinions, what are the possibilities for applying active teaching/learning methods in developing children's language skills at pre-school age?

The object of the research is teachers' opinions of the possibilities for applying active learning methods in developing children's language skills.

The aim of the research is to reveal teachers' opinions of the possibilities for applying active learning methods in developing children's language skills at pre-school age.

Research methods: theoretical (analysis of academic literature and documents), empirical (partially structured interview and content analysis).

1. Research methodology

In order to reveal the opinions of pre-school education teachers (PET) on the possibilities for applying active learning methods (ALM), qualitative research has been chosen to develop children's language skills at pre-school age. During the research, information provided in documents and academic literature, the data and results of the research, have been collected, analysed and systematised; the chosen research strategy and research design have been developed; a research instrument has been formed; a partially structured interview has been conducted; the research findings have been analysed and summarised, and a research report has been prepared. *The interpretive paradigm* (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007) and *the constructivist approach* (Berger, Luckmann, 1999) were used to justify the qualitative research. They have been adapted to provide an interpretative, holistic view of the situation under analysis, the experiences of those involved in it, and the explanation arising from the situation analysis.

Research participants. According to B. Bitinas (2013), the selection of the research participants in qualitative research depends on the purpose of the research. I. Gaižauskaitė and N. Valavičienė (2016) note that in an interview, sampling may be formed during the data collection. However, the initial composition of the research participants has to be logical and deliberate. In this research, sample units from the general population have been selected based on unlikely target sampling. *Depending on the purpose of the work, individuals who could provide meaningful information about the subject were selected for the research. In this case, it is the PET applying ALM when developing pre-school children's language skills. The demographic characteristics of the research participants are presented in Table 1.*

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the informants

Code	Gender	Teaching experience	ALM application period	Qualification category
PET1	Female	9 years	9 years	Senior teacher
PET2	Female	6 years	6 years	Senior teacher
PET3	Female	7 years	7 years	Senior teacher
PET4	Female	12 years	10 years	Teacher methodologist
PET5	Female	8 years	6 years	Teacher

Source: The authors, 2022.

The data in Table 1 show that one PET, three senior PETs and one PET methodologist were included in the research. The pedagogical work experience of the research participants varies from six to 12 years. The PETs have been applying ALM in the development of children's language skills from six to ten years. According to S. Brinkman (2018), the recommended sample size for individual interviews is from five to 30 people. So this sample is enough.

The research was conducted in February 2022. It was applied using the *interview method*. One of the advantages of the interview method is that research participants are free to express their thoughts and share their experiences. In the case of this research, the chosen data collection method was a *partially structured interview*. Partially structured interviews are based on a plan, taking into account pre-planned questions; but they are not 'tied' to the questions, the questions can change places freely, additional questions can be asked, and they provide an opportunity to get more information and delve into the problem at hand (Jamshed, 2014; Karvelienė, 2019). The choice of a partially structured interview was determined by the flexibility of the method, its directness, and the possibility to ask additional questions.

During the interviews, the main blocks of interview questions were as follows: demographic data (What is your teaching experience? How many years have you been applying ALM to develop pre-school children's language skills? What is your qualification category?); questions have been provided to find out the PET's

views on the application of ALM in the development of pre-school language skills (How do you understand the statement: 'developing pre-school children's language skills applying ALM'? What kind of ALM do you use to develop pre-school children's spoken/written language skills? What difficulties do you face in applying active language teaching/learning methods? How do you deal with the difficulties that might occur?); *questions to find out the PET's approach to the possibilities of applying ALM in developing children's language skills at pre-school age* (What do you think are the possibilities of language education for pre-school children using ALM in an educational institution?); *questions to find out how PETs improve their qualifications, get information about ALM when developing children's language skills, and application possibilities* (How do you improve your qualifications, learn about active language teaching/learning methods and their application possibilities?).

Research instrument. The research instrument in qualitative research is the researcher himself, who interacts directly with the research participants, and tries to understand and feel the nature and essence of educational phenomena (Rupšienė, 2007; Bitinas, 2013). The research is based on the assumption that the objectivity of educational research is partial, that personal experience and empathic insight are inseparable from the data obtained, but the research instrument tries to eliminate the influence of one's own personality on the interpretation of the result analysis.

Data analysis. The data obtained during the interviews were transcribed and analysed. According to methodologists (Creswell, 2013; Gaizauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016, etc), there is no formula for analysing textual interview material. Therefore, the main principle of the analysis of this research data was defined: the content of the text was analysed in a consistent manner, dividing the analysed content into codes, categories and subcategories. In this research, each informant was assigned a random code (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5). After the full text had been written, the transcripts of the interviews were coded. After coding the text, text excerpts from the interviews were broken down. Each coded informant's response was moved to the table, with the code written next to it. After transferring the encoded text to the table, data grouping was performed. The interview data, coded and already presented in the table, were transferred into groups and subgroups according to certain characteristics. After dividing the data obtained during the interviews into groups and subgroups, a detailed description of the data was made. A qualitative analysis of the content, based on the informants' collected data, was performed.

Validity and reliability of the study. Efforts were made to create an environment of mutual trust between the informants and the researcher, in order to ensure the validity of the study: informants were told that the research data were confidential and clear questions were formulated. B. Bitinas (2013) and V. Žydzūnaitė and S. Sabaliauskas (2017) note that the limitations of qualitative research are related to the inevitable subjectivity in qualitative research. Thus, although the design and conduct of qualitative research followed the requirements for this type of research, the generalisation of the research data was limited by the small number of study participants. The findings of the qualitative research are unique and specific to individuals who participated in the research.

Research ethics. Principles of voluntariness, confidentiality and anonymity were observed during the investigation.

2. Findings of the research

The research sought to find out *how teachers understand the statement 'developing pre-school children's language skills applying ALM'*. The research data are presented in Table 2.

Summarising the data from the informants presented in Table 2, we can see that the development of pre-school children's language skills applying ALM *is pre-school children's spoken and written language skills development using practical activities; providing modern ways of education that encourage children's activity, creativity, desire to learn and seek answers to their own questions.*

The teachers who participated in the research were asked to identify *which ALM they use to develop pre-school children's spoken language skills.* The research data are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. The development of pre-school children's language skills using the concept of ALM

Category	Statements
The concept of the statement 'The development of pre-school children's language skills using ALM'	<i>Modern ways of language development (PET1)</i>
	<i>The development of listening, speaking and writing skills when a child is involved in active tasks (PET2)</i>
	<i>Techniques that help to successfully develop a child's language (PET3)</i>
	<i>Applying practical tasks for language training to provide appropriate feedback, freeing up children's [...] desire to learn and find answers to their own questions (PET4)</i>
	<i>These are language teaching techniques that work and give good results (PET5)</i>

Source: The authors, 2022.

Table 3. Active techniques in the development of spoken language

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative statements	Number of duplicate statements
Active techniques in spoken language development	Research of environmental sounds, imitation	<i>I encourage exploring and imitating the sounds of the environment (PET1)</i>	1
	Articulation apparatus training exercises, games	<i>Stories, exercises for lips and tongue: bubble blowing, feather competition (PET1; PET4)</i>	2
	Creative activities	<i>We continue [...] stories, perform fictional situations, play and improvise (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET 4, PET5)</i>	5
	Educational trips	<i>We visit [...] libraries and bookshops (PET1)</i> <i>Mini excursions (PET4)</i>	2
	Reading and discussing fairy tales and various stories	<i>We read fairy tales (PET5); discuss [...] commenting on the character's actions, retelling the plot (PET1)</i> <i>I read a story and ask questions (PET2)</i>	3
	Promoting dialogic language	<i>Children [...] discuss and search for [...] answers (PET2, PET3, PET4)</i> <i>Utterance, discussions, conversations (PET5)</i>	4
	Promoting monologic language	<i>The child presents a story (PET2, PET4, PET5)</i>	3
	Audio word analysis	<i>I ask to choose an item, say its name, give the first sound of the word and then the sound in the middle of the word (PET2)</i>	1
	Language games	<i>Silence games and games with sounds (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5)</i>	5
	Listening tasks	<i>Listen to [...] records, friends' experiences and stories (PET1, PET2, PET3)</i>	3
	Short-term tests and experiments	<i>Carry out short-term experiments [...] (PET2)</i> <i>We perform experiments, measurements and weighing in the group [...] (PET4)</i>	2
	Autonomic sensory meridian response development	<i>I use autonomic sensory meridian reactions (ASMR). We create various sounds (roaring sea, wind, chewing food) and children listening to the ASMR try to guess what sound they hear (PET3)</i>	1
	Games with innovative toys	<i>I use innovative toys that have a sound recording system; having recorded certain concepts and words, this toy pronounces the word, and the children repeat it (PET3)</i>	1
	Activities with special devices	<i>I use opposition cards (PET3)</i>	1
	Learning poems	<i>We learn poems (PET3)</i>	1
	Singing	<i>Children sing songs (PET4)</i>	1
	Making rhythm	<i>Children learn rhythm (PET4, PET3)</i>	2

Source: The authors, 2022.

Table 3 shows that teachers use the following ALM to develop pre-school children's spoken language skills: *Language games* (informants PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5).

Creative activities (extending stories listened to, creating fictional stories, role-play, plays, etc) (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5).

Promoting dialogic language (informants PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5). During the interviews, PET2 shared their experience: 'Children participate in conversations, they discuss, consult and seek answers to the teacher's questions together.'

Reading and discussing fairy tales, various stories (PET1, PET2, PET5). The research revealed that PETs discuss fairy tales and various stories with children by asking them open-ended questions and encouraging them to comment on the characters' actions, and change the plot or the course of events.

Promoting monologic language (PET2, PET4, PET5): 'On Mondays in the Morning Circle [...] every child says how they spent their weekend and what they experienced,' said PET5.

Listening tasks (PET1, PET2, PET3).

Educational trips to parks, libraries and bookshops (PET1, PET4).

Articulation apparatus training exercises and games (PET1, PET4).

Short-term tests and experiments (PET2, PET4).

Rhythm activities (PET3, PET4). During the interview, PET3 noted: 'Children learn rhythm, we teach children to clap their name [...] surname, to play rhythmically [...] with pebbles, bamboo sticks and rattles.'

Exploration and imitation of environmental sounds (PET1); *aural word analysis* (PET2); *autonomous sensory meridian response development*; *games with innovative toys*; *activities with special devices*; *poetry teaching* (PET3); *singing* (PET4).

Table 3 shows that the most popular ALM used by PETs to develop children's spoken language skills are creative activities and games. According to N. Milotay (2015), and P. Hakkarainen, M. Bridikytė and A. Brandišauskienė (2015), a game is the most attractive and effective form of learning for children. Therefore, the game should not be replaced by any other activity reminiscent of academic learning. Games help to develop children's language listening skills, expand vocabulary, develop cohesive language, and create children's need and motivation to learn and master the real world (Hakkarainen *et al.*, 2015; Bražienė, Šalkuvienė, 2020).

The aim of the research was to find out *what ALMs are used by teachers in developing pre-school children's written language skills*. The findings of the research are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that *teachers use the following ALMs to develop pre-school children's written language skills*: *creative activities* (stamping, drawing, moulding, colouring, paper folding, construction, letter creation, etc) (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5); *activities with information technologies* (games with educational bee-robot [Bee-Bot, Kahoot], activities with interactive screens and light tables) (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4); *writing letters on sand, sugar, asphalt, windows, mirrors and snow* (PET1, PET2, PET3); *involvement in regional, national and international projects* (PET1, PET4, PET5); *small motor skills training games and exercises* (PET2, PET3, PET4); *educational activities in non-formal settings* (PET4, PET5); *investigation of maps and calendars* (PET1); *language games* (PET2). E. Valinskienė (2012), and N. Bražienė and O. Šalkuvienė (2020) note that writing 'emerges' from drawing. An acquaintance with writing begins with a letter, the graphic form of which is easiest to remember when you notice the resemblance of the letter to an object. Therefore, letters should be taught using as many visual aids as possible. L. Barzdonytė-Morkevičienė, L. Martišiūtė and E. Ivanauskaitė (2014) state that reading tasks should be presented to children in a gradually changing, more and more complicated order. The child is asked to list letters first, then combine letters into syllables, and syllables into words, to see if the child understands the meaning of the word s/he has read.

Table 4. Active methods of written language development

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative statements	Number of duplicate statements
Active methods in the development of written language	Creative activities	<i>We do a lot of creative [...] work</i> (PET4, PET1, PET2, PET3, PET5)	5
	Activities with information technology	<i>We play [...] with [...] the robot Bee-Bot</i> (PET1) <i>On the interactive whiteboard [...] define the specified letters and count how many letters they have found [...] play Kahoot games and analyse Padlet presentations</i> (PET2) <i>We use a [...] light table</i> (PET3, PET4)	4
	Writing letters	<i>We learn to write letters</i> (PET1, PET2, PET3)	3
	Exploration of maps and calendars	<i>Children [...] explore maps and calendars</i> (PET1)	1
	Participation in projects	<i>We get involved in regional, national and international projects</i> (PET1, PET4, PET5)	3
	Language games	<i>Games with letter cards and letter crowns</i> (PET2)	1
	Small motor skills, training exercises and games	<i>Finger games</i> (PET3, PET4); <i>Exercises Ball, House, Binoculars</i> (PET2)	3
	Educational activities in non-formal settings	<i>A visit to the [...] library, an introduction to the world of books and an opportunity to choose a book you like</i> (PET4, PET5)	2

Source: The authors, 2022.

During the interviews, PETs highlighted *the difficulties they faced in developing children's language skills through ALM*. The data are presented in Table 5.

Having analysed the answers received (Table 5), it can be stated that PETs face difficulties in developing children's language skills using ALM: *there is a large number of children in pre-school education groups* (PET1, PET2, PET4, PET5); *children have difficulty concentrating and paying attention, they are noisy and active* (PET2, PET4, PET5); *pre-school education institutions lack funding for modern language education tools* (PET1); *teachers do not know how to use information technologies, they do not use the possibilities of information technologies* (PET1); *pre-school education groups are attended by children of mixed ages and different abilities* (PET3); *children's fine motor skills are undeveloped* (children do not know how to use writing and drawing tools correctly, they cannot use scissors) (PET2); *children's spoken language is insufficiently developed* (children do not use compound sentences, they pronounce sounds vaguely) (PET5); *teachers experience stress at work, they are at risk of burnout* (PET4), etc. During the interview, PET4 expressed the opinion: 'There are too many children in the groups [...] it is difficult [...] to listen to them and to allow them [...] to discuss, because they find it hard to follow group agreements, try to shout each other down, and get tired of the noise themselves. If there are children with special educational needs in the group who have behavioural difficulties [...] the teacher faces difficulties both physically and psychologically when working in these conditions.' During the research, we found out that PETs try to solve the difficulties mentioned by updating and improving their educational environment, creating educational tools and games themselves; adopting the best practices of foreign teachers; cooperating with the children's parents and other specialists (psychologists, speech therapists, special educators, etc), and dividing the children into heterogeneous groups.

In carrying out the research, it was important to find out *what the language education possibilities are for pre-school children using ALM in an educational institution*. The research data are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Difficulties in applying active language teaching/learning methods

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative statements	Number of duplicate statements
Difficulties in applying active language teaching methods	Lack of educational tools	<i>There are no [...] funds for educational measures (PET1)</i>	1
	Teachers' digital literacy issues	<i>Teachers do not take advantage of information technology (PET1)</i>	1
	Large number of children in groups	<i>In groups there is [...] a large number of children (PET1, PET2, PET4, PET5)</i>	4
	Mixed age groups	<i>The group includes children of three ages [...] age-appropriate methods need to be selected due to age differences (PET3)</i>	1
	Difficulties in distance education	<i>If a group is closed due to the spread of the pandemic, we have to work remotely, which is [...] difficult because it is impossible to reach every child and explain the task (PET2)</i>	1
	Difficulties in keeping children's attention	<i>Children face difficulties when concentrating and maintaining attention (PET2, PET4, PET5)</i>	3
	Children's undeveloped fine motor skills	<i>Children's fingers do not work, they often cannot hold a pen or handle scissors (PET2)</i>	1
	Children's undeveloped spoken language	<i>The language [...] is vague, they speak very little (PET5)</i>	1
	Tension in pedagogical work	<i>In the future, teachers may be burned out at work (PET4)</i>	1

Source: The authors, 2022.

According to teachers (Table 6), *pre-school children whose teachers apply ALM have the following language education opportunities in the educational institution: to look at the situation differently, conventionally; to think creatively (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4); to experience the joy of education (PET2, PET3, PET5); to take responsibility (PET1, PET2); to actively act, investigate and solve problems (PET1, PET2); to work in pairs and groups; to learn to trust themselves and to be confident in their own strengths; to travel virtually, to visit virtual museums, to get to know different cultures and languages (PET1); to use media and to develop responsible media usage habits; not to be afraid to make mistakes and try again (PET2); to concentrate; to think critically (PET3); to satisfy the sense of cognition (PET4); to get involved in various projects (PET5).* During the research, we clarified the PET's opinion: the possibilities for children's language education (learning) using ALM depends very much on whether the teacher wants to apply ALM, whether s/he likes it, whether each time s/he is determined to be different, non-traditional, etc.

O. Monkevičienė, B. Autukevičienė, L. Kaminskienė *et al.* (2018) note that if PETs want to apply effective teaching/learning methods and develop innovative educational practices, they must acquire 21st-century competencies that include innovative and creative ways of pedagogical thinking and teamwork, technology-based professional tools and world-life competencies (public spirit, life, career, personal and social responsibility). Therefore, during the research, we strove to find out *the ways in which PETs improve qualifications and learn about the possibilities for the development language skills by applying ALM.* The findings of the research are presented in Table 7.

Table 6. Language education possibilities for pre-school children using ALM in an educational institution

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative statements	Number of duplicate statements
Language education possibilities for preschool children using ALM in an educational institution	Working in pairs and groups	<i>Perform tasks in pairs [...] work in small groups</i> (PET1)	1
	Taking responsibility	<i>Strengthens [...] a sense of responsibility for one-self and others</i> (PET1, PET2)	2
	Thinking creatively and acting	<i>Look at the situation differently, unconventionally and think creatively</i> (PET1, PET2) <i>Develops the imagination</i> (PET3, PET4)	4
	Investigating problems practically	<i>The child is in the centre [...] s/he is active, investigates and explains possible problem solutions</i> (PET1) <i>Learns through experience and investigation</i> (PET2)	2
	Believing in themselves, confidence in their own strengths	<i>Experience success [...] are confident in their own strengths</i> (PET1)	1
	Travelling virtually	<i>Visit virtual museums, get acquainted with other cultures and languages</i> (PET1)	1
	Experiencing the joy of education	<i>Children like [...] activities</i> (PET3, PET2, PET5)	3
	Using media responsibly	<i>Use media and develop responsible media usage habits</i> (PET2)	1
	Concentrating	<i>Help children learn to concentrate</i> (PET3)	1
	Making mistakes and trying	<i>Make mistakes and try</i> (PET2)	1
	Thinking critically	<i>Strengthen [...] critical thinking</i> (PET3)	1
	Satisfying the feeling of cognition	<i>Satisfy the feeling of cognition</i> (PET4)	1
	Participating in projects	<i>Additional [...] projects</i> (PET5)	1

Source: The authors, 2022.

The data presented in Table 7 show that PETs learn about the language education possibilities in applying ALM: *by participating in various training courses and seminars* (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5). Informants note that they are increasingly participating in distance learning and seminars organised by Pedagogas.lt; Tinklas.lt); *sharing good pedagogical work experience with colleagues* (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5); *searching for information about ALM and their application possibilities on the Internet and in methodological and academic literature* (PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5); *participating in conferences* (PET1, PET4); *sharing good pedagogical work experience on social networks* (PET2). The research participants revealed a lack of information about the possibilities for applying active language learning methods. ‘We would like to have practical seminars specifically for teachers working with pre-school children so that we would have an opportunity to participate in discussions with the lecturer and to try something in practice,’ said PET4 in an interview.

Table 7. Techniques for improving PET qualifications in ALM

Category	Subcategory	Illustrative statements	Number of duplicate statements
Techniques for raising PET qualifications in ALM	Participating in training and seminars	<i>I participate [...] in seminars</i> (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5)	5
	Participating in conferences	<i>I participate [...] in conferences</i> (PET1, PET4)	2
	Sharing good practice in an educational institution	<i>I ask for colleagues' advice in sharing good practices</i> (PET1, PET2, PET3, PET4, PET5)	5
	Sharing good practice on social networks	<i>I get ideas [...] in Facebook groups</i> (PET2)	1
	Self-education	<i>I read literature on this topic</i> (PET3); <i>search for [...] information online</i> (PET2, PET4, PET5)	4

Source: The authors, 2022.

The empirical research revealed teachers' attitudes towards the possibilities for applying ALM when developing children's language skills in the pre-school period. PETs revealed what ALM they use to develop pre-school children's spoken and written language skills; they named the difficulties in applying ALM when developing children's language skills, and provided solutions to them; they noted how they improve their qualifications, acquire information about ALM, etc.

Conclusions

The research findings reveal that the development of pre-school children's language skills using ALM is the development of children's oral and written language skills for PET, using practical tasks, modern educational techniques, and methods that promote children's activity and arouse their desire to seek answers to questions. During the research, it was established that in developing children's language skills, PETs apply active learning methods; that is, they initiate language games and creative activities, promote dialogic and monologue language, and activities with information technology, involve children in projects, conduct educational activities in non-traditional environments, etc.

During the interviews, PETs emphasised the difficulties they face in developing children's oral and written language skills when applying ALM: there are large numbers of children in pre-school education groups; groups are attended by children of different ages and abilities; children find it difficult to concentrate; pre-school education institutions lack funding for language education means; teachers do not take advantage of information technology, etc. PETs try to solve the difficulties mentioned by improving the educational environment, adopting the best foreign teachers' practices, cooperating with children's parents and specialists, dividing children into heterogeneous groups, etc.

From the teachers' point of view, children whose PETs apply ALM have the following language education opportunities in the pre-school education institution: they can think creatively, experience the joy of learning, take responsibility, investigate and solve problems, work in pairs and groups, learn to believe in themselves, use media and develop responsible media usage habits, etc. According to PETs, children's language education possibilities using ALM are highly dependent on teachers' competencies and creativity. Therefore, teachers constantly study ALM, developing children's language skills and application possibilities, improving their qualifications by participating in various training courses, seminars and conferences,

sharing good pedagogical work experience with colleagues, searching for information on the Internet and in the literature, etc.

When summarising the research findings, it is important to note the limitations. The limitations of qualitative research are related to the inevitable subjectivity in the qualitative research. Although the requirements for this type of research were met during the planning and conduct of the process, the generalisation of the research findings and their applicability were partly limited by the small number of research participants. The findings of qualitative research are unique, and characteristic of the individuals involved in the research. The findings of this research suggest recommendations that investigations into the potential of ALM to develop children's language skills at pre-school age are relevant and deserve to be continued.

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AKTYVIEJI MOKYMOSI METODAI UGDANT VAIKŲ KALBINIUS GEBĖJIMUS IKIMOKYKLINIAME AMŽIUIJE: MOKYTOJŲ POŽIŪRIS

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Santrauka

Kalba yra svarbi komunikacijos ir mąstymo priemonė. Tad viskas, kas vyksta su vaiko kalba iki jam pradedant lankyti mokyklą, yra svarbu. Mokslinių tyrimų logika leidžia teigti, kad vaikai, kurių kalbiniai gebėjimai yra geri, geba suprasti, apibendrinti informaciją, suformuluoti išvadas; reflektuoti užduoties atlikimą; paaiškinti savo kūrybines idėjas; sėkmingai bendrauti ir kt. Tobulindami vaikų sakytinės kalbos gebėjimus ikimokykliniame amžiuje, mokytojai: inicijuoja kalbinius žaidimus; skatina vaikus pamėgdžioti gyvūnų ir aplinkos garsus; skaito vaikams literatūros kūrinius; ragina pratęsti, papildyti žinomas istorijas; taiko dialoginio skaitymo metodą; kuria inscenizacijas; inicijuoja artikuliacinę mankštą; skatina tyrinėti žodynus, kalendorius ir kt. Aktyviųjų mokymosi metodų taikymo svarba akcentuojama šiuose dokumentuose: „Ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų pasiekimų apraše“ (2014); „Valstybinėje švietimo 2013–2022 m. strategijoje“ (2014); „Geros mokyklos koncepcijoje“ (2015); „Ikimokyklinio ugdymo metodinėse rekomendacijose“ (2015). Juose pažymima, kad ugdymo įstaigoje vaikui turi būti sudarytos sąlygos aktyviai veikti, bandyti, tyrinėti, eksperimentuoti, fantazuoti, stebėti savo veiksmų pasekmes, diskutuoti, mokytis spręsti problemas ir kt. Šiame straipsnyje keliamas probleminis klausimas, kokios yra aktyviųjų mokymo(si) metodų taikymo galimybės ugdant vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus ikimokykliniame amžiuje mokytojų požiūriu? Tyrimo objektas – mokytojų požiūris dėl aktyviųjų mokymosi metodų taikymo galimybių ugdant vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus. Tyrimo tikslas: atskleisti mokytojų požiūrį dėl aktyviųjų mokymosi metodų taikymo galimybių ugdant vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus ikimokykliniame amžiuje.

Siekiant atskleisti ikimokyklinio ugdymo mokytojų (toliau tekste – IUM) požiūrį dėl aktyviųjų mokymosi metodų (toliau tekste – AMM) taikymo galimybių ugdant vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus ikimokykliniame amžiuje, pasirinktas interviu metodas. Atliekant tyrimą rinkta, analizuota, sisteminta mokslinėje literatūroje ir dokumentuose pateikta informacija, atliktų mokslinių tyrimų duomenys ir rezultatai; pasirinkta tyrimo strategija, kuriamas tyrimo dizainas; parengiama tyrimo metodika; atliekamas iš dalies struktūruotas interviu; analizuojami, apibendrinami duomenys, rengiama tyrimo ataskaita. Kokybiniam tyrimui pagrįsti remtasi *interpretacine paradigma* (Cohen, Manion, Morrison 2007) ir *konstruktyvistine prieiga* (Berger, Luckmann, 1999). Jos pritaikytos, siekiant pateikti interpretacinį, visuminį analizuojamos situacijos vaizdą, joje dalyvavusių asmenų „išgyventą patirtį“ ir iš situacijų analizės kylantį paaiškinimą. Atsižvelgiant į darbo tikslą, tyrimui atrinkti individai, apie tiriamą dalyką galintys suteikti prasmingos informacijos. Šiuo atveju tai IUM, taikantys AMM, ugdant ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus.

Tyrimo radiniai išryškino, kad ikimokyklinio amžiaus vaikų kalbinių gebėjimų ugdymas, taikant AMM, yra vaikų sakytinės ir rašytinės kalbos gebėjimų ugdymas, naudojant praktines užduotis, taikant šiuolaikiškus ugdymo(si) būdus, metodus, kurie skatina vaikų aktyvumą, sužadina norą mokytis, ieškoti atsakymų į klausimus. Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad IUM, ugdydami vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus, taiko AMM: inicijuoja kalbinius žaidimus, kūrybinę veiklą, skatina dialoginę, monologinę kalbą, veiklą su informacinėmis technologijomis, įtraukia vaikus į projektus, vykdo ugdomąją veiklą netradicinėje aplinkoje ir kt.

Interviu išryškino sunkumus, su kuriais IUM susiduria ugdydami vaikų sakytinės ir rašytinės kalbos gebėjimus, taikant AMM: ikimokyklinio ugdymo grupėse yra didelis vaikų skaičius; grupes lanko skirtingo amžiaus ir skirtingų gebėjimų vaikai; vaikams sunku sukaupti, išlaikyti dėmesį; ikimokyklinio ugdymo įstaigoms trūksta lėšų kalbinio ugdymo(si) priemonėms; mokytojai neišnaudoja informacinių technologijų galimybių ir kt. IUM minėtus sunkumus stengiasi spręsti tobulindami ugdymo(si) aplinką; perimdami užsie-

nio pedagogų gerą patirtį; bendradarbiaudami su savo ugdytinių tėvais, specialistais; skirstydami vaikus į heterogenines grupes ir kt.

Mokytojų požiūriu, vaikai, kurių IUM taiko AMM, turi šias kalbinio ugdymo(si) galimybes ikimokyklinio ugdymo įstaigoje: kūrybiškai mąstyti; patirti ugdymo(si) džiaugsmą; prisiimti atsakomybę; tyrinėti, spręsti problemas; dirbti porose, grupėse; išmokyti pasitikėti savimi; naudoti medijas, ugdytis atsakingus medijų naudojimo įpročius ir kt. IUM teigimu, vaikų kalbinio ugdymo(si), taikant AMM, galimybės labai priklauso nuo mokytojo kompetencijų, kūrybiškumo. Todėl mokytojai nuolat tyrinėja AMM, ugdant vaikų kalbinius gebėjimus, taikymo galimybes, kelia kvalifikaciją dalyvaudami įvairiuose mokymuose, seminaruose, konferencijose, dalydamiesi gerąja pedagoginio darbo patirtimi su kolegomis; ieškodami informacijos internete, literatūroje ir kt.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *aktyvieji mokymosi metodai, kalbiniai gebėjimai, ikimokyklinis amžius.*

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