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Innovative Play-Based Methodologies for Development of Communication Skills of Preschoolers

Abstract

Introduction. The study examines the challenges of fostering communicative competencies among preschool-aged children through play-based pedagogical approaches, addressing the need for systematic approaches to developing communication skills in early childhood education. **Methodology and Methods.** The research employs comprehensive theoretical analysis of fundamental characteristics underlying communicative skills, drawing upon seminal contributions from distinguished scholars including L.S. Vygotsky, A.V. Zaporozhets, M.I. Lisina, T.A. Repina, E.V. Subbotsky, S.G. Yakobson, and other prominent figures in developmental psychology and educational theory. A systematic taxonomy approach was utilized to categorize communicative competencies. **Results.** The investigation provides conceptual clarification of communication skills and presents a systematic taxonomy encompassing three primary dimensions: informational-communicative, regulatory-communicative, and affective-communicative competencies. Contemporary gaming methodologies demonstrating significant potential for advancing communicative skill acquisition were delineated. Evaluative criteria encompassing cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions were established, with three developmental proficiency levels identified: emergent, developing, and advanced. A comprehensive diagnostic protocol for assessing communicative skill development in preschool populations was developed. **Scientific novelty.** The research elucidates scientific and theoretical frameworks underlying communicative skill development in preschool children, conceptualizing play-based activities as efficacious pedagogical instruments that facilitate acquisition of effective interpersonal interaction strategies and enhance comprehensive language development. **Practical significance.** Evidence-based methodological guidelines for educators were formulated to enhance communicative competency levels of young learners, providing practical tools for implementing play-based approaches in preschool educational settings.

Keywords: early childhood, interpersonal communication, communicative practices, communicative competencies, developmental components of communication skills, diagnostic assessment framework, play-based interventions for communicative skill enhancement in preschool populations.

Introduction. Human beings, as inherently social entities, manifest a fundamental need for interpersonal interaction from the earliest stages of development. Communication, characterized as a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, necessitates the acquisition of specialized knowledge and competencies that individuals develop through the assimilation of accumulated social-cultural heritage transmitted across

generations. Proficient communicative abilities constitute a critical determinant of successful social adaptation across diverse environmental contexts, thereby underscoring the practical imperative for cultivating these competencies during early developmental phases.

Contemporary recognition of the intrinsic value of the preschool developmental period, conceptualized as a distinctive phase of personality

formation, has established the pedagogical objective of expanding opportunities for individual children to make informed decisions regarding their developmental trajectories. Such trajectories are fundamentally influenced by interpersonal orientation, comprehension of communicative conventions, and engagement in diverse experiential activities (Doove et al., 2021). Initial interpersonal experiences establish the foundational framework upon which subsequent individual development occurs. The trajectory of a child's psychosocial and interpersonal development is significantly influenced by the quality of relationships established within their first formal social group - the kindergarten classroom environment (Lonigan et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that social communication skills uniquely predict self-regulation capabilities beyond vocabulary development (Lonigan et al., 2020).

Communicative competencies assume a paramount role in the development of preschoolers' interpersonal communication domain. These skills enable children not only to articulate thoughts with precision and accurately process information from communication partners, but also to differentiate among various communicative contexts, comprehend others' emotional states within such situations, and modify behavioral responses accordingly (Lonigan et al., 2020). This complexity necessitates the identification of authentic developmental resources for enhancing preschoolers' communicative capabilities.

Examination of psychological and pedagogical scholarship reveals extensive research addressing communication phenomena and communicative skill development. Studies demonstrate that reading aloud and storytelling can enhance children's communication development when staff prioritize literacy in preschool and have knowledge about how to use these activities to support children's communication (Brodin & Renblad, 2019). Contemporary research emphasizes the pivotal role of parental education in addressing the complexities of modern-day parenting, particularly in supporting children's communication development (Sultana & Purdy,

2024). The communicative development of preschool populations has been extensively investigated by researchers who have examined distinctive communication patterns among children with diverse educational requirements and analyzed the complexities of preschool communicative interactions (Timler et al., 2007). Recent adaptations in early years language and communication support, particularly in response to global challenges, have served as catalysts for reflection and more successful parental engagement strategies (Jack et al., 2024).

Contemporary research demonstrates that learning through play has emerged as an important strategy to promote student engagement, inclusion, and holistic skills development beyond the preschool years (Parker et al., 2022). Playful experiences lead to deeper learning when they are joyful, actively engaging, meaningful, iterative, and socially interactive (Parker et al., 2022). Play-based learning is relatively common in preschool settings and has been linked to the development of 21st century learning skills - including collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence (Institute of Education Sciences, 2024). Through play-based learning, children engage in imaginative and exploratory activities that encourage them to think creatively, solve problems, and develop communication skills organically (Brightwheel, 2025). Research indicates that play develops multiple essential skills including social skills such as taking turns and working cooperatively, cognitive skills including problem-solving and early academic skills, and communication skills such as responding to others and asking questions (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2022).

Nevertheless, the investigation of methodological approaches for developing preschoolers' communicative competencies through play-based interventions remains inadequately addressed. While learning through play is associated with high quality early childhood education practice and research, studies of learning through play in school for children beyond age five are limited (Parker et al., 2022). This gap in the literature determined the

selection of the research focus: “Development of Preschool Children’s Communication Skills Through Play-Based Activities”. The primary objective of this investigation is to establish theoretical foundations and methodological frameworks for enhancing communicative competencies in preschool children through structured play activities. Research demonstrates that playful pedagogies can be more effective in fostering social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative skills than traditional pedagogical approaches used in the primary school classroom (Parker et al., 2022).

Materials and Methods. This investigation employed a comprehensive methodological approach incorporating both theoretical and empirical research methods. The theoretical framework utilized analytical synthesis, generalization, and conceptual specification, while empirical methodologies encompassed survey administration, standardized assessment protocols, and controlled pedagogical experimentation. To establish the theoretical foundations underlying the development of communicative competencies in preschoolers through play-based interventions, this study delineates the essential constructs of “communication”, “communicative interaction”, “communicative activity” and “communicative skills”, while examining their developmental characteristics during the preschool period.

The construct of “communication” (from Latin “communicatio” - to make common, convey, discourse) emerged in scientific literature during the early twentieth century. Contemporary theoretical frameworks conceptualize communication not merely as information transmission, but as an active bidirectional exchange process that influences participant behavior and transforms relational dynamics between communicative partners (Lomov, 2022). Modern scholarship identifies communication as a fundamental structural component of interpersonal interaction, encompassing three interconnected dimensions: communicative (information exchange), interactive (behavioral coordination), and perceptual (social cognition) aspects (YingHu et al., 2017). Contemporary typologies distinguish

multiple communication modalities including interpersonal, cognitive, persuasive, expressive, suggestive, and ritualistic forms, each serving distinct functional purposes in facilitating strategic communicative outcomes (Day, 1977). The conceptualization of “communicative skills” originated within social psychological frameworks, defined as the capacity to establish and maintain effective interpersonal relationships through the mobilization of internal resources encompassing both knowledge and behavioral competencies. Leontiev’s theoretical model characterizes communicative skills as encompassing linguistic proficiency, situational adaptability, predictive behavioral modeling, empathetic responsiveness, and individual personality characteristics (Leontiev, 2022).

Developmental trajectories during preschool years demonstrate progressive intensification in communicative activity, characterized by increased selectivity, expanded communicative contexts, evolving adult interaction patterns, and enhanced peer-oriented social engagement. Lisina’s developmental framework identifies four sequential communication forms with adults: situational-personal, situational-business, non-situational-cognitive, and non-situational-personal modalities (Lisina, 2009). The emergence of non-situational-personal communication during late preschool years represents the pinnacle of communicative development, characterized by transcendence of immediate contextual constraints and recognition of adults as complex social entities with multifaceted personal histories. This advanced communicative form facilitates children’s integration into social relationship networks and promotes acquisition of moral frameworks, behavioral norms, and interactive conventions. Contemporary research identifies four essential components of communicative activity in senior preschoolers: cognitive (understanding human roles, relational dynamics, and communication modalities), motivational-need based (social approval seeking and emotional contact establishment), activity-oriented (empathetic capacity and behavioral appropriateness), and evaluative (self-assessment accuracy and partner perception) (Arbianingsih et al., 2018).

Samokhvalova's tripartite model delineates communicative activity through informational (interaction initiation and maintenance), regulatory (collaborative coordination and conflict resolution), and affective (emotional responsiveness and empathetic engagement) dimensions (Samokhvalova, 2016). Uruntaeva's developmental progression model identifies sequential stages of communicative skill formation: motivational establishment, methodological familiarization, skill automation, and creative application of complex communicative competencies (Uruntaeva, 2001). Play activities assume paramount significance in preschooler communicative development, serving as the predominant mechanism through which children explore and navigate spatial, temporal, and social realities. The transformative function of play enables children to convert abstract or challenging real-world scenarios into manageable, controllable learning experiences while simultaneously facilitating communicative skill acquisition through rule-based interactive frameworks (Malekian et al., 2013).

Play-based interventions promote effective communication strategies, foster collective consciousness, enhance attentional capacities, facilitate precise thought articulation, develop dialogical competencies, and advance linguistic proficiencies. Through play engagement, children acquire emotional expression capabilities, learn behavioral regulation within structured parameters, and develop goal-oriented cognitive processes. Cross-cultural examination of communicative skill development reveals innovative methodological approaches, exemplified by the Japanese Kumon system utilized by over four million children across 48 countries. The Kumon methodology emphasizes graduated skill acquisition through systematic progression, positive reinforcement strategies, engaging play-based learning environments with optimal 20-minute duration sessions, and autonomous skill development protocols that promote independent communicative competency formation. This comprehensive theoretical framework establishes the foundational understanding necessary for implementing

evidence-based play interventions designed to enhance communicative competencies in preschool populations.

Results and Discussion. Following comprehensive analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature and theoretical justification of the research problem, this study presents the findings of experimental work conducted at State Municipal Enterprise Kindergarten #20, Department of Education, Almaty. The research sample comprised an experimental group (EG) consisting of 20 children from the "Botocan" group and a control group (CG) of 21 preschoolers from the "Kulyn" group. The experimental design employed a three-phase methodology encompassing baseline assessment, intervention implementation, and post-intervention evaluation stages.

Phase One: Baseline Assessment Protocol

The primary objective of the baseline assessment phase was to establish initial diagnostic measurements of communicative skill development among preschool participants. Diagnostic evaluation utilized a tripartite criteria framework incorporating cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions, grounded in the theoretical contributions of Bodalev, Lozovan, Pronyaeva, Verax, Gutorov, and Sokolov.

Based on established criteria for preschooler communicative competencies, participants were stratified according to three developmental proficiency levels: advanced, developing, and emergent.

Advanced Proficiency Level: Children demonstrate proactive communicative engagement, exhibiting sophisticated listening comprehension and contextually appropriate interaction patterns. These participants readily establish rapport with peers and educators, articulate thoughts with clarity and coherence, and consistently employ appropriate speech etiquette conventions. They demonstrate heightened social awareness through expressions of care, attention, and empathetic responsiveness toward adults and peers. Conflict engagement occurs infrequently, with demonstrated capacity for cooperative problem-solving without emotional dysregulation.

Developing Proficiency Level: Children exhibit adequate listening comprehension and speech understanding capabilities while typically engaging in communication through external initiation rather than self-directed interaction. Speech etiquette utilization demonstrates inconsistent application patterns. Task completion occurs independently but may lack conscious intentionality, often requiring adult prompting. Occasional conflict engagement may occur, with frequent reliance on adult mediation for resolution of interpersonal difficulties.

Emergent Proficiency Level: Children demonstrate limited communicative initiative in interactions with peers and educational personnel, characterized by inattentiveness and minimal utilization of appropriate speech etiquette. Thought expression lacks coherence and sequential organization, with compromised

content accuracy in communication attempts. During collaborative activities, these children exhibit distractibility and may interfere with peer engagement. Conflict provocation occurs regularly, with confrontational responses including physical aggression and emotional reactivity in challenging situations. Peer relationships demonstrate predominantly negative characteristics and exhibit selective social preferences.

This comprehensive assessment framework provides the foundational measurement structure necessary for evaluating the efficacy of subsequent play-based communicative skill interventions and documenting developmental progress throughout the experimental investigation.

We used methods for diagnosing the development of preschool children's communication skills (Table 1):

Table 1. Program for diagnosing the development of preschool children's communication skills

Criterion	Method of diagnostic
Cognitive	Observation
Motivational	Testing (series of tasks)
Activity	Questionnaire (questionnaire of A. Leontiev)

The study of children's communication skills according to the cognitive criterion was conducted by observing free communication. In the process of observation, attention is drawn to the nature of communication, initiative, ability to enter into a dialogue, maintain and conduct it consistently, listen to the interlocutor, understand him, clearly express thoughts. Criteria for evaluating communication skills: low, medium, high (Makeeva, T., 2008).

The motivational criterion was diagnosed using testing (Samokhvalova, A., 2011), the goal of which is the child's understanding of the state of a peer. The method included 6 tasks (a series of images), for example, task 1, what do you think a boy looks like to a girl? Next to the desired picture, put a cross in a circle. Scoring points:

3 points – the child correctly selected 4 or more images (high level).

2 points – the child correctly chose 2-3 pictures (average level).

1 point – the child correctly chose 1 picture (low level).

Diagnostics of the activity criterion was carried out using a questionnaire (questionnaire

of A. Leontiev), consisting of 12 closed questions. For example, question 2:

Child interacting with peers in the classroom:

A) offers its own ways to perform the task, takes into account the opinion of other children.

B) prefers to follow the wishes of other children.

C) does not take into account the opinions and actions of peers.

Answer A-1 point; B-2 points; C-3 points. Points are summed up, with a result of 0-12 points-low level; 13-24 points – average; 25-36 high level of development of communicative skills of a preschool child.

Thus, the ascertaining stage of the study showed the following results (tables 2-4):

In control group:

low level – 5 preschoolers, which is 24%;
average level is 13 preschoolers, which is 62%;
highest level is 3 preschoolers, which is 14%.

In the experimental group:

low level – 7 preschoolers, which is 35%;
average level is 11 preschoolers, which is 55%;

highest level is 2 preschoolers, which is 10%.

Table 2. Summary data of the ascertaining stage of the study (control group)

№	Control group	Method of diagnostic			Level of development of communication skills
		Observation	Testing	Questionnaire	
1	K.I.	average	2	13	average
2	S.A.	low	1	10	low
3	A.B.	average	2	15	average
4	N.T.	average	2	20	average
5	V.N.	low	1	7	low
6	A.S.	average	2	18	average
7	A.M.	high	3	27	high
8	A.S.	average	2	20	average
9	I.M.	average	2	14	average
10	I.V.	average	1	8	low
11	G.V.	average	2	21	average
12	K.B.	average	2	18	average
13	I.K.	average	2	13	average
14	D.N.	average	2	15	average
15	N.A.	average	2	19	average
16	A.O.	low	1	8	low
17	M.K.	average	1	9	low
18	D.S.	average	2	13	average
19	G.A.	average	2	24	average
20	N.O.	high	3	32	high
21	T.B.	high	3	27	high

Table 3. Summary data of the ascertaining stage of the study (experimental group)

№	Experimental group	Method of diagnostic			Level of development of communication skills
		Observation	Testing	Questionnaire	
1	P.K.	average	2	14	average
2	A.A.	low	1	9	low
3	M.A.	low	1	5	low
4	K.M.	average	2	22	average
5	M.Ch.	average	2	16	average
6	A.F.	average	2	18	average
7	A.A.	average	2	24	average
8	A.A.	average	1	12	low
9	A.K.	low	1	11	low
10	A.A.	average	2	23	average
11	I.S.	average	2	13	average
12	V.F.	average	2	19	average
13	S.S.	low	1	9	low
14	T.B.	high	3	30	high
15	I.N.	average	2	21	average
16	S.O.	average	1	11	low
17	A.K.	high	3	31	high
18	N.P.	average	2	14	average
19	A.A.	average	2	15	average
20	G.N.	low	1	6	low

Table 4. General summary of both test groups (ascertaining stage of the study)

№	The subjects of the group	Level of development of communication skills					
		Low	%	Average	%	High	%
1	Control	5	24	13	62	3	14
2	Experimental	7	35	11	55	2	10

Primary diagnostics of the level of development of communication skills of preschool children in both groups is approximately the same, low-average level prevails (35% and 55%). We will perform mathematical processing of the obtained data to check the equivalence of the sample of subjects. Since the diagnostics used a rank scale of measurements: the Mann-Whitney U-test (automated program, accessed

20.02.2020). To do this, we have formulated statistical hypotheses:

H_0 - the level of development of communication skills of the two test groups does not differ.

H_1 - the level of development of communication skills of the two test groups differs.

The result: $U_{\text{emp}} = 183$

Critical value:

U_{kp}	
$p \leq 0.01$	$p \leq 0.01$
120	146

The obtained empirical value of U_{emp} (183) is in the zone of insignificance. Thus, the hypothesis H_0 was confirmed – the level of development of communication skills of the two test groups does not differ. This confirms the purity of the experiment and allowed us to move to the formative stage of the study, which includes the active use of the game (Malekian, F., 2013) to increase the level of development of communication skills of older preschoolers in the experimental group. Having determined that the problems of developing communication skills in preschool age are expressed in the inability to find an approach to the communication partner, maintain and develop the established contact, coordinate their actions in the process of any activity, respond adequately and Express their sympathy for a particular child, difficulties are noted in the ability to empathize in sadness and enjoy the success of another person-all this leads to various kinds of conflicts and misunderstanding of the interlocutors of each other.

Select the number of games would increase the level of development of communicative skills among them, of course, the leader acts as a role-playing game, providing senior preschoolers the opportunity to establish a role and real relationships that are the basis for the development of their communicative skills,

namely the motivational criterion, as well as new game roles (banker, agent, client, makeup artist, designer, etc.) and new game themes “Salon of cellular communication”, “Agency”, “Bank”, “McDonald’s”, etc. are of interest and contribute to the activity of the child (Martynenko, L, 2016).

To increase the activity criterion, we used theatrical games. Participation in theatrical activities increases speech development (improving dialogues and monologues, mastering the expressiveness of speech), and it is speech that is a means of communication. Joint theater and play activities are a unique type of cooperation. In the older group, all children actively participate in theatrical games and dramatizations. Older preschoolers, along with figurative-game sketches, games-improvisations, staging, become available to independent productions of performances, including on the basis of a “collage” of several literary works. For example, “A journey through Kazakh folk tales”, “New adventures of Aldar Kose”, etc.

To increase the level of cognitive criteria in the educational process, conversations about the moral qualities of people, about friendship, honesty, and justice play an important role. It is necessary to discuss various cases from their lives, situations,

and actions with children. For example, the conversation “About friendship!”

Points for discussion:

Who do we call friends?

Who's your friend?

Tell me about your friend.

What do you like about your friend?

What are you ready to do for your friend?

What friend do you dream of?

The conversation should always be built after the organization and plot-role and theatrical activities.

Also, in the experimental and control groups, organized training activities for

the implementation of the educational field “Communication” (Model curriculum, 2016) continued. The purpose of the control experiment analysis and evaluation conducted a formative experiment to identify the effectiveness of play activities to enhance communicative skills of preschool children, so confirm or refute hypotheses of the study. At the control stage of the study, the same diagnostic program was used as at the ascertaining stage, including diagnostics based on three criteria: cognitive, motivational, and activity (tables 5-7).

Table 5. Summary data of the control stage of the study (control group)

№	Control group	Method of diagnostic			Level of development of communication skills
		Observation	Testing	Questionnaire	
1	K.I.	average	2	13	average
2	S.A.	average	2	14	average
3	A.B.	average	2	15	average
4	N.T.	average	2	20	average
5	V.N.	low	1	7	low
6	A.S.	average	2	18	average
7	A.M.	high	3	27	high
8	A.S.	average	2	20	average
9	I.M.	average	2	14	average
10	I.V.	average	1	8	low
11	G.V.	average	2	21	average
12	K.B.	average	2	18	average
13	I.K.	average	2	13	average
14	D.N.	average	2	15	average
15	N.A.	average	2	19	average
16	A.O.	low	1	8	low
17	M.K.	average	1	9	low
18	D.S.	average	2	13	average
19	G.A.	average	2	24	average
20	N.O.	high	3	32	high
21	T.B.	high	3	27	high

Table 6. Summary data of the control stage of the study (experimental group)

№	Experimental group	Method of diagnostic			Level of development of communication skills
		Observation	Testing	Questionnaire	
1	P.K.	average	2	17	average
2	A.A.	average	2	19	average
3	M.A.	low	1	11	low
4	K.M.	average	2	29	high
5	M.Ch.	average	2	24	average
6	A.F.	high	2	24	high

7	A.A.	average	2	24	average
8	A.A.	average	2	22	average
9	A.K.	average	2	21	average
10	A.A.	high	2	30	high
11	I.S.	average	2	22	average
12	V.F.	average	2	21	average
13	S.S.	average	2	19	average
14	T.B.	high	3	30	high
15	I.N.	high	2	25	high
16	S.O.	average	2	20	average
17	A.K.	high	3	31	high
18	N.P.	average	2	16	average
19	A.A.	average	2	17	average
20	G.N.	low	2	13	average

Table 7. General summary of both test groups (control stage of the study)

№	The subjects of the group	Level of development of communication skills					
		Low	%	Average	%	High	%
1	Control	4	19	14	67	3	14
2	Experimental	1	5	13	65	6	30

Thus, the control stage of the study showed the following results:

In control group:

low level – 4 preschoolers, which is 19%;

average level is 14 preschoolers, which is 67%;

highest level is 3 preschoolers, which is 14%.

In the experimental group:

low level – 1 preschooler, which is 5%;

average level is 13 preschoolers, which is 65%;

highest level is 6 preschoolers, which is 30%.

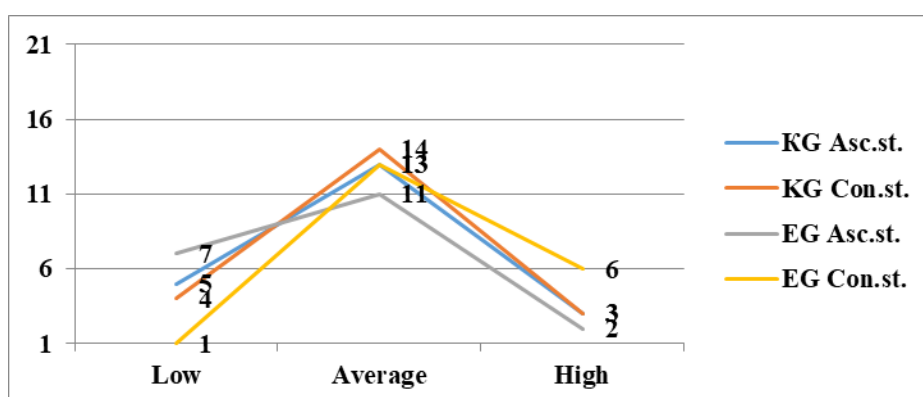


Figure 1: Comparative analysis of data from the ascertaining and control stages of the study

On the face of a significant change in results for the better in the EG: the low level decreased by 30%, the average level increased by 10%, the high level increased by 20%. In the control group, the results remained almost unchanged: the low level was 5%; the average level was 5%; the high level was unchanged (Figure 1).

Conclusion. This investigation addresses the critical challenge of developing communicative competencies among preschool children through systematic play-based pedagogical interventions. The comprehensive analysis of scholarly literature, grounded in the seminal contributions of Vygotsky, Zaporozhets,

Lisina, Repina, Subbotkin, Jacobson, and other distinguished researchers, facilitated the operational definition of “communicative skills” within this study. Communicative skills are conceptualized as the capacity of preschool children to initiate and terminate dialogical interactions effectively, utilizing conversational turn-taking protocols to establish, maintain, and conclude communicative exchanges, while demonstrating proficiency in responsive questioning, active inquiry, and attentive listening behaviors. The research presents a comprehensive taxonomic framework encompassing three distinct categories of communicative competencies: informational-communicative skills (content transmission and reception), regulatory-communicative skills (behavioral coordination and social influence), and affective-communicative skills (emotional expression and empathetic responsiveness).

The study established a multidimensional evaluation system incorporating cognitive, motivational, and behavioral criteria with corresponding indicators and three-tiered proficiency levels (emergent, developing, advanced). Diagnostic assessment employed multiple methodological approaches including systematic behavioral observation, standardized assessment protocols, and structured interview

techniques during the baseline evaluation phase. Results from the baseline assessment phase revealed predominantly low-to-moderate levels of communicative skill development among preschool participants. Statistical analysis utilizing the Mann-Whitney U-test confirmed sample equivalence between experimental and control groups prior to intervention implementation, establishing methodological rigor for subsequent comparative analyses. The study identified optimal pedagogical conditions for enhancing communicative skill development through structured implementation of collaborative role-playing activities, theatrical performance experiences, and facilitated conversational exchanges. These interventions incorporated discussions regarding human social roles, interpersonal relationship dynamics, verbal and nonverbal communication modalities, emotional expression, and behavioral norms across diverse situational contexts. Experimental data analysis demonstrated that communicative skill development represents a manageable and systematic educational process. Implementation of evidence-based pedagogical conditions resulted in measurable improvements in communicative competency levels, thereby confirming the research hypotheses and achieving the established investigative objectives.

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