

## Psychological Peculiarities of the Development of Junior Students' Voluntary Attention in the Process of Teaching English at Secondary School

### Психологічні особливості розвитку довільної уваги учнів початкових класів загальноосвітньої школи у процесі навчання англійської мови

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#### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this article is to study micro-age properties of stability and concentration of the 1 grade students' voluntary attention at secondary school, to determine the levels of their development, interrelation of attention with junior schoolchildren's thinking, as well as psychological and pedagogical conditions for activating junior students' voluntary attention to increase the efficiency in learning English.*

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**Methods of the research.** *The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: empirical method, psychological and pedagogical experiment, structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization.*

**The results of the research.** *The following new thesis has been elaborated: interconnections between the identified properties of voluntary attention (stability and concentration) thinking and junior students' academic success in learning English determine their positive interactions in the process of speech development; it is also proved that properties of voluntary attention influence students' individual psychological peculiarities (anxiety, communication, self-assessment, temperament properties) and vice versa – individual characteristic features of students may have their impact on the main properties (stability and concentration) of voluntary attention. Use of visual aids at the English language classes directly influence the mechanisms of formation of junior students' voluntary attention as well as their individual psychological peculiarities therefore contributing to development of young learners' speech and communicative skills. A new conceptual model of development of young learners' voluntary attention has been created, which takes into account its typical individual characteristic features (the degree of concentration on a particular task, the level of distribution of attention in the process of describing objects using collage visual aids). A new technology on the basis of English language exercises directed towards psychotherapeutic influence on the development of children's basic properties of voluntary attention in their connection with thinking was created. Criteria, indicators and a set of methods, including author's psychological training activity, are presented to diagnose development of main properties of 6–8-year-old students' voluntary attention. It was proved that effectively used visual aids in the educational process have a great impact on the development of young learners' monologue speech, reduce the level of their anxiety, improve communicative skills, motivate schoolchildren to be active, develop their interests and finally increase their self-esteem.*

**Conclusions.** *Criterion-oriented diagnostics in the research helps identify the actual data within these age categories that characterizes five different levels of development of stability and concentration of voluntary attention in comparison with the level that characterizes optimally realized age potential of this category of young learners. In the experimental research a large amount of factual data is obtained and systematized, having characterized individual and individual-typical peculiarities of stability and concentration as the properties*

*of voluntary attention in typical learning conditions, which can be taken into account when organizing psychological and pedagogical service at primary school. Purposeful and systematic formation of 6-8-year-old schoolchildren's self-control actions may be realized if teacher is aimed towards not only the development of voluntary attention, but also implements the technology of forming mental actions, applies the individual pedagogical approach in teaching junior students, using diagnostic data in its dynamics on the basis of early correction of applied learning technology.*

**Key words:** *voluntary attention, integral indicator of voluntary attention development, stability and concentration of attention, speech operations, primary school age, means of visualization, individual-psychological features, technique of development of voluntary attention.*

## Introduction

The most important characteristic and condition of the student's development as a subject of educational activity, of course, is the development of his voluntary attention. However, despite the large amount of psychological literature devoted to this problem it remains insufficiently solved. Some psychologists note the low level of attention development as one of the main difficulties in teaching children at primary school (Dam, 1990). Many researchers found out that learning process itself has a positive effect on the formation of the properties of attention (LaBerge, 1990; Posner & Petersen, 1990; Wickens, 1987). It has been experimentally proved that a high level of development of attention properties has a positive effect on learning success (Bosse & Valdois, 2009; Navon, 1989). The majority of researchers believe that the development of personality orientation should be a prior goal for a teacher at primary school (Lellis, Mariani, Ribeiro, Cantiere, Teixeira & Carreiro, 2013). The authors consider organization of students' educational activities to play a significant role in the development of their attention. All the above mentioned researchers define attention as «focus and (or) concentration of consciousness on certain objects or kinds of activities» (All-

port, 1989; Abrams & Law, 2000). They describe attention as not an independent process, but only as a side of other processes, especially cognitive ones (perception, thinking, memory and others). Considering the problem of developing children's attention, they recommend to form a sense of responsibility, interests, discipline, positive emotions, etc. (Mykhalchuk & Onufrieva, 2020). Attention should appear as a result of personality education (Dam, 1990; Turton, 2004). Some authors support the theory of formation of students' mental actions gradually (Posner & Petersen, 1990). Another approach to the problem of attention is declared by Dale Schunk, Peggy A. Ertmer (Schunk & Ertmer, 2012), whose researches are devoted to the problem of self-regulation of personality, peculiarities of its personal development at the early stages of ontogenesis.

Nowadays, new educational technologies at primary school, changes in curricula and programs provoke researchers to study the impact of new learning conditions on the development of cognitive processes of students and as the result the development of the child's personality. The main properties of voluntary attention (stability and concentration, first of all) are considered basic for the formation of students' self-organization. We consider this problem very important, especially for junior schoolchildren as a subject of educational activity. A new technology, we have created, is targeted towards development of young learners' voluntary attention in its connection with thinking at the English classes, its effectiveness has been experimentally proved (Spence, Shore & Klein, 2011). We consider the following issues to be very relevant in the framework of the problems of our experimental research: the study of individual and individual-typical features of stability and concentration of voluntary attention; establishing the range of capabilities of 6-8-year-old schoolchildren in the development of these properties; understanding the measure of teacher's awareness of the task to form students' voluntary

attention; searching of optimal conditions for its development, etc. The practical significance of this research and the lack of development of its theoretical aspects have determined its relevance.

Therefore, **the purpose of this article** is to study micro-age properties of stability and concentration of the 1 grade students' voluntary attention at secondary school, to determine the levels of their development, their interrelations with junior schoolchildren's thinking, as well as psychological and pedagogical conditions to activate junior students' voluntary attention to make successful progress in learning English.

### **Methods of the research**

The following theoretical methods of the research were used to solve the tasks formulated in the article: empirical method, psychological and pedagogical experiment, structural and functional methods, the methods of the analysis, systematization, modeling, generalization.

### **Results and their discussion**

The problem of attention is one of the oldest psychological problems. Edward B. Titchener investigated the problem of the attention and formulated the law of prior entry: «the object of attention comes to consciousness more quickly than the objects which we are not attending to» (Titchener, 1908). The latest researches, devoted to the problem of the speed of perception of attended stimuli confirm the truth of this statement. Recent brain imaging studies have been able to confirm these findings by showing that attention can speed up perceptual brain activation. In this research we have made theoretical analysis of the main characteristics of voluntary attention (concepts, physiological mechanisms, psychological features), the main properties of which are stability and concentration. This phenomenon is investigated not only in psychology, but

also within the pedagogical, medical, psychological and other scientific fields, which emphasizes its multidimensional integrity. Interdisciplinary analysis of the concept of voluntary attention has revealed that scientists view it differently. The generalization and synthesis of the accumulated scientific experience on the investigated problems allowed to clear up ambiguity in the understanding of voluntary attention as a subject of psychological research. Within the framework of domestic and foreign psychological science, this phenomenon does not have an unambiguous interpretation and is described by scientists in different terms. The age ontogenesis of the main properties of voluntary attention from the peculiarities of their development to the perspective of their improvement in the process of educational activities for the 1–2 grade students at secondary school was analyzed. It was found out that development of the above mentioned properties of voluntary attention depends on the intentions, design and content of foreign language material for memorization and on the means of visual aids, this material is offered to students to train their active vocabulary with the aim of qualitative verbal expression of young learners' feelings and emotions. The analysis of scientific sources showed insufficient empirical study of the problem of voluntary attention in psychology, the manifestation of individual psychological characteristics in the form of communication, anxiety, temperament and self-esteem as mental phenomena associated with development of junior students' voluntary behavior. It is analyzed that the starting point of birth of spontaneous speech of students is the stability of voluntary attention, which helps to determine the content of meaningful information, so the development of stability of junior students' attention becomes an important point of their speech, and thus, their mental development. As a result of theoretical review of the development of features of voluntary attention, it is assumed that the means of visual

aids is a unique, comprehensive, holistic and personally-mediated means of harmonious influence, which can be used to achieve qualitative changes in the development of stability and concentration of voluntary attention. We can't find special researches, devoted to the problem of dependence of development of primary schoolchildren's voluntary attention on teacher's awareness and special aims, targeted to formation of these properties in the learning process. All this defines the direction of our experimental research.

Attention plays an important role in learning foreign language at junior school, where students just only begin to learn one, and in specialized schools, even two foreign languages. Such lessons promote the development of junior students' communicative motivation in learning. When a person expresses an opinion using his native language, his attention is focused on the content of the message, but the manner of expressing thoughts is carried out at the level of background automatism. Formulating thoughts in foreign language, a person has additional difficulties, because his attention is switched and focused on the selection of language tools and formation of the message. Many students at primary classes find it very difficult to focus their attention, to switch from one type of activity to another, especially 6-8-year-old students. We conducted a primary diagnosis of such properties of attention as stability, volume, and concentration among young learners of the 1-2-nd grade of secondary school. We have used:

- ✓ Bruce E. Wexler's method to determine the volume of attention;
- ✓ Anfimov's method to study the level of stability of attention;
- ✓ Rybakov's method aimed to study active attention.

### Chart 1

#### The results of the primary diagnosis of active attention, stability and volume (%)

Levels	m. Rybakov active attention		m. Anfimov stability		m. Wexler volume	
	6-7	7-8	6-7	7-8	6-7	7-8
Age	6-7	7-8	6-7	7-8	6-7	7-8
High	46.7	44.7	–	4.3	6.7	42.6
Upper-intermediate	26.7	10.6	–	–	6.7	36.2
Intermediate	6.6	29.8	40	34	86.6	19.1
Pre-intermediate	–	4.3	20	44.7	–	2.1
Low	20	10.6	40	17	–	–

The study involved 63 junior students, including 25 students of the 1-st grade and 48 students of the second grade. Methods were performed by students in a group version. Based on the results of the initial diagnosis (Chart 1), it can be noted that 6-7-year-old students are characterized by significantly unstable attention (60% of students from the total amount of students of this age group covered by the study) and 61.7% of 7-8-year-old students out of total amount of students of this age who took part in testing. It is difficult for these children to maintain a state of attention on any subject without being distracted from work. Low level of active attention was demonstrated by 14.9% of 7-8-year-old students and by 20% of 6-7-year-old students. Such children have the lack of attention, superficial attention, distraction, which is manifested in their inability to focus on something for a long time, but also in a slight and frequent distraction from activity. Speaking about the study of the volume of the junior students' attention, we noticed that this characteristic of attention is more developed among the 7-8-year-old children. Children may simultaneously store a certain amount of information in the area of their increased attention. As far as the volume of attention



is concerned we may say that 13.4% of students of 6–7-year-old and 78.8% of 7–8-year-old students have a high and upper-intermediate level of its development and only 2.1% of 7–8-year-old students have pre-intermediate level of the volume of attention. We analyzed the reasons of students' inattentiveness at the lessons and found out that physiological features of children (peculiarities of the nervous system, general condition of the body), mental states (excitement, inhibition), motivation (lack of interest in the subject, its importance to students), as well as other circumstances may really influence on the development of attention of junior students. Such properties of attention as switching and distribution also should be tested. We plan to perform control testing of students of this age group, using other methods, in order to study these properties of attention and to compare the results and conclusions. Taking into account the data obtained in the research, we have created a series of special exercises aimed at developing the students' attention, which we use at the English lessons. Below there are examples of such exercises-tasks that will help to more clearly and specifically represent the practical experience with the aim of development of junior students' main properties of voluntary attention.

**Exercise 1.** «What? Where? Who?» is aimed towards improvement of concentration of attention and memory. It can be used when study any English topic. Children are given a collage with the relevant images to the topic they study, then the teacher takes the picture back and begins to ask students questions about its content.

*Example: Topic «Appearance»*

Children are given posters with different people. They view them a couple of minutes. Then teacher may ask different type of questions, students answer them watching the posters. To train memory young learners look a couple of minutes at the collage then teacher takes it away and may ask the following questions:

- Who looks happy?
- What color is the girl's hair?
- The girl has dark brown eyes, doesn't she?
- Is the boy tall or small?
- Is the man's hair black?

This exercise is effective both from psychological and educational aspect, it allows to remember English words.

**Exercise 2.** «Who is faster?» is used to improve switching and distribution of attention. Children are given photocopies of English texts. Then they are asked to cross out the letter «B» and «I» during a minute. Then students exchange their sheets and check. This method can be suitable when learning new vowels, consonants, sounds, words that are presented in the text and are needed to remember.

**Exercise 3.** «Questions» develop voluntary attention.

At the beginning of the lesson, teacher asks each student to prepare at least two interesting questions based on the learning material they are going to study. Teacher facilitates young learners' activity. At the end of the lesson the best question is declared. This exercise is used to develop students' attention during the whole lesson, as well as organize, motivate them for creating different types of questions, which is quite problematic at junior school.

**Exercise 4.** «Be attentive» may be held both at the beginning of the lesson to revise the learning material and at the end to summarize it.

a) Teacher reads the words the students have learned, for example: *Topic «Weather»*: rain, snow, warm, nasty, cold, dry, bright. Then asks: «Which word has the letter «r»? or «Which word has the sound [ai]?»

b) To revise the topic «Professions» teacher may read the following words: doctor, policeman, saleswoman, teacher, driver, cook. Then asks the question: «What was the second word?»

**Exercise 5.** The game «Spies» develops concentration of students' attention as well as involves them to participate ac-

tively during the lesson. At the beginning of the lesson teacher gives students questions they need to answer at the end of the lesson. They are asked to pay attention to some students' activity during the lesson (number of students who answer teacher's questions, what kinds of activity is used, etc.). At the end of the lesson all the answers are checked in the form of competition.

**Exercise 6.** The game «Counting together» is used to improve switching and distribution of attention when study mathematical operations with numbers. Game participants must perform addition or subtracting. The following algorithm may be used:

1-st student calls the number: nine (9).

2-nd -calls the sign: plus (+).

3-rd -calls the number: three (3).

4-th -calls the sign: is (=).

5-th -calls the summer: twelve (12), etc.

The student who is mistaken, leaves the game. Such kind of task enriches the students' receptive and productive reproduction of the English language.

**Exercise 7.** The game «Follow my movements» is another method to ensure the development of switching and distribution of attention.

Children must repeat different movements after the facilitator, except two of them:

- ✓ If the teacher clap the hands, children must jump;
- ✓ If the teacher bends to the left, children bend to the right.

If a student is mistaken, he sits down. The winner receives applauses.

This method is very perfect for the development of switching the junior students' attention, helps them relax especially after performing some complicated mental activities at the English language classes.

## Conclusions

Consequently, the concept of voluntary attention of junior students and its main properties: stability and concentration plays the most important role in their learning activity, more than that, the absence of purposeful pedagogical management in educational process directed towards development of 6–8-year-old students' voluntary attention may negatively influence their successful progress in English communication as well as mental development. The use of innovative programs that are not targeted towards formation of voluntary attention, as it turned out, can't have developing effect on its main properties: stability and concentration. Criterion-oriented diagnostics in the research helps to identify the actual data within these age categories, allows us to determine and characterize five different levels of development of stability and concentration of voluntary attention in comparison with the level that characterizes optimally realized age potential of this category of young learners. The techniques used in this research help determine individual actual and potential peculiarities of development of the most important 6–8-year-old students' properties of voluntary attention.

In the experimental research a large amount of factual data was obtained and systematized, having characterized individual and individual-typical peculiarities of the stability and concentration as the properties of voluntary attention in typical learning conditions, which can be taken into account when organizing psychological and pedagogical management of the learning process at primary school. Purposeful and systematic formation of primary schoolchildren's self-control actions may be realized if a teacher is aimed towards not only the development of voluntary attention, but also implements the technology of forming mental actions, applies the individual pedagogical approach in teaching young learners using diagnostic data in its dynamics and, thus, adjusts learning technology.

Theoretical and applied aspects of relevance; psychological impact of visual aids on the development of junior students' voluntary attention as well as on their emotions, interests, the mechanisms of development of young learners' attention, some aspects of the theory of temperament and its influence on successful English communication will be analyzed in our further articles.

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**Ляшенко Лариса. Психологічні особливості розвитку довільної уваги учнів початкових класів загальноосвітньої школи у процесі навчання англійської мови**

## АНОТАЦІЯ

**Метою статті** є вивчення мікрорікових властивостей стійкості й концентрації довільної уваги учнів 1–2-х класів початкової загальноосвітньої школи, визначення рівнів їх розвитку, взаємозв'язку уваги з мисленням молодшого школяра, а також психолого-педагогічні умови активізації довільної уваги учнів-початківців для підвищення ефективності засвоєння англійської мови.

Для розв'язання поставлених у роботі завдань використано такі теоретичні **методи дослідження**: емпіричний метод, психолого-педагогічний експеримент, структурно-функціональні методи, методи аналізу, систематизації, моделювання, узагальнення.

**Результати дослідження.** Розроблено нові положення, а саме: взаємозв'язку між властивостями довільної уваги учнів 1–2-х класів початкової загальноосвітньої школи (стійкість, концентрація), мисленням та успішністю у процесі навчання англійської мови зумовлюють їх позитивні взаємовпливи у процесі мовленнєвого розвитку молодших школярів. Доведено, що властивості довільної уваги впливають на індивідуально-психологічні особливості учнів (тривожність, спілкування, самооцінка, властивості темпераменту) і, навпаки, індивідуальні характерні особливості учнів можуть впливати на основні властивості (стабільність і концентрацію) довільної уваги. Використання засобів зорового унаочнення на уроках англійської мови безпосередньо впливає на механізми формування довільної уваги молодших школярів, а також на їх індивідуально-психологічні особливості, що сприяє розвитку мовленнєвих і комунікативних навичок молодших школярів. Створено нову концептуальну модель розвитку довільної уваги учнів 1-х і 2-х класів, яка враховує її типові індивідуальні особливості (ступінь зосередженості на певному завданні, рівень розподілу уваги у процесі опису об'єктів за допомогою засобів зорової наочності). Створено нову технологію на основі вправ з англійської мови, спрямовану на розвиток у дітей основних властивостей довільної уваги у зв'язку з мисленням. Представлено критерії, показники та набір методик для діагностики розвитку основних властивостей довільної уваги 6–8-річних учнів. Було доведено, що ефективно використані у навчальному процесі наочні засоби мають значний вплив на розвиток монологічного мовлення молодших школярів, знижують рівень їх тривожності, покращують комунікативні навички, мотивують школярів до активності, розвитку своїх інтересів й адекватної самооцінки.



**Висновки.** Критеріально-орієнтована діагностика в нашому дослідженні дає змогу виявити розкид фактичних даних у межах визначених вікових категорій. Охарактеризовано п'ять основних рівнів розвитку стійкості й концентрації довільної уваги порівняно з рівнем, що характеризує оптимальним чином реалізований віковий потенціал дитячого віку. Використані методики, як ми переконалися, дозволяють діагностувати індивідуальні актуальні та потенційні особливості розвитку в 6–8-річних дітей найважливіших властивостей довільної уваги. Цілеспрямоване і планомірне формування дій самоконтролю в учнів 1–2-х класів потребує від учителя спеціальної підготовки: він повинен не тільки усвідомлювати завдання розвитку довільної уваги, але і володіти технологією формування розумових дій, здійснювати індивідуалізацію програми педагогічного впливу на дітей згідно з діагностичними даними про їх динаміку. З урахуванням загальновікових та індивідуально-типових особливостей стійкості й концентрації довільної уваги в учнів 1–2-х класів у дослідженні визначено можливі психолого-педагогічні напрями корекційної роботи, які можуть бути реалізовані за певних умов корекції педагогічного процесу вчителями та шкільними психологами.

**Ключові слова:** довільна увага, інтегральний показник розвитку довільної уваги, стійкість і концентрація уваги, мовленнєві операції, молодший шкільний вік, засоби зорового унаочнення, індивідуально-психологічні особливості, модель розвитку довільної уваги.

**Ляшенко Лариса.** Психологические особенности развития произвольного внимания учащихся начальных классов общеобразовательной школы в процессе обучения английского языка

## АННОТАЦИЯ

**Целью статьи** являются определение микро-возрастных свойств устойчивости и концентрации произвольного внимания учащихся 1–2-х классов начальной общеобразовательной школы, уровней их развития, установление связи между вниманием и мышлением младшего школьника, а также психолого-педагогических условий активизации произвольного внимания младших школьников для повышения эффективности усвоения английского языка.

Для решения поставленных в работе задач использованы следующие теоретические **методы исследования:** эмпирический метод, психо-

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*лого-педагогический эксперимент, структурно-функциональные методы, методы анализа, систематизации, моделирование, обобщение.*

**Результаты исследования.** Нами были разработаны новые положения, а именно: взаимосвязи между свойствами произвольного внимания учащихся 1–2-х классов начальной общеобразовательной школы (устойчивость, концентрация), мышлением и успеваемостью в процессе обучения английскому языку обуславливают их положительные взаимовлияния в процессе речевого развития младших школьников. Доказано, что свойства произвольного внимания влияют на индивидуально-психологические особенности учащихся (тревожность, общение, самооценка, свойства темперамента) и, наоборот, индивидуально-психологические особенности младших школьников могут влиять на основные свойства (стабильность и концентрацию) произвольного внимания. Использование средств зрительной наглядности на уроках английского языка непосредственно влияет на механизмы формирования произвольного внимания младших школьников, а также на их индивидуально-психологические особенности, способствует развитию речевых и коммуникативных навыков. Создана новая концептуальная модель развития произвольного внимания учащихся этой возрастной группы, которая учитывает его типичные индивидуальные особенности (степень сосредоточенности на определенном задании, уровень распределения внимания в процессе описания объектов с помощью средств зрительной наглядности). Создана новая технология с использованием упражнений по английскому языку, направленная на развитие у школьников основных свойств произвольного внимания во взаимосвязи с мышлением. Представлены критерии, показатели и набор методик для диагностики развития основных свойств произвольного внимания у 6–8-летних учеников. Было доказано, что эффективно использованная наглядность в учебном процессе имеет большое влияние на развитие монологической речи младших школьников, снижает уровень их тревожности, улучшает коммуникативные навыки, мотивирует школьников к активности, развитию своих интересов и адекватной самооценки.

**Выводы.** Критериально-ориентированная диагностика в исследовании позволяет выявить достоверные данные в рамках избранных возрастных категорий, которые характеризуют пять различных уровней развития устойчивости и концентрации произвольного внимания по сравнению с уровнем, характеризующим оптимально реализованный

*возрастной потенциал данной категории школьников. Методы, использованные в этом исследовании, помогают определить индивидуальные типичные и потенциальные особенности развития важнейших свойств произвольного внимания у школьников 6–8 лет. В экспериментальном исследовании был получен и систематизирован большой фактический материал, охарактеризованы индивидуальные и индивидуально-типологические особенности устойчивости и концентрации произвольного внимания в типичных условиях обучения, которые могут быть учтены при организации психолого-педагогической службы в начальной школе. Целенаправленное и систематическое формирование самоконтроля у 6–8-летних учащихся может быть реализовано, если учитель нацелен не только на развитие произвольного внимания в процессе учебной деятельности, но и реализует технологию формирования мыслительных действий, применяет индивидуальную программу педагогического влияния на учеников согласно диагностических данных в их динамике. С учетом общевозрастных и индивидуально-типологических особенностей устойчивости и концентрации произвольного внимания у учащихся 1–2-х классов в исследовании определены возможные психолого-педагогические направления коррекционной работы, которые могут быть реализованы при определенных условиях коррекции педагогического процесса учителями и школьными психологами.*

**Ключевые слова:** *произвольное внимание, интегральный показатель развития произвольного внимания, устойчивость и концентрация внимания, речевые операции, младший школьный возраст, средства зрительной наглядности, индивидуально-психологические особенности, модель развития произвольного внимания.*

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