

# The model of activity of a foreign language teacher on the prevention of preadolescents' academic failure

## El modelo de actividad de un profesor de lengua extranjera sobre la prevención del fracaso escolar de los preadolescentes

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#### ABSTRACT:

The object of this study is the process of teaching a foreign language to schoolchildren of 5th-6th grades of the general education school (a basic general education level). The subject of this study is the activity of a foreign language teacher on the prevention of academic failure of schoolchildren of the specified age group. The purpose of the study is to generalize and systematize foreign and national experience in preventing academic failure of schoolchildren, to develop a model of activity of a foreign language teacher on the basis of the idea of an integrated approach to solving the problem of preventing academic failure in general and in the sphere of language education in particular. To achieve the purpose, the following methods of scientific research have been used: analysis, generalization, synthesis, simulation, participant observation, conversation, testing, pedagogical experiment, and statistical methods of processing the results obtained. The article justifies the choice of preadolescence as the period, when children are the most susceptible to the preventive and corrective impact. The author reveals the content of the developed model of activity of a foreign language teacher, the implementation of which

#### RESUMEN:

El objetivo de este estudio es el proceso de enseñanza de una lengua extranjera a escolares de 5º a 6º de la escuela de educación general (nivel básico de educación general). El tema de este estudio es la actividad de un profesor de lengua extranjera sobre la prevención del fracaso escolar de los escolares del grupo de edad especificado. El objetivo del estudio es generalizar y sistematizar la experiencia extranjera y nacional en la prevención del fracaso escolar de los escolares, desarrollar un modelo de actividad de un profesor de lengua extranjera sobre la base de la idea de un enfoque integrado para resolver el problema de la prevención del fracaso académico En general y en el ámbito de la educación de lenguas en particular. Para lograr el propósito se han utilizado los siguientes métodos de investigación científica: análisis, generalización, síntesis, simulación, observación participante, conversación, ensayo, experimento pedagógico y métodos estadísticos de procesamiento de los resultados obtenidos. El artículo justifica la elección de la preadolescencia como período, cuando los niños son los más susceptibles al impacto preventivo y correctivo. El autor revela el contenido del modelo

contributes to the prevention of preadolescents' academic failure.

**Keywords:** foreign language teacher, model of activity, academic failure, preadolescents.

desarrollado de actividad de un profesor de lengua extranjera, cuya implementación contribuye a la prevención del fracaso escolar de los preadolescentes.

**Palabras clave:** profesor de lengua extranjera, modelo de actividad, fracaso académico, preadolescentes.

## 1. Introduction

In a democratic state, every child has the right to a quality school education in accordance with his/her interests, abilities, opportunities, and has the right to be successful in studies.

Unfortunately, due to various reasons, this right cannot always be exercised in the modern educational space, including the sphere of foreign language teaching. Meanwhile, both adults and school/gymnasium/college students objectively have a need for knowledge of one or more foreign languages. This is due to the processes of globalization in the modern world, opening up new opportunities for personal and professional growth to all people speaking foreign languages.

The importance of taking measures to prevent academic failure in foreign language learning exactly among preadolescents (10-12-year-old schoolchildren) is due to a number of facts. Firstly, at this age there is often the greatest decline in academic performance compared to previous years of study. Secondly, psycho-physiological features of preadolescents make them sensitive to the pedagogical influence, including a preventive and corrective impact (Lipsitz 1980).

Gizatullina A.V. in her study identified four groups of causes for academic failure in adolescence, including academic failure in foreign language learning: these are physiological, psychological, social and pedagogical causes, which constitute an individual case of academic failure of each preadolescent (Gizatullina 2015, pp. 1332). The derivative nature of most of the causes makes it possible to eliminate them through a positive change in the environment of a preadolescent with insufficient level of learning, in particular by raising the level of teaching and educational work of teachers and the quality of family upbringing.

Despite the urgency of the problem of school failure, it often remains unresolved in many secondary general education institutions. Foreign language teachers experience special difficulties in the process of preventing and overcoming school failure, which is caused by the complexity of the subject and specific features of difficulties encountered in its learning (Gizatullina 2015, pp. 1332).

**Methodology and methods of research** are determined by the tasks at hand and include the following theoretical methods: the analysis of pedagogical, psychological and methodological literature and research on various aspects of the problem under study, as well as the analysis of the experience of practical work of school foreign language teachers, simulation; empirical methods: participant observation, the study of students' deliverables, conversation, testing, pedagogical experiment; mathematical methods: statistical methods of results processing. General education schools of Yelabuga, Naberezhnye Chelny and Mendeleevsk in the Republic of Tatarstan are determined as a research base. The experiment involved 143 students studying English or German (71 students in the control group and 72 students in the experimental group). Language tests were used as a diagnostic tool for experimental research.

## 2. Research results

In order to achieve the purpose, the following tasks were solved in the process of research: foreign and national experience in the research area has been generalized and systematized, the general principles of the teacher's activity on the prevention of academic failure in foreign language learning have been revealed, the content of this activity in four areas (self-educational, organizational, psychological-pedagogical diagnostics, correctional areas) has been disclosed, a model of activity of a foreign language teacher has been developed, which

implements an integrated approach to solving the problem of preventing school failure in foreign language learning. The effectiveness of the developed model has been tested during the pedagogical experiment.

In order to check the significance of the differences obtained as a result of comparing the advance of experimental groups (EG-1 – English and EG-2 – German) and control groups (CG-1 and CG-2), the following calculations were made. First, the average values for the groups were calculated. The difference in the average values showed a change in academic performance in each group before and after the experiment. In EG-1, it was equal to 0.285714; in CG-1 = 0.071429; in EG-2 = 0.571429; in CG-2 = 0. These data show that in the experimental groups there were significantly greater changes than in the control groups (in CG-2 changes did not occur). This is confirmed by the obtained data on the dispersion in the groups under study. For EG-1, a change in the dispersion was 0.55102, which is significantly greater than a change in the dispersion in CG-1 = 0.088637. In EG-2, a change in the dispersion was 0.776239, while in CG-2 there were no changes (=0). This means that after the experiment the experimental groups have become more homogeneous in terms of academic performance (the teenagers with academic failure have become successful). The control groups remained almost as heterogeneous as before the experiment.

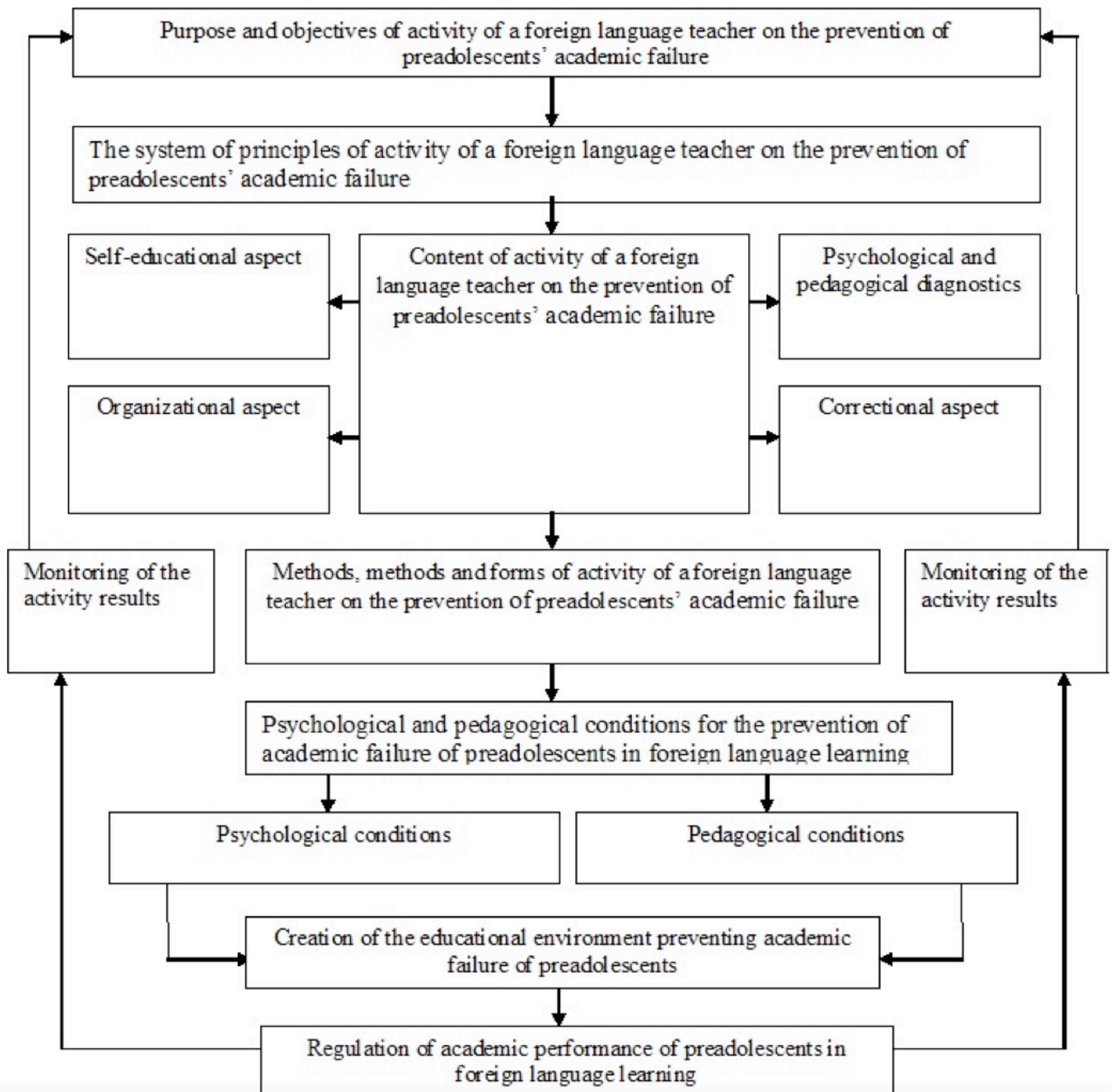
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### **3. Discussion of results**

The prevention of academic failure of preadolescents can be achieved through the implementation of an integrated approach to solving this problem and the creation of appropriate psychological and pedagogical conditions by a foreign language teacher in the educational process. These conditions are implemented through the developed model of activity of a foreign language teacher on preventing academic failure of preadolescents.

The object of simulation is the activity of a foreign language teacher on preventing academic failure of preadolescents. The subjects are the participants in the educational process – a foreign language teacher, preadolescents, their parents and school specialists (a class teacher, subject teachers, a school psychologist, a counselor, a school doctor, and a speech therapist).

The model of activity of a foreign language teacher on preventing academic failure of preadolescents is a set of interconnected and interdependent components (purposes, objectives, principles, methods, techniques, forms, etc.) aimed at creating the learning environment that prevents academic failure and regulating academic performance of preadolescents (Figure 1). The first group of components includes the purpose and objectives of work with underachievers or weakly performing preadolescents.



**Figure 1.** The model of activity of a foreign language teacher on the prevention of preadolescents' academic failure

of pedagogical support, psychological correction, humanistic and cooperation pedagogy, namely:

- a principle of harmonizing the pedagogical process with the individual psychological features of students (Bukhvalov 2000, pp. 35);
- a principle of positive motivation and a favorable emotional learning climate (Zagvyazinsky 2001, pp. 46) and a more general principle of humanism (Selevko 2005, pp. 69);
- a principle of orientation to the positive in the behavior and personality of a child (Rozhkov 2001; pp. 43) or a principle of optimistic hypothesis (Selevko 2005, pp. 69); a principle of rational combination of exactingness and respect for a student or a principle of democratic relations between a teacher and students (Bukhvalov 2000, pp. 31);
- a principle of the unity of diagnostics and correction (Dubrovina, 1999, pp. 10; Slobodyanik 2003, pp. 39, Kruglova 2004, pp. 4), including the unity of correction and development, the unity of age-specific and individual characteristics in the development, an activity-related

principle of correction, an attitude in the correctional work towards each student as an advanced one (Dubrovina 1999, pp. 10-13);

- a principle of simultaneous study of the collective and the individual (Maksimov 2002, pp. 59);
- principles of pedagogical support for students: a principle of "development", a principle of top-down correction, a principle of systemic development (Popova 2005, pp. 6);
- a principle of adaptability of education and upbringing to the levels and characteristics of students' development and preparedness and a principle of activation and use of internal self-regulating mechanisms for the development of the personality of weakly performing adolescents (Selevko 2005, pp. 69, 82);
- a principle of uniting the efforts of a teacher, parents and school specialists (Slobodyanik 2003, pp. 43; Monina & Panasyuk 2003, pp. 19; Lukyanova 2004, pp. 40);
- a principle of communicative orientation of foreign language learning, in the content of which one can distinguish such aspects as communicative consciousness, communicative activity, communicative visibility and personal individualization (Nikitenko 1985, pp. 8-9).

The third group of components of the model of activity of a foreign language teacher on preventing preadolescents' academic failure includes the content of the teacher's activity, in which several aspects can be distinguished: self-educational, diagnostic, organizational, correctional aspects.

Continuous self-education of a foreign language teacher should include:

- 1) Self-education in the sphere of philology and foreign language teaching methods;
- 2) Enhancing one's own psychological and pedagogical competence on the issues of age-related psychological characteristics of adolescents, the psycho-physiological conditionality of some learning difficulties of students, an influence of students' individual-typological features of the nervous system and gender (Biddulph 2013) on their learning activities.

A diagnostic aspect of the teacher's activity is conditioned by the need for:

- 1) studying the personality of preadolescents and a team (of a training group) as a whole;
- 2) identifying underachievers and students weakly performing in foreign language learning;
- 3) finding out academic difficulties of underachievers and the causes for these difficulties;
- 4) classifying underachievers on a particular type (according to the classification of Menchinskaya (1989)), which makes it possible to obtain a clearer idea of an individual case of academic failure of a certain student, and then to unite underachievers of a similar type for performing the group correctional work and implementation of a differentiated approach in the lessons.

On the one hand, diagnostics precedes the creation and application of a system of measures to prevent academic failure of preadolescents, as it helps a teacher to get deeper understanding of the difficulties experienced by schoolchildren. On the other hand, diagnostics is a final (or transitional) stage of the activity of a foreign language teacher on preventing academic failure, depending on how successfully the performance of preadolescents has been regulated.

Distinguishing an organizational aspect of the teacher's activity is driven by the need for consolidating the efforts of students, their parents, teachers and school specialists with the purpose of preventing or overcoming academic failure. This aspect involves the organization of the educational process, which is adequate to the revealed principles, and the creation of psychological and pedagogical conditions conducive to the prevention of preadolescents' academic failure on the subject "Foreign Language".

A correctional aspect of the teacher's activity is implemented through correction of the following:

- 1) Knowledge and skills of preadolescents with academic failure;

2) Insufficiently developed psychological processes, educational motivation, self-esteem and interpersonal relations of students with learning difficulties;

3) Methods and techniques of the foreign language teacher's work, if they come into conflict with the principles discussed above and do not correspond to the set goal.

The fourth group of model components includes the methods, techniques and forms of foreign language learning that implement the content of the teacher's activity on preventing academic failure of preadolescents. The list of them is provided below:

- a method of analyzing psychological and educational literature and a method of studying and generalizing working experience of foreign language teachers on the prevention of academic failure in the practice of secondary general educational institutions;
- a method of observation, including participant observation of students, as well as self-observation;
- interaction with colleagues and parents on the basis of methods of individual or group conversation, explanation, persuasion;
- a method of setting perspectives and creating situations of success for students with learning difficulties;
- an encouragement method;
- control methods;
- a game method;
- a competition method, which, in our opinion, is only limitedly applicable in case of academic failure, because its careless application can lead to the frustration, to a decrease in the self-esteem and activity of students (more information can be found in the study of Gizatullina and Yakhina (2014));
- an exercise as one of the main correction and teaching methods (including the fulfillment of tasks for psycho-diagnostic tables);
- filling personal pedagogical cards of preadolescents with the insufficient level of learning and "risk group" students;
- application of subjective (individual) standards, implementing a principle "today you have become better than yesterday", along with the generally accepted standards of assessing the achievements;
- a technique of a chain of instructions (Tsetlin, 1989, pp. 13-14);
- a technique of "emotional stroking" of students.

A lesson, consultations and short individual and group extra lessons are traditional forms of work with underachievers. The work with parents, teachers and school specialists is performed in the form of consultations, conversations, reports, lectures.

The fifth group of model components includes a set of conditions for preventing preadolescents' academic failure in foreign language learning, which includes a group of psychological conditions and a group of pedagogical conditions. In our opinion, the implementation of these conditions leads both to the creation of the educational environment that prevents preadolescents' academic failure and to the regulation of their academic performance.

The sixth group of model components is a block of control over the results of the foreign language teacher's activity on preventing preadolescents' academic failure. Language tests perform the function of a control-diagnostic tool.

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## 4. Conclusion

The developed model makes it possible to get a clear idea of the external and internal links of various factors of students' academic performance, the psychological and pedagogical



conditions for preventing preadolescents' academic failure, the content and stages of the foreign language teacher's activity in the regulation of their academic performance and the role of school specialists and parents in this process. The practical significance of the study is that its results can be used in the practice of foreign language teaching at school (at the stage of basic general education), in the process of subject, methodological and psychological-pedagogical training of students studying at philology departments of pedagogical universities, as well as in advanced training courses for school foreign language teachers.

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