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"ROLE OF PHONETIC RHYTHM IN CORRECTION OF SPEECH DEFECTS"

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Abstract. Phonetic rhythm is an effective tool in correcting speech defects, as it supports articulation, fluency, and prosody. Through rhythmic exercises, speech organs are synchronized, auditory skills are strengthened, and motor coordination is improved. This study emphasizes the role of phonetic rhythm in speech therapy, highlighting its contribution to overcoming stuttering, dysarthria, and other speech disorders.

Keywords. Phonetic rhythm, speech therapy, speech defects, articulation, fluency, prosody, stuttering, dysarthria.

The full development of speech function is an integral part of a child's overall cognitive growth. During the process of speech formation, attention, memory, and thinking are simultaneously developed and improved. Clear and understandable speech is a necessary condition for complete communication, as it helps the child to broaden their understanding of the surrounding world. Furthermore, speech itself performs a regulatory function, since through verbal instructions a child's behavior can be guided, their participation in collective activities can be organized, and their actions can be effectively controlled.

Many renowned pedagogues and psychologists, especially L. S. Vygotsky, J. Piaget, and A. V. Zaporozhets**,** have emphasized in their works that early childhood is the most intensive stage of mental development and, at the same time, the most sensitive period to negative influences. Infancy, which lasts from birth to three years, is a period when motor activity, cognitive functions, and speech abilities are actively formed, while a child's personal traits also begin to develop. Even seemingly insignificant or unfavorable factors can negatively affect the complete development of speech functions. However, because the brain of a young child is highly plastic during these years, corrective pedagogical and therapeutic influences can be especially effective if applied early.

In recent years, more parents have been seeking professional help for delayed speech development in children under the age of three. Many children at this stage do not use speech as a primary means of communication, which causes great concern among parents. Most parents understand the necessity of professional intervention, and specialists strongly recommend beginning corrective work as early as possible. If logopedic intervention is postponed, there is a high risk of developing secondary pathologies. At the same time, traditional speech therapy approaches for children under three years do not always bring the expected results. For this reason, modern speech therapy increasingly employs phonetic rhythmics**,** a method that has shown high effectiveness with young children. Phonetic rhythmics involves a set of special exercises in which speech material (sounds, syllables, and short texts) is coordinated with

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general body movements (hands, fingers, legs, head, and torso). The method was first introduced in 1989 by T. Vlasova and A. Pfafenrodt for developing pronunciation in children with hearing impairments. Later research demonstrated that this approach is also highly effective for children with speech delays, articulation disorders, stuttering, and dysarthria.

According to A. Mukhina**,** phonetic rhythmics creates psychophysiological conditions necessary for forming the sound side of speech. It develops three levels of praxis: general motor praxis, articulatory praxis, and speech-motor praxis. In the initial stage, phonetic rhythmics begins with the stimulation of sounds through facial expression exercises, auditory imitation, and visual-motor support. At later stages, these exercises promote the automatization of correct sound articulation, the development of fluency, and the integration of prosodic features such as intonation, loudness, and voice quality.

From a practical standpoint, phonetic rhythmics provides numerous benefits. It normalizes speech breathing and lengthens exhalation, develops the strength and modulation of the voice, enhances articulation accuracy, and increases auditory and visual attention. It also improves memory capacity, develops tactile-kinesthetic body awareness, and supports coordination between fine and gross motor skills. The rhythmic element strengthens the synchronization between auditory and motor systems of the brain, which is confirmed by modern neurolinguistic studies on neural entrainment**.** Such research shows that rhythmic training enhances timing control in children with stuttering and supports language acquisition in those with developmental language disorders.

Another important advantage of phonetic rhythmics is its play-based character. When integrated into speech therapy sessions, these rhythmic exercises create a positive emotional atmosphere, which motivates children to actively participate in communication. The method also relies heavily on imitation: the child imitates the model given by the speech therapist, which strengthens articulation, motor control, voice production, and breathing regulation. Thus, the use of phonetic rhythmics in speech therapy contributes to solving multiple problems at once: it stimulates communicative activity, develops higher mental functions, improves auditory-motor coordination, and helps children master prosodic aspects of speech. Children not only learn to perceive and reproduce sounds, but also acquire new articulatory positions and develop rhythmical speech patterns. All of these outcomes provide a foundation for further speech development and successful communication.

Recent research in speech-language pathology highlights that rhythm is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a neurological mechanism that supports timing, sequencing, and coordination in speech production. Studies in neurocognitive science demonstrate that rhythmic training activates the auditory–motor loop in the brain, improving connectivity between the auditory cortex and motor planning regions. This connection is especially important for children with developmental speech and language disorders (DLD) or apraxia of speech**,** where deficits in motor planning and timing disrupt fluency.

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Moreover, phonetic rhythm has been shown to enhance prosodic elements of speech- such as intonation, stress, and melody—which are crucial for natural communication. Without prosody, even grammatically correct speech can sound robotic or unclear. Rhythm-based therapy provides a natural framework for developing prosody by linking speech with body movement and music-like patterns.

International studies also support the idea that rhythm-based interventions can be generalized beyond children with speech delays. For example, rhythm therapy has been applied successfully in adults recovering from stroke-induced aphasia**,** where rhythmic speech and movement exercises help restore lost language functions. Similarly, rhythm-based training has been used in cases of Parkinson's disease**,** where it helps patients maintain speech fluency and motor control. Thus, phonetic rhythm is not only a corrective tool for articulation and fluency but also a multifunctional therapeutic strategy that connects linguistic, motor, cognitive, and emotional aspects of development. Its adaptability makes it valuable across a wide spectrum of speech disorders and age groups.

Conclusion

Phonetic rhythm plays a vital role in the correction of speech defects by integrating linguistic, motor, and cognitive processes. Through rhythmic exercises, children develop articulation, fluency, prosody, and motor coordination while also strengthening attention and memory. The method is effective not only for early childhood speech delays but also for various speech disorders across age groups. Its simplicity, adaptability, and evidence-based results make phonetic rhythmics a powerful tool in modern speech therapy, supporting both communication skills and overall cognitive development.

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