



MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC
SOLUTIONS

**ISSUES OF TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO STUDENTS
IN GRADES 8–11 IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR AGE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
CHARACTERISTICS**

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Introduction

Learning a foreign language is not simply about memorizing new words or grammatical rules. It is a process of entering another culture and way of thinking while still preserving one's own identity. For students in grades 8–11 — that is, young people between the ages of 14 and 17 — this process unfolds with its own distinct set of challenges. This is because adolescence marks a sharp turning point between childhood and early adulthood, a period defined by rapid inner transformation.

Main Body

1. The Connection Between Age Characteristics and Foreign Language Learning

During adolescence, the brain continues to develop actively — logical thinking, abstract reasoning, and critical analysis all grow stronger. In one sense, this is an advantage: a student in grades 8–11 is far better equipped to understand grammar and grasp the patterns of word formation than a student in primary school. However, this same period is when a young person is actively constructing their sense of self. The fear of making mistakes, the anxiety of being laughed at in front of peers — these emotions become powerful barriers in the foreign language classroom. A student wants to speak in English, yet an inner voice holds them back: *"What if I say something wrong?"*

2. The Question of Motivation — The Greatest Challenge

Many teachers notice this: a student arrives to class in grade 8 but cannot find an answer to the question, *"Why do I need to learn this?"* In lower grades, this question rarely arose so sharply — children simply studied. But in adolescence, the search for meaning begins. If a student cannot connect the foreign language to their own life, future, or interests, it stops being a subject and becomes an obligation.

The root of this problem does not lie with the student alone. Often the curriculum, the textbook, and sometimes the teacher's approach itself remain far removed from the student's actual world. Memorization, translation, mechanical exercises — these methods still dominate. Yet students of this age want to discuss, express their own opinions, and use the language in real situations.

3. Psychological Safety in the Classroom

The most essential condition in a foreign language classroom is an environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes. But how consistently is this being achieved in practice? If a teacher corrects every grammatical error immediately, students gradually





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...speak less and less. If classmates laugh at one another, a student can never come to feel that the language belongs to them.

For adolescents, social standing within the group matters enormously. For this reason, being called on individually for an oral response can intensify anxiety and stress. Working in pairs or small groups, on the other hand, gives students a safe space for language practice without the pressure of full public exposure.

4. The Need for a Differentiated Approach

The gap between students in grades 8–11 can be striking. One student may have been watching English-language series at home and already has a natural relationship with the language, while another is still struggling with basic reading. A uniform pace and identical tasks serve neither student well: one grows bored, the other falls behind.

Unfortunately, implementing a truly differentiated approach demands considerable time and creative energy from the teacher. A class of 30 to 35 students makes this task even harder to carry out effectively.

5. Technology and the Expectations of Today's Adolescent

Today's student in grades 8–11 is a digital native. They have grown up with YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. They expect dynamism, visual engagement, and interactivity. A static textbook page and repetitive drills cannot hold their attention. When teachers work with this reality rather than against it, results improve. Podcasts, videos, authentic materials, and real opportunities for communication — all of these carry irreplaceable value in the modern classroom.

Conclusion

Teaching a foreign language to students in grades 8–11 is a complex, multi-layered pedagogical task. At this age, students are not only acquiring knowledge — they are also discovering themselves. For this reason, an effective teacher must simultaneously be a linguist, a psychologist, and a motivator. Education built without regard for the age-related characteristics of students — even if methodologically sound — will not yield the results it aims for. The essential goal is to make the foreign language a genuine part of the student's life: not something that belongs to others, but something they can truly call their own.

