

SOME PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE PRONUNCIATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AGED 5-6 THROUGH USING LEARNING GAMES

Vu Thi Huong Giang, Pham Thu Thuy
*Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education,
Hai Phong University
Email: giangvth@dhhp.edu.vn*

Received: 10/9/2025

Revised: 23/9/2025

Accepted: 24/10/2025

Abstract: Accurate pronunciation is a key factor in the process of language development, contributing to the formation of effective communication skills and helping children acquire knowledge at the next educational stage. At the age of 5-6, children are at the stage of completing their language development and preparing for entry into primary school. Therefore, the practice of correct pronunciation is not only important for daily communication but also establishes a crucial foundation for learning, particularly reading and writing skills. Based on the psychological and cognitive characteristics of preschool children, this study aims to propose and experiment with several pedagogical measures for pronunciation practice through learning games. This approach aligns with children's natural tendency to "learn through play," simultaneously stimulating interest and enabling them to practice pronunciation in a natural, enjoyable, and effective way. Initial experimental results indicate that learning games not only enhance children's motivation for participate in language activities but also significantly improve the pronunciation abilities of 5- 6-year-olds. The study contributes to affirming the role of integrating games into language education while providing practical implications for preschool teachers in organizing pronunciation practice, thereby improving the quality of school readiness for children before entering primary education.

Keywords: Pronunciation, pedagogical measures, learning games, 5-6-year-old kindergarten children, preschool.

MỘT SỐ BIỆN PHÁP RÈN PHÁT ÂM CHO TRÉ 5-6 TUỔI THÔNG QUA TRÒ CHƠI HỌC TẬP Ở TRƯỜNG MẦM NON

Tóm tắt: Phát âm chuẩn là yếu tố cốt lõi trong quá trình phát triển ngôn ngữ, góp phần hình thành khả năng giao tiếp hiệu quả và hỗ trợ trẻ trong việc lĩnh hội tri thức ở bậc

học tiếp theo. Ở lứa tuổi 5-6, trẻ đang trong giai đoạn hoàn thiện ngôn ngữ và chuẩn bị bước vào tiểu học, do đó việc rèn luyện phát âm đúng chuẩn không chỉ có ý nghĩa trong giao tiếp hàng ngày mà còn tạo nền tảng quan trọng cho học tập, đặc biệt là kỹ năng đọc - viết. Xuất phát từ đặc điểm tâm lý, nhận thức của trẻ mầm non, nghiên cứu này hướng tới việc đề xuất và thử nghiệm một số biện pháp sư phạm rèn phát âm thông qua hình thức trò chơi học tập. Đây là phương pháp phù hợp với nhu cầu “học bằng chơi” của trẻ, vừa kích thích hứng thú, vừa giúp trẻ luyện phát âm một cách tự nhiên, nhẹ nhàng và hiệu quả. Kết quả thực nghiệm bước đầu cho thấy các trò chơi học tập không chỉ nâng cao hứng thú tham gia hoạt động ngôn ngữ mà còn cải thiện rõ rệt khả năng phát âm của trẻ 5-6 tuổi. Nghiên cứu góp phần khẳng định vai trò của việc lồng ghép trò chơi trong giáo dục ngôn ngữ, đồng thời đưa ra gợi ý thiết thực cho giáo viên mầm non trong việc tổ chức hoạt động rèn phát âm, từ đó nâng cao chất lượng chuẩn bị cho trẻ trước khi vào tiểu học.

Từ khóa: Phát âm, biện pháp, trò chơi học tập, trẻ mẫu giáo 5-6 tuổi, trường mầm non.

1. Introduction

Language development is one of the five core domains in the Early Childhood Education Program, serving as a foundation for children’s communication, thinking, and learning abilities. Within this domain, accurate pronunciation is a crucial component, not only determining clarity and coherence in expression but also directly influencing the acquisition of reading and writing skills in primary school. At the age of 5-6, children are entering the stage of consolidating their language abilities; however, pronunciation errors remain common, such as confusing initial consonants (l/n, s/x, r/d/gi), producing inaccurate rhymes, or misusing tones. If not addressed in a timely manner, these limitations may

negatively affect children’s confidence in communication and their academic performance later on.

In recent years, preschools have increasingly paid attention to pronunciation practice through language-related activities. Nevertheless, the time allocated to this task is still limited, and the content as well as the forms of organization are not sufficiently diverse to fully meet children’s language development needs. Current methods of pronunciation practice in many settings remain rigid and teacher-centered, which can lead to children’s reluctance or diminished interest in participation.

This situation highlights the urgent need for pedagogical measures that are both scientifically grounded and tailored to the psychological and cognitive

characteristics of older preschool children. In this context, the use of learning games in pronunciation practice emerges as a feasible and effective solution. Learning games not only create a natural communicative environment and stimulate motivation but also enable children to practice pronunciation in a relaxed, engaging, and sustainable way, thereby improving the quality of language education in preschools.

2. Literature Review and Research Methods

2.1. What are pronunciation and pronunciation practice?

Pronunciation is the process of producing speech sounds through the coordination of articulatory organs (such as the tongue, lips, teeth, and larynx) in order to form phonemes in accordance with linguistic norms (Clark & Yallop, 1995).

Pronunciation practice refers to a purposeful educational process designed to help children practice pronouncing consonants, vowels, syllables, and tones in their mother tongue (in this case, Vietnamese) so that they conform to phonological and phonetic standards. This process requires children to listen to accurate models, engage in repeated practice, receive corrective feedback, and consolidate their skills through various activities such as games, poetry recitation, storytelling, and communication.

2.2. Research Methods

This study employs several educational research methods to ensure comprehensiveness, objectivity, and practical relevance in analyzing, evaluating, and proposing pedagogical measures for improving the pronunciation of 5–6-year-old children through learning games. Specifically, the following methods were applied:

Document analysis and synthesis: Collecting and analyzing both domestic and international studies related to linguistics, psychology, early childhood education, and learning games, thereby establishing the theoretical foundation for pronunciation practice in preschool children.

Pedagogical observation: Observing language activities and learning games in selected kindergarten classes, recording the organization of activities, children's participation and responses, as well as the initial effectiveness of pronunciation practice.

Survey and interviews: Distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews with preschool teachers regarding children's pronunciation, the extent to which games are used in pronunciation practice, and challenges encountered during implementation.

Pedagogical experimentation: Implementing a number of language games in large kindergarten classes, comparing children's pronunciation performance before and after intervention in order to assess the effectiveness of the proposed measures.

Statistical and comparative analysis: Processing and analyzing data collected from surveys and experiments, and comparing results with previous studies to draw scientific conclusions and propose appropriate pedagogical recommendations.

3. Research Findings

3.1. Linguistic foundations of pronunciation in preschool children

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of spoken language, situated within the domain of phonology. In children, the development of pronunciation depends on multiple factors, including the structure of the articulatory organs, the ability to perceive and retain phonological information, the linguistic environment, and adult influence. According to Lenneberg (1967), children's language develops in accordance with biological cycles and there exists a "critical period"-between the ages of 2 and 6-during which speech and accurate pronunciation are most effectively acquired. At the age of 5-6, children are completing the development of their overall pronunciation abilities; however, they still encounter difficulties distinguishing between closely related phonemes such as /l/-/n/, /s/-/x/, /r/-/d/-/gi/, as well as tones such as *sắc*, *nặng*, *hỏi*, and *ngã* in Vietnamese.

Research by Nguyễn Ánh Tuyết (2018) emphasizes that preschool children develop language primarily through social interaction and play. Therefore, environmental stimuli such as teachers'

speech, language games, and group activities play an essential role in reinforcing accurate pronunciation.

One of the critical characteristics of pronunciation is that it is not merely a mechanical skill but also reflects phonological awareness and the brain's capacity for language processing. For this reason, pronunciation practice must be associated with processes of cognitive activity, imagery, and emotion-elements that learning games are particularly effective in fostering.

3.2. Psychological and educational foundations

According to L. S. Vygotsky (1978), children's language development is closely tied to social activity, particularly guided communication and pretend play. Vygotsky highlighted the concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), in which children can achieve linguistic skills beyond their current level with the support of adults or peers. Within this context, language games serve as a form of "scaffolding," allowing children to practice pronunciation in an environment that is both safe and challenging.

In parallel, Jean Piaget posited that children in the preoperational stage (2-7 years old) primarily learn through concrete actions and symbolic play. For 5-6-year-olds, play is not only a form of recreation but also a "bridge" for the development of symbolic thought, imagination, and language. Consequently, practicing pronunciation through games ensures both

natural engagement and cognitive development.

In Vietnam, Dinh Hong Thai (2015) also affirmed that language education for preschool children must be closely linked with play activities to enhance interest and expressive ability. His research showed that children who frequently engaged in language games demonstrated better pronunciation and a richer vocabulary compared to those taught through traditional language instruction. This indicates that games are not only supportive tools but also an effective pathway for language development, particularly in pronunciation.

Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet (2016) argued that play is “the shortest path for children to acquire language naturally.” The author emphasized that when games are organized with clear pedagogical objectives, children develop pronunciation skills, strengthen language memory, and improve communicative reflexes.

Similarly, La Thi Bac Ly (2020), in her research on language and communication skills development in preschool education, demonstrated that games such as “syllable matching,” “speak fast–speak accurately,” or “sound relay” not only help children practice pronunciation but also foster confidence, listening comprehension, and critical thinking. Children who regularly participate in language games possess a richer vocabulary and more coherent expressive ability. Her findings confirm that language games not

only help children overcome common pronunciation errors but also shape social communication skills, thereby preparing them more effectively for Grade 1.

From both international and domestic research, it can be affirmed that learning games provide a robust theoretical and practical foundation for pronunciation practice in 5–6-year-old children. International studies highlight that games create a social communicative environment suitable for children’s cognitive and symbolic thinking, while supporting the development of language skills. Domestic research similarly underscores the effectiveness of learning games in improving pronunciation, expanding vocabulary, and fostering comprehensive language competence. This demonstrates that the application of learning games has both strong theoretical grounding and practical value in preschool education.

3.3. Methodological foundations of learning through play

In early childhood education, particularly in language education, learning games are not only a form of activity organization but also an important pedagogical method. From a competency-based perspective, language learning for 5-6-year-old children must be connected with experience, interaction, and practice in meaningful contexts. Learning games simultaneously fulfill these requirements: they are appropriate to the psychological and developmental

characteristics of the age group while ensuring language training objectives.

According to Piaget (1951), play is the pathway through which children assimilate and adapt to the surrounding world, thereby developing cognition and language. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), in which children can reach higher levels of development through support from peers and adults in interactive activities, particularly pretend and language-based play. Similarly, Bruner (1983) argued that learning through play creates “cognitive scaffolding,” enabling children to gradually master knowledge and language skills.

Within this framework, learning games not only help children practice accurate pronunciation but also provide a natural communicative environment where they are motivated to use language to achieve play-related goals. Research by Nguyễn Thị Ánh Tuyết (2016) affirmed that “play is the shortest path for children to acquire language naturally.” Organizing language games such as “syllable matching,” “distinguishing initial consonants,” “sound relay,” and “speak fast–speak accurately” not only improves pronunciation skills but also fosters listening comprehension, observation, critical thinking, and confidence in communication.

Thus, methodologically, teaching through play in pronunciation practice for 5-6-year-old children is based on three key foundations:

Psychological-cognitive foundation:
Children learn most effectively through experience, action, and play.

Social-interactional foundation:
Language is best acquired in environments with cooperation, communication, and support.

Educational-pedagogical foundation:
Games transform educational objectives into engaging activities, creating learning motivation and fostering comprehensive competence development.

4. Current Situation of Pronunciation among 5-6-Year-Old Children in Preschools in Hai Phong City

4.1. Objectives and Survey Methods

Survey objectives:

To assess the current pronunciation status of older preschool children in selected preschools in Hai Phong City.

To examine the extent to which pronunciation training measures—particularly learning games—are applied in teaching practice.

To analyze teachers’ difficulties, advantages, and needs in organizing pronunciation activities.

Methods:

Teacher questionnaire survey: 50 teachers from 6 preschools in Hai Phong.

Recording and analyzing pronunciation errors of 250 children aged 5–6 through tasks involving single words, phrases, and sample sentences.

Classroom observation and in-depth interviews with 12 core teachers (two from each school) regarding their habits of organizing learning games in pronunciation practice.

Master’s degree: 16%

100% of teachers met or exceeded professional standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training.

b. Children (n = 250)

Age: 5–6 years (enrolled in large kindergarten classes)

4.2. Description of the Sample

a. Teachers (n = 50)

Gender: 100% female

Average years of teaching experience: 8.6 years

Qualifications:

Bachelor’s degree: 84%

Evenly distributed across 6 preschools (40–45 children per school)

Evaluated based on criteria: initial consonants, rhymes, tones, speech rate, and confidence in speaking.

4.3. Teachers’ Survey Results

a. Awareness of pronunciation and the role of games

Survey item	Agreement rate (%)
Accurate pronunciation is the foundation of language	100%
Supportive measures are needed for pronunciation practice for 5-6-year-olds	100%
Children in Hai Phong tend to pronounce with a regional accent	94%
Games are an effective method for pronunciation practice	96%
Frequently use language games in class	34%

Although most teachers were aware of the importance of pronunciation and games, only 34% frequently used language games. This indicates a “gap” between pedagogical awareness and classroom practice.

b. Difficulties in organizing pronunciation activities

Reported difficulty	% of teachers
Influence of regional accent (Hai Phong dialect)	76%
Lack of materials for designing pronunciation games	62%

Reported difficulty	% of teachers
Children are shy or reluctant to speak	46%
Time pressure from curriculum requirements	42%
Lack of specialized training on language development through games	68%

4.4. Children’s Survey Results and Pronunciation Errors

Children were asked to read 10 single words, 5 phrases, and 2 short sentences. Errors were analyzed in groups:

a. Common pronunciation errors

Initial consonants	<i>l</i> → <i>n</i> , <i>s</i> → <i>x</i> , <i>r</i> → <i>d</i>	52.4%
Tone	<i>m</i> → <i>má</i> , <i>c</i> → <i>cá</i>	37.2%
Rhymes or final consonants	<i>b</i> → <i>ban</i> , <i>c</i> → <i>cát</i>	28.8%
Influence of regional accent	<i>g</i> pronounced as <i>d</i> ; <i>l</i> pronounced as <i>n</i>	60.0%
Mumbled or unclear articulation	Due to lack of confidence or insufficient practice speaking loudly	42.0%

Regional characteristics identified: Hai Phong dialect strongly influenced children’s pronunciation, notably:

Assimilation of initial consonants (*l/n*, *r/d*).

The consonant “s” often pronounced as “x,” “r” as “d.”

Some children tended to elongate final sounds or use a “mixed North–South accent” influenced by media, YouTube, and unsuitable online content.

b. Self-awareness and correction ability

Skill	% of children
Able to identify errors when listening to their own voice	34%
Able to correct errors with gentle teacher prompts	48%
Unable to recognize errors and continue speaking incorrectly	18%

5. Pedagogical Measures for Improving Pronunciation of 5-6-Year-Old Children through Learning Games

5.1. Developing a categorized bank of language games based on pronunciation goals

Systematizing language games according to target groups (initial consonants, rhymes/final sounds, tones) provides teachers with clear guidance in organizing activities. For example, the game “*Who Answers?*” focuses on distinguishing easily confused initial consonants (l/n, s/x, r/d/gi), while “*The Magic Box*” helps children consolidate rhyme pronunciation, and “*Melody of Language*” emphasizes tone differentiation. Such categorization not only addresses common pronunciation errors among 5-6-year-olds but also enables teachers to select games aligned with specific lesson objectives, thereby enhancing pedagogical effectiveness.

5.2. Integrating movement and language in games

Older preschoolers still learn primarily through action. Therefore, organizing games that combine movement and pronunciation—such as “*Where Does the Wind Blow?*” or “*Run to the Sound Station*”—creates a link between physical activity and language articulation. This integration helps maintain children’s interest while supporting breath control, voice intensity, and rhythm in pronunciation. In practice, children

engaging in movement-language games tend to be more confident, enthusiastic, and better able to remember sounds compared to static practice methods.

5.3. Enhancing feedback and positive error correction during play

Teacher feedback functions as scaffolding, helping children recognize and self-correct pronunciation errors. Instead of direct criticism, teachers may use gentle strategies such as praising correct pronunciation, offering prompts when errors occur, or playing standard pronunciation models for comparison. This approach reduces anxiety, fosters self-monitoring, and encourages children to view pronunciation practice as a natural part of play, thereby increasing effectiveness.

5.4. Applying technology and digital games

In the context of modern early childhood education, technology can serve as a supportive tool for pronunciation practice. Learning applications or phonetic training software allow children to listen to models, repeat, and receive instant scoring and feedback. Integrating digital games into classroom activities (e.g., interactive whiteboards, tablets) not only adds novelty and engagement but also enables individualized practice according to each child’s ability. Moreover, digital data collection supports teachers in monitoring children’s progress over time, enhancing the scientific basis for evaluation.

Teachers remain the decisive factor in organizing learning games. However, many have not received in-depth training in pronunciation pedagogy and lack reference materials. Therefore, professional development programs and detailed instructional materials for designing and implementing language games are necessary. Furthermore, parental involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing children's pronunciation outside the classroom. Parents can support practice through simple activities such as reciting poems, storytelling, and letter-matching games. This home-school cooperation ensures consistency and sustainability in children's language development.

6. Conclusion

Pronunciation training for older preschoolers (5-6 years old) is a task of particular significance in developing language competence, enhancing communication skills, and preparing children with a solid foundation before entering primary school. Findings from this study demonstrate that integrating learning games into pronunciation practice is an effective pedagogical approach, both consistent with the psychological-cognitive characteristics of this age group and conducive to a positive and engaging learning environment. Language games not only support children in achieving more accurate pronunciation but also foster confidence in communication and simultaneously develop other essential

language skills such as listening, comprehension, and expression. By combining theoretical foundations with survey and experimental results, the study affirms both the feasibility and practical value of the proposed measures.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that embedding learning games into language education is not only a practical solution but also a necessary direction for improving the quality of early childhood education. This approach contributes to supporting children's transition to primary school with greater confidence and effectiveness.

REFERENCES

1. Nguyen Tu Anh (Ed.) (2024), Current situation of language development activities for 5-6-year-old children in preschools in Tay Ninh City, Tay Ninh Province, *Journal of educational equipment: Applied research*, Volume 2, Issue 321.
2. La Thi Bac Ly (2020), Games in language and communication development for preschool children, *Journal of Educational Science*.
3. La Thi Bac Ly (2017), Developing vocabulary for preschool children through experiential activities, *Journal of Education*, Special issue, 12/2017.
4. Đinh Hong Thai (2021), *Language development in preschool age*, Hanoi National University of Education Publishing House.

5. Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet (2018), *psychological processes*, Harvard *Preschool pedagogy*, Hanoi National University Press.
University of Education Publishing House.
6. Lenneberg, E. H. (1967), *Biological foundations of language*, Wiley.
7. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978), *Mind in society: The development of higher*
8. Piaget, J. (1951), *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*, Routledge.
9. Clark, J., & Yallop, C. (1995), *An introduction to phonetics and phonology*, Blackwell.