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Interactive classes in the excursion activities of the Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram

Abstract. The article examines the development and testing of interactive tasks for children aged 7–11 during guided tours at the Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram – a unique structural subdivision of the Russian university of traditional art crafts.

The aim of the research is to develop a format for excursion work that takes into account the age-related psychological and pedagogical characteristics of primary school students and contributes to the formation of their interest in cultural heritage, the development of research skills and the broadening of their horizons. The methodological basis of the research relies on the question and answer method, speech games, comparison of exhibits, practical assignments and multimedia demonstrations.

Observation results show that interactive elements effectively hold children's attention, contribute to the development of comparison and research skills and also increase motivation for visiting the museum.

Keywords: excursion activities, museum space, interactive session, guided tour.

In the modern educational landscape, the role of museums as platforms for children's learning and development cannot be overstated. The Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram possesses significant potential to foster schoolchildren's interest in cultural heritage, develop their research skills and broaden their horizons through interaction with unique exhibits.

The aim of the study is to develop and test an interactive component of children's cognitive activity during a tour, taking into account their age-related psychological and pedagogical characteristics.

General overview tours at the Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram take place in three halls. The hall of Russian folk toys displays items made of clay, wood, papier-mâché, fabric and other materials. Also presented are exhibits found during archaeological excavations in Kolomenskoye, the Tver Kremlin and the ancient settlement of Radonezh – typically, these are clay whistles. The exposition features Dymkovo and Filimonovo clay whistle toys, Sergiev Posad toys, Khot'kovo sewn and turned lathe toys, as well as toys decorated with Gorodets painting.

The hall of Russian and foreign toys is a unique treasure trove of world level. It features toys that belonged to the children of the Romanov dynasty: mechanical toys by Western European and Russian craftsmen, dolls, board games and mechanical music boxes with bright narrative scenes. In the museum's exposition, one can see board games and play sets from the classrooms and playrooms of the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo (Pushkin City, St. Petersburg), which were used as teaching aids for history, geography, mathematics, musical literacy, manual labor and reading.

In the hall of Soviet industrial toys, visitors are introduced to samples created at the Scientific and Experimental Institute of Toys, cooperative (artel') and factory-made toys, as well as modern domestically produced toys.

The toys on display thematically reflect events taking place in the country. For example, themes such as the development of the North, industrialization, collectivization and the formation of the Red Army in the pre-war period found their way into playsets like "Icebreaker Krasin", "Nenets chum", dolls depicting representatives of working professions, animal sets "Farm yard" and "Poultry farm", as well as playsets dedicated to the service and life of soldiers of the Red Army.

The audience of the Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram consists of visitor groups of different ages. Experience working with children aged 7–11 has revealed some patterns. If a tour lasts more than 40 minutes, children get tired, become distracted, stop listening to the guide and lose interest. A decrease in children's engagement is caused by: the narrative nature of information delivery; an insufficient number of objects in the "tour guide's portfolio"⁸⁶; lack of feedback during the tour.

The article analyzes the developed interactive forms of organizing activities for children aged 7–11 during a guided tour, aimed at fostering not only external but also internal motivation, as well as activating their research abilities.

The development of an interactive component for children's cognitive activity in the museum is based on their age-related psychological and pedagogical characteristics. A.V. Bakushinsky asserts that in childhood, the need for one's own creative expression prevails over interest in the outside world, while "there grows an especially heightened attention to the external world" [1, p. 105]. Therefore, it is so important to create conditions for the realization of children's creative manifestations, which ensures an activity-based approach when working with schoolchildren during a lesson. The methodology of the lesson is based on the following principles:

- the principle of activity: the student acquires knowledge and new information not in a ready-made form, but through the process of cognition by means of their own speech, physical and intellectual activity;
- the principle of variability: providing the opportunity to choose actions when completing tasks assigned by the guide;

⁸⁶ "The guide's portfolio" is a set of informational materials that a tour guide uses during an excursion. These can include images, video and audio recordings, replicas of exhibits, documents, diagrams, cards and toys.

- the principle of creativity: the guide focuses on the children's creative potential in developing the excursion, during which they gain experience in creative and research activities.

L.S. Vygotsky asserts that “a child of 7–8 years old is no longer a preschooler, but not yet an adolescent..., which is why they present difficulties in terms of upbringing» [4, p. 15], and at this age there is a disturbance of “mental equilibrium, instability of will and mood” [4, p. 15]. At the same time, “the child’s independence increases and their attitude towards other children changes” [4, p. 18]. B.A. Stolyarov defines the foundations of teaching younger schoolchildren in a museum as not only memorization, but also the comprehension of “acquired information and the independent search for answers to questions posed to them” [7, p. 152].

The work on transforming excursion activities in the museum is based on the concept of external and internal motivation for activity. The concept of motive is the foundation of the Activity Theory developed by A.N. Leontiev and S.L. Rubinstein. Research by P.Y. Gal’perin on attention control in children allowed for the identification of key changes in the guide’s work.

A child’s activity in the museum is conditioned by both external and internal motivation. External motivation can be triggered by a teacher (trusted by the students) announcing a lesson at the museum, the friendliness of a guide who pays attention to everyone, as well as cognitively attractive tasks that allow a child to improve their self-esteem. This process strengthens internal motivation, which is directed towards forming a need to visit museums.

The process of preparing to change the format of the guide’s work included several stages. At each stage, specialists paid attention to choosing the optimal form for conducting the tour and the subsequent implementation of the interactive component of the lesson within the museum’s exhibition space.

The daily work of a tour guide, which involves the repeated delivery of the same material, often leads to them reproducing information mechanically, without emotional involvement. As a result, the interest of excursionists in what is happening decreases, especially among children, who can listen continuously for no more than 15 minutes before fatigue sets in.

A tour itinerary was developed that includes interactive tasks. When creating this itinerary, the age-related characteristics of children aged 7–11 were taken into account, according to the periodization of developmental psychology by D.B. El’konin. The lesson employs technologies for using museum objects as visual aids. The museum-pedagogical form of work is aimed at “facilitating creative activity”, which promotes the “direct perception of exhibits” [5, p. 15].

The group spends 15 minutes in each of the three halls. The total duration of the excursion is 45 minutes, during which the children become acquainted with the hall’s exposition. Their attention and ability to perceive the exhibits at a high level are maintained through the guide’s questions, speech games and solving problem situations. The methodology is based on a system of open-ended questions and the pedagogical principle: “Try to look at the artwork through the eyes of a child; think the way they think” [3, p. 32].

The activities in the folk toy hall are related to the materials from which the items are made. When introducing the topic of archaeological excavations, the guide invites the children to examine *a paper bird, a wooden cube and a clay whistle from the “guide’s portfolio”*, name the material they are made of, and guess how long these objects could have been buried underground. The children examine the artifacts and independently conclude that the clay toy is the most durable (Fig. 1⁸⁷).

Continuing their introduction to clay toys (Fig. 2), the guide invites the children to play with Zhbannikovo clay whistles and uses a question and answer method in the form of a speech game, developing word formation skills. For example, what is the name of a toy if it was made:

- in the city of Kargopol? (*Kargopolskaya*);
- in the village of Abashevo? (*Abashevskaya*);
- in the city of Skopin? (*Skopinskaya*);
- in the town of Gorodets? (*Gorodetskaya*);
- in the village of Zhbannikovo? (*Zhbannikovskaya*).



Fig. 1. Toys made of paper, wood and clay from the “guide’s portfolio”



Fig. 2. Zhbannikovo clay whistles

When studying the Filimonovo and Dymkovo toys, it is proposed to:

- compare the materials from which the toys are sculpted: blue clay, which Filimonovo masters called “sinika” for its bluish tint in its raw state, and red clay, which was used by the master craftsmen of the Dymkovo Sloboda (a suburb) of the city of Vyatka (current name – Kirov) (Figs. 3, 4);
- select cards with images of painting elements from whistle toys.



Fig. 3. Filimonovo clay toy



Fig. 4. Dymkovo clay toy

⁸⁷ Figs. 1-6, 8-14. Photo by the author of the article.

The regional component of the interactive lesson contains assignments aimed at studying Sergiev Posad carved wooden toys. The materials for completing the tasks include a three-sided wooden log blank, “Hussar” and “Lady” dolls, and cards with images of a triangular prism, a cube, a tetrahedron and a pyramid. The guide invites the children to examine the Sergiev Posad carved toy blank (Fig. 5) and asks:

- Examine and tell me, how many faces does this log blank have?⁸⁸ The log blank resembles one of the geometric figures; think about it and name it (*triangular prism*). Then, the children compare the blank with the “Hussar” and “Lady” dolls. It is known that the Sergiev Posad soldier was the most coveted toy for boys in the 19th and early 20th centuries [2, p. 24].

The guide’s story about the Bogorodskoye toy is accompanied by its demonstration. “Dancers” on strings, “Blacksmiths” on slats and balance toys, including “Chickens pecking”, simultaneously become objects of play and investigation (Fig. 6). Speech assignments alternate with practical ones, which ensures a variety of activities for the children. While examining a collection of matryoshka dolls, the children name female names that could have been given to the wooden doll with multiple nested figurines.



Fig. 5. Wooden blanks for Sergiev Posad carved dolls



Fig. 6. Demonstration of play with Bogorodskoye toys featuring various movement mechanisms: dancers, sliders and balance toys

An introduction to the toys of the children from the Romanov dynasty in the hall of Russian and foreign toys is preceded by a guide’s story about how children in the royal family were raised differently: as gifts, the heir to the throne received dolls of soldiers and sailors, sets of toy soldiers (figurines), miniature models of weapons and a children’s furniture set depicting the coats of arms of the Russian Empire and the House of Romanovs [6, p. 47].

⁸⁸ A “churochka” is a wooden blank for a Sergiev Posad doll. It consists of a tyul’ka (a short section of a log) that has been split into four, five, or seven parts. A tyul’ka is a part of a log cut into short segments. In the Sergiev Posad carved wooden dolls of the second half of the 19th century, the base of the doll took on the shape of this wooden “churochka” blank, with the length of such a blank reaching up to 40 cm.

The guide invites the children to examine a photograph from the “guide’s portfolio” showing Prince Alexey in front of a guardhouse (Fig. 7⁸⁹) and to find the object depicted in it within the museum’s exposition (Fig. 8). If necessary, they can ask leading questions: what color is this object, does it have any patterns or decorations on it and what is it used for?



Fig. 7. Prince Alexey in front of a guardhouse



Fig. 8. Guardhouse with a military figure. Russia. Early 20th century

Comparison of the object in the photograph and the one in the museum’s exposition

The guide uses the method of comparison when introducing visitors to the cast-iron model of a steam locomotive tender – a toy of Prince Alexey – and invites the children to name the cutting-edge technologies of the modern world. Then, he shows them a toy from the beginning of the 20th century, defining it as a novelty and an embodiment of the technical progress of that time.

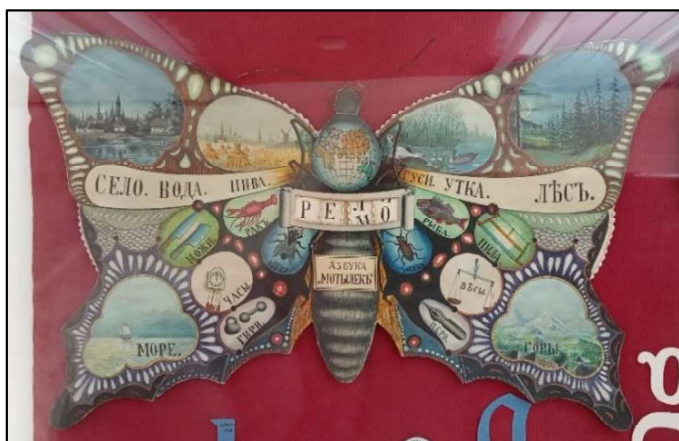


Fig. 9. Moth Alphabet Book

While examining the board games from the Alexander Palace, the guide invites the excursion participants to name the games they know. One of the board games belonging to the children of Nikolay II was intended for teaching literacy.

The Moth Alphabet Book is a collection of paper sheets shaped like wings with drawings and four-letter words (Fig. 9). The guide invites the participants to form words

using letter cards from the “guide’s portfolio”.

On name days and holidays, the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia received dolls as gifts. These dolls had German porcelain heads and

⁸⁹ Fig. 7. A collection of photographs 1907-1908. // State Archive of the Russian Federation. – URL: <https://statearchive.ru/assets/galleries/435/ron-286.jpg> (date of access: 12.05.2026).

hairstyles made of natural hair, dressed in gowns of satin, silk, poplin and velvet, with numerous accessories – hats, gloves, shoes and umbrellas. The children were rarely allowed to play with these dolls and only under adult supervision. The guide invites visitors to examine the dolls' faces, details of their clothing and accessories, and then compare them with modern toys.

While examining a porcelain doll's tea service made at the Imperial Porcelain Factory, children discuss etiquette rules, including table manners and behavior in public places.

The arrangement of the exhibits gives visitors the opportunity to compare the toys displayed in the display case with their images in paintings. The guide invites them to find the similarities and differences between rocking horses made in the 18th–19th centuries (Fig. 10).

A multimedia demonstration of French musical automata gives participants an understanding that the exhibited toys were an integral part of children's play in the past.

In the hall of Soviet industrial toys, where children are immersed in the atmosphere of the past, the film “The adventures of a Bolvashka (Peg doll). Part 1” is shown. In this film, young viewers witness their peers visiting the museum and asking questions, which helps them better understand the history and culture of that time. The role of the guide in the film is played by the museum's founder, Nikolay Dmitrievich Bartram. The children ask him: “Where do toys come from?” In response, they learn that toys are made in workshops. After watching the film, the guide applies the method of solving problem situations and asks the participants: “How do toys end up in the museum?” After listening to the children's answers, the guide begins to tell them about who “donors” are. He shares the story of a plush dog that used to be a family heirloom but now adorns the museum's exposition.

The guide uses the comparison method when introducing a toy with movement and a sound mechanism – a rocking horse manufactured at the Zagorsk Toy Factory No. 1. If you pull the yellow ring, you hear the cheerful neighing of a horse.

The guide shows the excursion participants how the sound mechanism of a modern gaming device works and also invites them to remember toys with sound presented in the Folk Toy Hall: clay whistles (Fig. 11), rattles (Fig. 12) and ‘sharkunki’ (a type of rattle).



Rocking horse. Russia. 1750s. Portrait of Prince A.I. Baryatinsky as a child with his rocking horse. 1817



Fig. 11. T.N. Zotkin. Whistle “Rider on a horse”. 1982. Penza region, Abashevo village;
L. Kalitin. Whistle “Rider on a two-headed horse”. 1988. Velsk city, Arkhangelsk region;
S.S. Klykov. Whistle “The Rider”. 1988. Velsk city, Arkhangelsk region



Fig. 12. Rattle. First half of the 20th century. Central region



Fig. 13. V.P. Khalyuta. Olympic Mishka. Based on a model by V.A. Chizhikov. 1980. All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Toys, Zagorsk city

An adult invites the children to get acquainted with toys that illustrate significant events in the country’s history. At the “Space” display case, the children answer the guide’s questions: When did the first human space flight take place? What was the name of the first cosmonaut?

The space theme in the exposition is represented by a wooden construction set “Spaceport” by artist E.I. L’vova, as well as lunar rovers and satellites. The guide tells the children the story of how the image of the first cosmonaut appeared in toys. A few years before the first human spaceflight, inspired by the launch of the first artificial Earth satellite, artist E.F. Fadeeva created the toy “Dunno the Astronaut”. The model for the spacesuit was a diving suit. The children examine the toys in the display case and discuss the similarity between Dunno’s outfit and a real astronaut’s spacesuit.

The guide tells the children about an event that took place in Moscow in 1980 – the XXII Summer Olympic Games. Following the tradition of the Olympics, a mascot was chosen: the most popular image in the country. The guide invites the children to look at cards depicting a matryoshka doll, the humpbacked pony, Petrushka and a bear cub, and to name the contenders for the title of the mascot for the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The children choose the card with the image of the bear cub. The guide explains that the artist and toy creator Vera Petrovna Khalyuta made the Olympic bear cub doll based on a drawn model (Fig. 13).

Unique toy models of specialized vehicles, which were manufactured in 1980 at the Kiev electromechanical plant named after M.F. Vatutin (Fig. 14), serve as a reminder of how technology helps people in their daily lives. The guide asks the

children to name these machines and explain what features helped them determine their purpose. The children examine the toy cars, name them and then explain which distinctive signs helped them complete the task.

Fig. 14. Toy vehicles “Special equipment”. Kiev electromechanical plant named after M.F. Vatutin. 1980. Metal, painted finish



The tour concludes with an interactive game involving toys representing fairy-tale characters and cartoon heroes. As part of the game “Name a fairy-tale character and a cartoon hero”, children and their accompanying adults study the exhibits and recall beloved characters.

The session culminates in an exchange of impressions among the excursion participants:

- Which toys do you remember?
- What surprised you in the museum?
- With what words would you recommend our museum to your friends?
- Why is it important to visit museums?

Filling the tour with interactive components allows for solving important pedagogical tasks: forming the skill of comparing exhibit items; developing visual literacy; reducing fatigue by switching attention to various objects; expanding students’ horizons within the museum space; and creating prerequisites for the development of research activities.

The presented elements of excursion activities can be used by primary school teachers to conduct educational lessons at the Art and Pedagogical toy museum named after N.D. Bartram.

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