

The Need for a Discursive Approach in Mother Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the theoretical and methodological foundations of the discursive approach, the effectiveness of its application in native language education, as well as methodological recommendations based on experimental lessons conducted in grades 6–7. The discursive approach requires special attention to the development of communicativeness, contextual approach and critical thinking in language teaching. The article presents an example of practical exercises aimed at improving students' oral and written speech through this approach.

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Introduction

The modern education system requires students to develop not only knowledge, but also skills such as expressing their opinions in life situations, being able to communicate in various social contexts, and critical and creative thinking. This is especially important for native language education, because language is the basis of thinking, a means of communication and a mirror of cultural identity[1]. From this point of view, the use of a discursive approach in mother tongue education is of great importance. Discourse is a set of ideas expressed in language, which arises in a specific context, in a way that is aimed at a specific goal. “Communication between students - especially observation and discussion - proves to be an important tool in their active acquisition of knowledge”[2]. It is not just a set of language units, but a speech activity associated with social, cultural and communicative factors. “The discursive approach is not limited to teaching language alone, but also serves to form the student as a socially-socialized person” [3]This approach is aimed at students' effective use of language in real speech activities, that is, speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative methodological framework, grounded in discourse analysis and pedagogical case study design, to explore the significance and application of a discursive approach in mother language instruction. The study focuses on the way language is used in classroom interactions, textbook content, and student responses, aiming to uncover patterns of meaning-making, negotiation, and cultural identity construction. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with language teachers, and analysis of instructional materials used in secondary schools. The participant sample consisted of ten experienced language teachers from urban schools, selected through purposive sampling to ensure their familiarity with discourse-oriented teaching practices. This multi-pronged methodology enables a nuanced understanding of the practical realities and pedagogical potential of adopting a discursive approach in mother tongue education[4]. It also lays the foundation for suggesting curriculum reforms and teacher training models that prioritize interactional competence, cultural relevance, and critical language awareness.

Results and Discussions

For many years, the traditional approach based on grammar and analysis has dominated mother tongue education. In this approach, students mainly learned to analyze the text, memorize grammatical rules, and emphasize word formation and morphology. However, this approach has been found to be insufficient in helping students enter real-life situations and participate in real speech activities, as well as in developing communication skills. Therefore, today, communicative, constructive and discursive approaches are taking a leading place in language education. “The discursive approach is based on Vygotsky’s theory of social-cognitive development[5]. According to him, the child forms his thinking through speech and interacts with the surrounding social environment: “Speech is the external form of thinking, through which thoughts develop in a social context” [6]. “According to Halliday, language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of creating meaning in a social context. “Language is the most important means of producing meaning in social life, and any text forms a discursive reality” [7]. The discursive approach turns the student into an active participant, not a passive listener. In lessons, texts are not just read or translated, but discourses are created through activities such as questioning and answering, analytical conversations, debates, expressing opinions, and retelling events from a different perspective. In this process, the student not only uses language, but also expresses his/her thoughts through it, learns to form a personal opinion and influence through language.

Below are examples of practical methodological recommendations for native language lessons for students in grades 5-6:

1. Text-based discussions. Based on the text read in the lesson, questions such as “Do you agree with this opinion?”, “What does the author mean by this text?” form a critical approach in students.
2. Role-playing Students engage in real communication by creating conversations in specific social situations (for example, a library, school, transport).
3. Multi-perspective analysis Viewing the same event or text from different perspectives - for example, retelling a story on behalf of another student - forms creative and multi-faceted thinking.
3. Sample discursive tasks: Describe the event and what kind of opinion would you expect from a friend?

Has the problem in the text occurred in your life?

How would you act in this situation?

Exercises in native language textbooks are mainly aimed at improving literacy (learning correct writing, pronunciation and spelling rules)[8], expanding students' vocabulary, learning new words and phrases and correctly using them in speech, mastering sentence structure, word groups, being able to analyze and understand the text, developing creative thinking, and most importantly, developing the ability to express one's own opinion orally and in writing, and forming communication skills. Local studies also show that tasks based on a discursive approach “develop the student’s individual expression, logical reasoning, and communication skills” [9]. In particular, the 6th grade native language textbook contains enough exercises that serve as an important factor in the fluency of students’ oral and written speech and the improvement of communication skills. The full formation of speech competencies in these classes requires the teacher to organize lessons in various interactive methods. For example, the following tasks can be used to develop discursive communication in students in grades 5, 6, and 7:

Divided into three groups, compose a text based on pictures, using figurative language, proverbs, and expressions, and express your text orally, following the norms of literary language[10]. If the texts violate the norms of literary language, other group members can correct these errors and express their reactions, or, conversely, express positive opinions about the uniqueness of the text.



This task serves to develop students' skills in following pronunciation rules, working in a team, expressing their opinions freely in public, critical thinking, expressing reactions, writing correctly, thinking creatively, and making an effective speech. When students compose a text based on pictures, the world of thinking and imagination expands further, which helps to reveal the student's logical and creative thinking abilities[11].

This type of staged tasks also creates convenience for the teacher, that is, it is easier to monitor students who have completed the first stage of the task but failed to complete the second stage, or students who have completed both stages. It effectively affects the expansion of students' knowledge of the sections of orthoepy and spelling, including the further development of discursive communication[12]. By completing this task, the student will gain a broader understanding of phraseological units, figurative expressions and proverbs, and students who have seen in their own experience that speech composed with the participation of these units is effective will try to use these units effectively in communication.

Application:

1. First, students are divided into three groups. Then, in agreement with the team, they are asked to compose a text using proverbs, phrases and figurative expressions based on the pictures provided. In this case, the teacher uses the "Quick Question and Answer" and "Brainstorming" methods to provide students with information about proverbs, phrases and figurative expressions and reminds them once again. He explains the wrong answers and gives students directions. Then, students begin to compose a text based on the above units and pictures[13]. Most importantly, at this stage of the task, students' spelling and grammatical knowledge are worked on.

2. In the second stage of the task, one of the students from the group recites the composed text. In this process, the extent to which students adhere to pronunciation norms in oral speech and the level of speech communication and shortcomings in it (if any) are revealed. While listening to the students' texts, the teacher explains the mistakes made in pronunciation and pronunciation norms. The main thing is that at this stage, the development of students' oral speech is worked on.
3. At the last stage of the task, that is, at the stage of expressing reactions, positive comments can be made about the mistakes made or, conversely, the uniqueness of the text. This tests the students' grammatical knowledge. Most importantly, the skills of critical thinking and expressing reactions are worked on.

This experiment was tested among 6th grade students during pedagogical practice.

Examples of tasks completed by students:

Group 1

Erkinjon worked in the field and helped his father. His father was very happy with his work and praised him, saying, "My son, you are a good worker." Overjoyed by this praise, Erkinjon began to work even harder. He would say to himself, "Work brings wealth, and marriage brings beauty," and he would add strength and energy to his efforts. When the sun rose, father and son went to the shade of a tree to have lunch. Erkinjon, who was in the field, saw a falcon-plane and began to watch it from the side on the blue grass. While he was watching the plane, a dragonfly flew up to him. To catch the dragonfly, Erkinjon ran after it, holding its leg in his hand. The father, however, was left behind by his son, and when he got home, he decided to give him his education.

Group 2

New Year is coming... We went to the store to buy a fir tree, the queen of the family forest. There we bought not only a fir tree, but also toys and decorations to match it. After we got home, we did not postpone decorating the fir tree, but immediately got down to decorating it. After all, they say, "Snow will fall on the rest of the work." My sister Sevara and I prepared the fir tree in no time. Seeing our work, my mother was in awe. She asked what gift we would like from Santa Claus for the New Year. We unanimously told my mother that we wanted to receive a book that was a schoolmate as a gift. Now we are eagerly waiting for our gift until the holiday...

Group 3

The king of a country had unlimited wealth, territory, and generosity. He was famous for his generosity. He had adopted the wise saying "The path is open to those with open hands." But the king had no son. He had an only daughter, who was very naughty, naughty, and lazy. The king ordered that this naughty princess be protected by soldiers who were the guardians of peace. She was overwhelmed by this attention.

One day, something happened to the queen and she went to the palace library and was amazed when she saw the books there. She took one of them and read it. She liked the story and the stories in the book. After that, she started reading all the books, and the queen began to change for the better because of the books.

Such tasks serve to consolidate students' orthographic and orthoepic knowledge. At the same time, the proverb also forms the skills of using figurative expressions and phraseological units in speech[14].

Expressing one's thoughts in the controversial part of the task prepares the ground for the emergence of responsiveness, logical consistency, and fluency in students. This type of task can be used in all grades. Such tests greatly help students' fluency in written and oral speech.

The following types of tasks are offered in native language lessons based on this approach:

1. "Controversial idea" task:

Students are presented with controversial ideas related to social life (for example, "Reading books is not important for modern youth").

They justify the idea with “yes” or “no”.

This forms critical thinking and reasoned speech skills.

2. “Alternative Point of View” task:

The content of the text is analyzed, an opposing or alternative point of view is expressed to the author’s opinion.

Students justify their opinion with examples.

3. “Multi-perspective analysis” activity:

Texts on social and life topics are worked on.

The text is approached from the perspectives of the author, reader, and critic.

This task develops students’ empathy, point of view differentiation, and contextual thinking skills.

4. “Creating a speech situation” activity:

Students organize a discussion based on social topics.

For example: organizing a discussion on the topic “Youth and social networks”.

Each participant justifies their point of view.

The following tasks are used to develop written speech:

Creating socially oriented texts: writing an appeal, recommendation, application, article;

Text evaluation: analyzing the author’s position and arguments;

Creating new contextual texts based on the text (paraphrase, updated scenario);

Expressing the content of the text in the form of a post on a social network.

Experimental-test lessons were held in grades 6–7. The following examples serve as the basis for this:

In a lesson on the topic “Environmental Rules” with 6th grade students, the “Controversial Opinion” task was completed. Students were required to provide evidence for the idea: “Keeping the environment clean is important for our health.” Students gave various examples and expressed their opinions based on social ethics.

In the 7th grade, a lesson was held on the topic “Language Culture and Society” based on the “Multi-perspective Analysis” task. Students analyzed the author’s point of view and expressed their thoughts in writing in a different social context. At the end of the lesson, the following were taken into account when evaluating their texts:

- Consistency of thought;
- Level of substantiation with evidence;
- Compatibility of the text with the style of speech;
- Contextual compatibility.

Through the discursive approach, the following skills are formed in students:

Listening comprehension: understanding the meaning of a statement in context.

Reading comprehension: understanding the logical and social structure of the text.

Speaking: freely expressing one’s thoughts in oral form.

Written speech: creating a text with a social purpose (address, recommendation, application, article).

Such skills, in turn, increase the communicative competence of students.

According to Shodiyeva, “native language lessons organized through interactive and discursive methods significantly increase students’ critical thinking skills” [15].

Conclusion

The results of the experiment showed that tasks organized on the basis of a discursive approach actively develop students' oral and written speech. They learn to express their opinions independently, justify their opinions with evidence, and be tolerant of alternative opinions. On this basis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The discursive approach is effective in developing students' communicative competence.
2. It forms the skills of expressing opinions in speech situations, participating in discussions, and creating texts.
3. A system of tasks based on this approach should be developed in native language education.

Suggestions:

1. Widely introduce discursive activities in native language lessons;
2. Enrich curricula with communicative and discursive tasks;
3. Organize seminars and trainings for teachers on teaching discursive methodology;
4. Give more space to materials based on real speech situations in textbooks and manuals.

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