

The Content of the Process of Developing Primary School Pupils' Communicative Competence in English Language Education

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Abstract

This article examines the theoretical, psychological, and pedagogical foundations of developing communicative competence in primary school pupils within English language education. Particular attention is paid to the role of the reflexive approach as a pedagogical mechanism that enables learners to plan, analyze, evaluate, and improve their own speech activity. The study analyzes the scientific views of leading psychologists and educators concerning speech activity, communication, motivation, and cognitive development. It identifies the main pedagogical conditions necessary for communicative competence development, including learner-centered instruction, authentic communicative situations, reflective activities, supportive communicative environments, and the consideration of age-related characteristics of young learners.

Keywords: Communicative competence, reflexive approach, primary school pupils, English language education, speech activity, reflective learning, communicative environment, learner autonomy, communicative skills, foreign language teaching.

Introduction

The successful development of communicative competence among primary school pupils depends on a variety of factors and is primarily determined by favorable pedagogical and psychological conditions created within the educational process. In educational psychology, several theoretical concepts have been developed on the basis of activity theory, providing a foundation for understanding the system of cognitive actions necessary for knowledge acquisition. One of the earliest concepts, proposed by Sergei Rubinstein, Yuri Samarin, and Dmitry Bogoyavlensky, is based on the associative-reflex theory of Ivan Sechenov and Ivan Pavlov.

According to this theory, individuals acquire knowledge and experience about the surrounding world through the perception and formation of various associations and connections established during cognitive and practical activities. In the process of education and upbringing, different associative links are formed, creating an integrated system that determines an individual's level of knowledge and attitude toward the environment.

A detailed classification of associative systems was developed by Yuri Samarin, who identified four stages in the formation of associative thinking:

- Local associations;
- Partially systematic or limited systematic associations;
- Intrasystemic (subject-based) associations;
- Intersystemic or interdisciplinary associations.

The development of communicative competence among primary school pupils in English language learning is closely connected with supporting learners' cognitive activity and independent learning. In their theoretical framework, Pyotr Galperin and Nina Talyzina emphasized activity rather than perception as the principal factor of learning. They argued that knowledge and skills can be effectively acquired only when they are integrated with learners' practical and mental activities.

Researchers emphasize that the effectiveness of any pedagogical influence decreases without the active participation of learners. Therefore, the process of developing communicative competence should involve pupils in meaningful communication, encourage speech activity, and support reflective thinking. Such an approach promotes not only language acquisition but also the development of communicative confidence and learner autonomy.

The development of communicative competence in primary school pupils requires the creation of several favorable pedagogical conditions, including:

- consideration of learners' age-related characteristics;
- provision of a supportive social environment and successful socialization;
- high levels of teacher professional competence;
- selection of appropriate speech and communication strategies by the teacher;
- enhancement of learners' motivation to study English;
- implementation of learner-centered and activity-based teaching methods;
- modeling authentic communicative situations in the classroom;
- provision of methodological materials that facilitate communicative competence development;
- promotion of cognitive activity and the establishment of a positive communicative environment that encourages effective interaction among learners.

Success in foreign language education largely depends on learners' psychological readiness to acquire a new language. In psychology, speech is regarded as a system of signs that serves as a means of communication, cognitive activity, and self-awareness. Therefore, effective English language teaching requires consideration of the psychological mechanisms of speech, the principles of creative thinking development, and age-related characteristics of learners. These issues have been extensively investigated in the works of Lev Vygotsky, Natan Leites, Sergei Rubinstein, and Yuri Samarin.

Researchers emphasize that the effectiveness of any pedagogical influence decreases without the active participation of learners. Therefore, in the process of developing communicative competence, it is essential to engage pupils in meaningful communication, encourage their speech activity, and support the development of reflective thinking [1].

From the perspective of the reflexive approach, the teacher's role is aimed at organizing learners' communicative experience and developing their ability to analyze and evaluate their own speech activity. Reflexive processes enable learners to understand the motives, intentions, and characteristics of communicative situations as well as the behavior of communication participants

Therefore, the reflexive approach is considered an important pedagogical mechanism for developing communicative competence among primary school pupils. Furthermore, the diversity of learners' individual characteristics and the uniqueness of pedagogical situations arising within the educational process determine the creative nature of pedagogical activity.

In pedagogy, reflexive and non-reflexive forms of managing learners' activities are distinguished. Reflexive management is based on recognizing the learner as the central figure and primary participant in the educational process. Within this framework, the teacher's task is to support learners' development, create favorable pedagogical conditions, and help them realize their full potential [2].

An analysis of psychological and pedagogical studies devoted to the age-related and psychological characteristics of primary school pupils indicates that their development is primarily associated with changes in their social status and role within educational activities. At this stage of development, pupils actively seek to explore the surrounding world, engage in communication with peers and adults, and begin to construct their own personal experiences. Consequently, particular importance should be attached to organizing communicative activities and fostering elements of reflective thinking in the process of teaching English to young learners.

A number of internal factors play an important role in creating favorable didactic conditions for the development of communicative competence through a reflexive approach. These include:

- the motivational sphere;
- the individual's internal position;
- the development of the self-concept ("I-concept") and the formation of personal identity.

Particular attention is paid to the development of the motivational sphere of the individual. In this regard, the formation of a worldview, its influence on cognitive activity, self-awareness, and the development of moral consciousness are of great importance. The dynamics of the development of the individual's internal position and self-concept are also significant factors. The "internal position" reflects a child's attitude toward his or her present and future place in society, based on personal abilities, previous experiences, needs, and aspirations. It is this internal position that determines the child's attitude toward reality, other people, and himself or herself.

The formation of personality takes place through the process of socialization, that is, through interaction and communication with other people. During communication, a child not only acquires the culture of society and develops psychological processes but also gains important psychological qualities such as self-evaluation, self-awareness, and a sense of personal identity. From this perspective, the development of the primary school pupil's self-concept is one of the important factors in the formation of communicative competence.

Another important pedagogical condition in primary education is the support of pupils' activity and relative independence. At this stage of development, pupils' thinking gradually acquires an independent, active, and creative character. Their intellectual development is characterized not only by the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities but also by the formation of individual ways of thinking. Therefore, communicative tasks organized through a reflexive approach in English language teaching contribute to the development of independent thinking, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of speech activity.

One of the important tasks of the social development of primary school pupils is the formation of effective communication skills with peers and adults, as well as adaptation to educational activities. At this stage, the central aspects of personality development are interest in learning, the need for communication, and the desire for self-expression. Therefore, organizing communicative activities and developing elements of reflective thinking in English language teaching are of particular importance.

The social and personal development of a primary school pupil is associated with understanding his or her role in educational activities, adapting to the classroom community, and developing the ability to evaluate personal behavior and speech activity. This process requires the development of self-awareness mechanisms, the formation of elements of a worldview, and the emergence of a sense of responsibility for the results of one's own activities.

At the primary education stage, pupils' attitudes toward learning are primarily determined by their interest in studying, their desire to acquire new knowledge, and their need for communication with peers. Therefore, communicative tasks, collaborative activities, and reflective exercises serve as important tools for the development of communicative competence in English language teaching. Another necessary didactic condition for developing communicative competence among primary school pupils is the teacher's ability to organize optimal mechanisms of speech activity. According to L.S. Vygotsky, speech is functionally diverse, and each function corresponds to specific linguistic means. Changes in the functions of speech lead to changes in its structure and form. In the scholar's view, "to convey a thought or message to another person, it is necessary to classify it within a certain category of phenomena, which requires generalization" [3].

Language is used within the framework of speech activity and communicative activity. Language is regarded as a system of means that ensures social communication, whereas speech is considered the method through which this communication is realized. Communication itself is an activity aimed at establishing and developing social relations. Language manifests its functions only when it becomes part of speech activity. Consequently, speech becomes a means of communication only within the framework of an active communicative process.

In analyzing the psychological mechanisms of speech, it is advisable to rely on the conceptual ideas developed by L.S. Vygotsky and representatives of his scientific school, including P.Ya. Galperin, V.V. Davydov, A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luria, and D.B. Elkonin.

The main principles of this concept are as follows:

1. Understanding consciousness as an activity with a specific structure consisting of motives, goals, methods, and means, and recognizing the process of transition from external activity to internal activity;
2. Interpreting a child's individual development as a unique process formed through personal experience;
3. Understanding psychological functions as forms of activity that enable an individual to regulate his or her own behavior and actions.

In his article "Inner Speech and the Processes of the Grammatical Formation of Speech Utterances," A.A. Leontiev distinguishes between the concepts of "inner speech," "inner articulation," and "inner programming."

According to the scholar, "inner programming" refers to the subconscious formation of a certain scheme that serves as the basis for the subsequent production of a speech utterance, that is, the

planning of speech actions . Based on the analysis of their scientific works, A.A. Leontiev interprets a speech utterance as a speech action within the structure of a holistic activity. Such an action is characterized by motivation, goal orientation, a three-component structure (planning, implementation, and comparison of results), and hierarchical organization.

Accordingly, a speech action consists of the following components :

- programming (planning);
- implementation of the program;
- comparison of the planned and the achieved results.

This interpretation of speech activity makes it possible to distinguish between its semantic component (determined by the purpose of the action) and its operational component (determined by the conditions under which the action is carried out). Like other components of speech activity, the semantic aspect of a speech action is also programmed in advance.

I.A. Zimnyaya, who investigated the psychological and psycholinguistic aspects of foreign language acquisition, proposed a model of speech production that is conceptually similar. She viewed speech as a means of formulating and expressing thought and identified three major stages in speech activity: the motivational-stimulating stage, the formative stage, and the implementation stage.

The motivational-stimulating stage serves as the starting point of the entire speech process and is based on the “internal image” of a particular activity. At this stage, a need becomes connected with the object of activity and acquires a specific direction. According to I.A. Zimnyaya, “the object, that is, thought, as an objectified need becomes the internal motive of speech activity, the factor that generates speech activity itself” .

I.A. Zimnyaya explains the dialectical relationship between thought and speech utterance as follows: a specific motive transforms into a thought, and this thought functions as the internal motive of speech activity. The researcher distinguishes between motive and communicative intention. Communicative intention determines the nature and purpose of a particular speech act. At this stage, the speaker does not yet know exactly what will be said but understands what the speech will be about. In other words, the speaker is aware of the general topic of the utterance and the form of interaction with the interlocutor, whether it is necessary to ask a question, provide information, or express an opinion. The precise content of speech is formed during the subsequent stages.

In this regard, I.A. Zimnyaya writes: “The motivational-stimulating stage, determined by external influences (either direct or indirect through internal factors), independently forms the subject matter and goals of the speech utterance”[4].

These theoretical views provide an important methodological foundation for developing primary school pupils’ communicative competence in English through a reflexive approach. During reflexive activity, learners first plan their thoughts, then express them in speech, and finally analyze and evaluate the outcomes of their speech activity. This process serves as an important psychological mechanism in the development of communicative competence.

The insufficient development of working speech memory explains many of the difficulties pupils encounter when producing independent speech utterances. The complex and still insufficiently studied mechanism of working speech memory functions as follows: syntactically related words

and phrases are retained in memory sequentially, while the general meaning of the utterance is simultaneously maintained through the specific code of inner speech. Expressing the overall meaning of a sentence step by step rather than all at once reduces the cognitive load on working memory. However, psychological tension associated with time distribution increases. Nevertheless, the process of establishing syntactic connections becomes automated through repeated practice.

According to N.M. Vening, pupils sometimes begin a sentence but shift to another idea before completing it. In such cases, the new thought displaces the overall meaning of the previous sentence retained in working memory. Therefore, observation should be used to determine the sentence length and grammatical structures that cause difficulties for learners. When necessary, it is advisable to simplify sentence structures and optimize the number of words used. Since spoken language generally contains shorter sentences than written language, greater attention should be paid not to sentence length but to grammatical accuracy and structural variety [5].

The retrieval of words from long-term memory and their integration into sentences through working memory are subordinate to a communicative purpose. If learners do not know what they want to talk about, speech activity will not occur. Conversely, if learners feel that their ideas are interesting to listeners and that they are being understood, their motivation to communicate increases, and they become more willing to elaborate on their thoughts.

The content of speech is expressed not only through lexical units and their relationships but also through intonation. Appropriate intonation is intonation that corresponds to the meaning of the utterance. It develops naturally during conversations, discussions, and exchanges of ideas. Two principal levels of intonation are generally distinguished: the logical level and the emotional level. Speech intonation should not only convey logically structured thought but also reflect the speaker's emotional state.

Creating an emotionally rich communicative environment is particularly important for developing primary school pupils' oral English proficiency. If learners are limited to repeating ready-made textbook texts, their speech loses its naturalness and emotional expressiveness. In such situations, pupils may memorize language units but have limited opportunities to use them independently in authentic communication.

For this reason, one of the most important pedagogical conditions for developing communicative competence is the modeling of real-life communicative situations within the educational process. Learners should master the material to such an extent that they can express their thoughts independently rather than relying on the words of others. To achieve this, English lessons should incorporate dialogues, role-plays, pair and group communication activities, problem-solving situations, and reflective tasks. Such activities contribute to the development of learners' speech autonomy, communicative activity, and ability to analyze their own speech performance.

To accomplish this goal, pupils should be provided with tasks that require independent thinking. Their speech should be logically structured and supported by evidence. When discussions arise during speech activity, different viewpoints emerge, creating conditions for genuine and meaningful communication. In the process of solving problems, learners use previously acquired knowledge while simultaneously acquiring new knowledge. It should be remembered that speech serves not only to develop speaking skills but also to enable individuals to express thoughts and

emotions clearly and effectively. Under such conditions, natural and expressive intonation develops spontaneously.

All forms of speech activity are closely interconnected. Therefore, speech development should not be limited to oral communication alone. Pupils' written communication skills and other language abilities must also be developed, as this will enable them to improve these competencies independently in the future.

Mastering written communication contributes to learners' development in several ways. First, it helps them acquire the ability to express their thoughts consciously and purposefully, thereby promoting awareness in speech activity. Second, it increases the complexity of communication because written communication allows the exchange of ideas even in the absence of a direct interlocutor. Third, it contributes to the further development of all speech functions, including the informational function (expressing ideas in written form), the regulatory function (letters, messages, and similar forms of communication), and the self-regulatory function (diaries, notes, and personal records), among others. This concept enabled A.A. Leontiev to apply theoretical views on the mechanisms of voluntary activity developed by scholars such as A.N. Leontiev, E. Galanter, P.K. Anokhin, N.A. Bernstein, D. Leppler, and K. Pribram to speech activity.

Based on the analysis of their scientific works, A.A. Leontiev interprets a speech utterance as a speech action within the structure of a holistic activity. Such an action is characterized by motivation, goal orientation, a three-component structure (planning, implementation, and comparison of results), and hierarchical organization. The harmonious development of these three components is particularly important in fostering primary school pupils' communicative competence in English through a reflexive approach. During reflexive activity, learners not only exchange information but also engage in cooperation, strive to understand their interlocutors, and learn to analyze and evaluate their own speech activity [6].

The communicative, interactive, and perceptive components of communication may be regarded as relatively independent processes that play a significant role in interpersonal interaction. In particular, communication as a process of information exchange can be effective only when participants use a common system of encoding and decoding information.

In the communication process, the person who transmits information is referred to as the communicator. While conveying ideas to an interlocutor, the communicator does not merely transfer information but expresses it through specific linguistic units, that is, encodes thoughts into words. In this process, language resources are selected purposefully and directed toward accomplishing a particular communicative task.

The person who receives information is known as the recipient. The recipient receives the message transmitted by the communicator and performs a decoding process in order to understand its meaning and content. In other words, the recipient must identify and correctly interpret the ideas, intentions, and meanings embedded within the message.

Thus, effective communication requires that participants use the same encoding and decoding system. Otherwise, the exchange of information becomes difficult or may fail altogether. Moreover, even when interlocutors communicate in the same language, communicative misunderstandings may arise because different meanings can be attached to the same words.

This aspect is particularly important in the process of developing primary school pupils' communicative competence in English. Learners must not only acquire linguistic units but also

understand and apply their meanings appropriately within communicative situations. Within a learning environment organized on the basis of a reflexive approach, pupils are given opportunities to analyze their own speech activity, comprehend the ideas expressed by their interlocutors, and identify the causes of communicative difficulties. This contributes not only to the development of communicative competence but also to ensuring mutual understanding in the communication process.

Communication tools refer to the means by which information is encoded, transmitted, processed, and decoded. Such tools include linguistic units, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, written texts, and other forms of information carriers. Human beings can utilize both verbal and non-verbal means of communication.

Participants in communication may be individual persons, social groups, or cultural objects created as products of human activity, such as books, works of art, and other cultural artifacts. According to the direction of information flow, communication can be classified into one-way and two-way communication. Examples of one-way communication include reading a book, watching a film, listening to a lecture, or listening to a monologue. Two-way communication, on the other hand, includes dialogues, discussions, and exchanges of ideas. In such forms of communication, participants occupy relatively equal positions and share their thoughts, opinions, and emotions with one another.

Creating a positive communicative environment is of particular pedagogical importance in developing primary school pupils' communicative competence in English. Experience demonstrates that learners tend to express their ideas more freely when working in small groups or pairs. Conversely, speaking in front of the entire class may create psychological barriers for some pupils and reduce their speech activity. Therefore, in English lessons organized on the basis of a reflexive approach, it is an important methodological requirement to create favorable communicative situations that take into account learners' age-related and psychological characteristics.

Such an approach contributes to the development of learners' abilities to understand, evaluate, and improve their own speech activity, thereby facilitating the effective formation of communicative competence. At present, communicatively oriented language teaching has become an important pedagogical necessity in general secondary education. This approach aims to develop learners' ability to communicate freely in both oral and written forms, master speech behavior appropriate to specific social contexts, and use language resources effectively in a variety of everyday situations.

The language teaching process encompasses a number of interrelated factors. These include the needs of society and learners, educational conditions, instructional goals and content, teaching methods and resources, as well as the activities of the main participants in education—the teacher and the learner. Effective educational outcomes can be achieved only when all of these components are optimally integrated.

In addition to the structural components of communication, the environment in which communication takes place is of considerable importance. When other people are present during the communication process, such a situation may be described as a social communicative setting. The communicative environment directly influences participants' speech activity, self-confidence, willingness to express their opinions, and overall level of engagement.

Creating a positive communicative environment is of particular pedagogical significance in the development of primary school pupils' communicative competence in English. Experience shows that learners tend to express their ideas more freely when working in pairs or small groups. Conversely, speaking in front of the entire class may create psychological barriers for some pupils and reduce their speech activity. Therefore, in English lessons organized on the basis of a reflexive approach, creating favorable communicative situations that take into account learners' age-related and psychological characteristics is an important methodological requirement.

Such an approach promotes the development of learners' abilities to understand, evaluate, and improve their own speech activity, thereby contributing to the effective formation of communicative competence. At present, communicatively oriented language teaching is regarded as an important pedagogical necessity in general education schools. This approach aims to develop learners' ability to communicate freely in both oral and written forms, acquire speech behavior appropriate to specific social contexts, and use language resources effectively in various everyday situations.

Conclusion

When designing the content of communicatively oriented instruction, it is essential to study the mechanisms of speech activity thoroughly and relate them to learners' main types of activity as well as to typical communicative situations that stimulate speech production.

Educational motivation is an important pedagogical factor in the successful development of communicative competence. In addition, the content of instructional materials, the social and practical significance of the target language, and learners' individual needs for language acquisition play a significant role in this process. The process of language teaching encompasses a number of interrelated factors. These include the needs of society and learners, educational conditions, instructional goals and content, teaching methods and resources, as well as the activities of the main participants in education—the teacher and the learner. Effective educational outcomes can be achieved only when all of these components are optimally integrated.

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