HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

DEVELOPING PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' MOTHER TONGUE COMPETENCE THROUGH MODERN PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23877283

Abstract. This article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of developing primary school pupils' mother tongue competence through modern pedagogical approaches. Mother tongue education plays a fundamental role in the intellectual, communicative, cognitive and social development of young learners. At the primary education level, language learning is not limited to acquiring grammatical rules, vocabulary and spelling skills. It also involves developing pupils' ability to express their thoughts clearly, understand different types of texts, communicate effectively, interpret information and use language appropriately in various situations. The article analyses the importance of communicative, competency-based, interactive and learner-centred approaches in mother tongue teaching. Particular attention is paid to the development of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills as interconnected components of language competence. Furthermore, the study explores the educational potential of digital technologies, problem-based learning, collaborative activities and creative tasks in improving the effectiveness of mother tongue lessons.

Keywords: primary education, mother tongue, language competence, communicative competence, speech development, reading literacy, writing skills, interactive methods, digital technologies, pedagogical approaches.

Introduction Education in the modern world is undergoing significant changes due to the development of information technologies, global communication and the increasing importance of knowledge-based societies. These changes require educational systems to reconsider traditional teaching methods and introduce approaches that develop learners' practical knowledge, critical thinking and communication skills. Mother tongue education occupies a central position in primary education because language is the principal means through which children understand the world, acquire knowledge and communicate with others. The primary school period is particularly important for establishing the foundations of linguistic development, reading literacy, written communication and independent thinking.

The mother tongue is not simply an academic subject. It is an essential instrument for intellectual development, cultural identity and social interaction. Through language, children learn to formulate ideas, express emotions, understand information, participate in discussions and develop relationships with other people. In primary education, the teaching of the mother tongue should therefore focus on the comprehensive development of pupils' language abilities. Traditional approaches that concentrate mainly on memorising grammatical rules and completing mechanical exercises may not sufficiently develop pupils' practical communication skills. Consequently, contemporary pedagogical practice requires the integration of communicative, interactive, competency-based and learner-centred approaches. The relevance of this issue is also associated with international educational assessments,

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including PIRLS and PISA, which emphasise reading comprehension, interpretation of information, critical analysis and the practical application of knowledge.

The purpose of this article is to examine modern pedagogical approaches to developing primary school pupils' mother tongue competence and identify methodological opportunities for improving the effectiveness of mother tongue education. The objectives are to analyse the theoretical foundations of mother tongue education; identify the main components of language competence; examine modern pedagogical approaches; determine the role of interactive and digital technologies; and propose practical methodological activities.

The methodological basis of this article consists of theoretical analysis, comparison, generalisation and interpretation of scientific and pedagogical literature related to mother tongue education and language competence development. The research methodology is based on several complementary approaches. The competency-based approach focuses on developing pupils' ability to apply acquired linguistic knowledge in practical communication situations. The communicative approach considers language primarily as a means of interaction and encourages learners to ask questions, express opinions and engage in discussions. The learner-centred approach recognises pupils' individual abilities, interests and learning experiences. The activity-based approach develops language knowledge through reading, storytelling, writing, role-playing and text analysis. The integrative approach connects mother tongue education with literature, mathematics, science and environmental studies.

The combination of these approaches provides methodological opportunities for improving the organisation of mother tongue lessons and developing pupils' comprehensive language competence.

Mother tongue competence is a multidimensional educational outcome that includes several interconnected components. In primary education, these components should be developed systematically and consistently.

Listening competence refers to the ability to understand spoken language, identify essential information, interpret oral messages and respond appropriately. Primary school pupils develop listening skills through listening to stories, following instructions, participating in conversations and discussing information presented orally. After listening to a short story, for example, pupils may identify its main characters, explain the sequence of events and express opinions about the characters' behaviour. Such activities improve auditory attention, comprehension and information processing.

Speaking competence involves the ability to express thoughts clearly, construct meaningful sentences, participate in conversations and communicate effectively. The development of speaking skills requires regular practice in different communicative situations. Useful activities include describing pictures, retelling stories, role-playing, discussing everyday situations, expressing personal opinions and giving short oral presentations. The activity "Describe and Explain" encourages pupils to observe an illustration and describe the objects, people and events represented in it. Teachers can gradually introduce more complex questions that require pupils to explain reasons and express attitudes.

Reading competence involves the ability to read texts accurately, understand their meaning, identify important information and interpret the author's ideas. Reading development should go beyond reading words and sentences. Pupils should learn to analyse texts, identify main ideas, distinguish factual information from opinions and make simple conclusions. An effective method includes three stages: before reading, pupils predict the content from the title or illustrations; during

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reading, they identify important information and unfamiliar words; after reading, they answer comprehension questions, discuss the text and express opinions.

Writing competence refers to the ability to express ideas in written form using appropriate vocabulary, grammatical structures, punctuation and spelling conventions. At the primary level, writing activities should progress from simple sentences to connected paragraphs and short compositions. Activities may include completing unfinished sentences, describing familiar objects, creating short stories, composing letters and messages, summarising texts and writing personal reflections. The relationship between oral and written language development is important: discussions and oral expression provide valuable preparation for written communication.

The effectiveness of mother tongue education depends significantly on the selection and appropriate application of teaching methods.

1. Interactive teaching methods. Interactive teaching methods encourage pupils to participate actively in the educational process. They create opportunities for communication, cooperation, independent thinking and creative problem-solving. During brainstorming, for example, pupils express ideas related to a topic without immediately evaluating their correctness. When studying "My Native Language", the teacher may ask: "Why is the mother tongue important in our everyday lives?" Pupils share opinions and discuss the importance of language in communication, education and cultural identity.

The Venn diagram helps pupils compare two texts, characters, objects or linguistic concepts and identify similarities and differences. The "Think–Pair–Share" method asks pupils to think independently, discuss ideas with a partner and then share conclusions with the class. These methods create a supportive learning environment and improve communicative activity.

2. Problem-based learning. Problem-based learning is an approach in which pupils acquire knowledge and develop skills through analysing and solving meaningful problems. In mother tongue lessons, teachers can present situations that require pupils to use linguistic knowledge in practical contexts. For example, pupils may receive a short message containing spelling and punctuation mistakes. They identify the errors, explain why they are incorrect and rewrite the message. This activity develops grammatical knowledge, analytical thinking and the ability to apply language rules.

3. Game-based learning. Educational games are particularly effective in primary education because they correspond to the developmental characteristics and learning interests of young children. "Find the Synonym" asks pupils to identify words with similar meanings. "Build a Sentence" requires pupils to arrange separate words into grammatically correct sentences. In "Continue the Story", each pupil adds one or two sentences to a developing story. "Word Detective" asks pupils to find particular parts of speech or spelling patterns in a text. Games should have clearly defined educational objectives; their purpose is not merely entertainment but the development of specific language skills.

The digital transformation of education creates new opportunities for improving language teaching and learning. Digital technologies provide access to interactive educational resources, electronic dictionaries, audio materials, digital books and multimedia learning environments. In primary school mother tongue lessons, digital resources can present illustrated texts and stories, develop listening comprehension through audio recordings, organise interactive spelling exercises, support digital storytelling, conduct vocabulary games and provide immediate feedback. Audio recordings can be particularly useful for developing listening competence and pronunciation. Pupils can listen to a text several times, identify its main idea and answer comprehension questions. Artificial

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intelligence tools may also support the preparation of differentiated exercises, generate age-appropriate reading materials and provide additional vocabulary examples under appropriate teacher supervision. However, the use of digital technologies should be pedagogically justified. They should complement direct communication, reading printed texts, handwriting and face-to-face interaction rather than replace these essential learning experiences. The teacher remains responsible for selecting educational content, checking its accuracy and ensuring that digital resources correspond to pupils' age and learning objectives.

To ensure effective development of pupils' language competence, mother tongue lessons should include systematic activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing. The following table presents examples of classroom activities and their expected outcomes.

Educational activity	**Method**	**Expected learning outcome**
Listening to a story	Audio-based learning	Understanding oral information
Describing pictures	Visual communication	Developing speaking skills
Reading a short text	Guided reading	Improving reading comprehension
Analysing sentences	Grammar exercises	Developing linguistic knowledge
Creating a story	Creative writing	Developing written expression
Group discussion	Collaborative learning	Improving communication
Interactive word games	Game-based learning	Expanding vocabulary
Working with digital texts	Digital learning	Developing information literacy

Topic: Developing pupils' speech through working with a text. Objective: to improve pupils' ability to understand a text, identify its main idea, use new vocabulary and express personal opinions. Teaching materials: a short literary text, illustrations, vocabulary cards and a multimedia presentation.

Lesson procedure: (1) Motivation: the teacher presents an illustration and asks pupils to predict what the text might be about. (2) Reading: pupils read individually or listen to the teacher. (3) Comprehension: the teacher asks questions about the main characters, events and central idea. (4) Vocabulary development: pupils identify unfamiliar words, explain their meanings and use them in new sentences. (5) Creative activity: pupils work in small groups and create an alternative ending. (6) Reflection: each pupil explains what they have learned and identifies the most interesting part of the activity.

This lesson structure integrates several language competencies and creates opportunities for meaningful communication.

The analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches demonstrates that developing mother tongue competence in primary education requires a comprehensive and systematic educational process. First, language learning should be organised around practical communication. Pupils need opportunities to use language in meaningful situations rather than simply memorising rules. Second, listening, speaking, reading and writing should be integrated because these skills are interconnected and mutually reinforce one another. Third, individual differences among pupils should be considered. Some learners may demonstrate stronger oral communication skills, while others may require additional support in reading or writing. Differentiated tasks can help address these differences. Fourth, the educational environment should encourage pupils to express ideas without fear of making mistakes.

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Constructive feedback, encouragement and collaborative activities contribute to confidence and motivation. Finally, modern educational technologies should be integrated thoughtfully. Their effectiveness depends not on the number of digital tools used but on their contribution to clearly defined educational objectives. Continuity between classroom learning and everyday language experiences is also important. Reading at home, family conversations, storytelling and cultural activities can strengthen the results achieved at school.

Mother tongue education is one of the fundamental components of primary education because it provides the basis for pupils' intellectual, communicative and social development. The development of primary school pupils' mother tongue competence should involve more than the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical rules. It should focus on the practical use of language, conscious reading, meaningful writing, listening comprehension, speaking abilities and independent thinking. Communicative, competency-based, learner-centred, interactive and activity-based approaches create favourable conditions for improving the quality of mother tongue teaching. The integration of educational games, problem-based learning, collaborative activities and digital resources can increase pupils' motivation and provide additional opportunities for developing language skills. The following recommendations are proposed: (1) organise mother tongue lessons around practical communicative situations; (2) integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing within each learning unit; (3) introduce interactive methods that encourage independent thinking and cooperation; (4) use age-appropriate literary texts and creative assignments to enrich vocabulary; (5) apply differentiated activities according to individual learning needs; (6) integrate digital educational resources while maintaining direct communication and traditional literacy practices; and (7) assess not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language in practical situations. In conclusion, the systematic application of modern pedagogical approaches can contribute to the development of linguistically competent, independent and creative primary school pupils. Improving mother tongue education is therefore an essential condition for preparing young learners for successful academic achievement and active participation in society.

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ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
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