



DEVELOPING THE DISCURSIVE COMPETENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS BASED ON AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

Rustamova Dilobar Abdimalik qizi

Specialized School N-6

English Language Teacher

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ABSTRACT

In modern education, discursive competence plays a crucial role in developing students' ability to effectively express ideas, engage in meaningful discussions, and comprehend complex texts. Discourse competence is the ability of an individual to express their thoughts clearly, logically, and persuasively in the process of communication. For high school students, these skills are crucial not only in the educational process but also in their future professional and social lives. This article explores strategies for enhancing high school students' discursive competencies through an individualized approach. By integrating personalized learning techniques, differentiated instruction, and communicative activities, students can develop their linguistic and cognitive abilities. The study also examines the impact of tailored teaching methods on students' analytical thinking and argumentative skills.

Introduction

In the modern education system, the principle of an individual approach plays a crucial role. Specifically, applying an individualized approach enhances the effectiveness of developing high school students' discursive competencies. Discursive competence refers to students' ability to express their thoughts logically, coherently, and persuasively in both oral and written communication. This article analyzes the key features of developing high school students' discursive competencies based on an individual approach. Discursive competence, the ability to construct and interpret discourse in various communicative situations, is essential for students' academic and social success. Traditional one-size-fits-all methods often fail to address individual learners' needs. An individual approach, based on personalized instruction, scaffolding, and differentiated learning, allows students to develop discourse skills at their own pace and cognitive level.

Several scholars have discussed the benefits of an individual approach in education and its role in developing discursive competence. An individualized approach to education, as suggested by Vygotsky¹[10], emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and differentiated instruction in language development. His sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of

¹ Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.



individualized scaffolding in language learning. He believed that tailored instruction helps students develop higher-order thinking and discourse skills.

Vygotsky²[10] emphasized the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that learners develop best when they receive individualized support (scaffolding) from teachers or peers. In discourse competence, this means tailoring instruction to each student's linguistic level to foster gradual, meaningful development.

According to his approach Scaffolding involves providing temporary support that is gradually removed as students become more competent. In this process teachers guide students through structured discourse activities before allowing them to work independently. For instance, firstly provide sentence starters for argumentative essays. Later, encourage students to structure their writing independently. Another approach highlighted by Jerome Bruner³, In his constructivist learning theory, learning is more effective when it is adapted to the learner's cognitive development and prior knowledge. This aligns with individualized discourse teaching methods. Bruner argued that students actively construct knowledge and that instruction should be adapted to their cognitive development. This supports personalized approaches to discourse learning, where students engage in discussions and text analysis that match their cognitive abilities.

Engaging students in real-life, meaningful discourse tasks enhances their ability to construct coherent communication. David Nunan⁴ [5] considered a key figure in language education. He supported learner-centered approaches and stated that personalized instruction enhances students' ability to use language in real-world discourse situations. Nunan promoted task-based learning and emphasized individualized instruction in language learning. He suggested that discourse competence develops best when students work on authentic communicative tasks that are personally meaningful. It can be observed in the form of authentic tasks such as debates, storytelling, and role-plays.

For Example: Students analyze and rewrite a controversial news article using different tones and perspectives.

Van Dijk⁵ [11] is a leading scholar in discourse analysis, stressed that discourse competence involves coherence, adaptability, and critical thinking. Individualized instruction supports this by allowing students to develop discourse strategies at their own pace, focusing on areas where they need improvement. When we analyze these three components Coherence - refers to the ability to structure speech or writing logically and cohesively so that ideas are connected and easy to follow. For instance, Personalized Writing Tasks: Students who struggle with organization can receive scaffolded assignments where they first work on structuring paragraphs before moving to full essays.

Secondly, Outlining and Mind Mapping in which student with difficulty maintaining coherence in essays can be encouraged to use graphic organizers tailored to their thinking style. Here is a real example:

² Vygotsky, L.S. (1929). "The Problem of the Cultural Development of the Child." *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 36(3), 415-434.

³ Bruner, J. S. (1960). *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁴ David Nunan "Second Language Teaching & Learning" (1999) – Covers theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching.

⁵ Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse as Structure and Process*. SAGE Publications.



A teacher assigns a persuasive essay but notices that one student's arguments are scattered. The teacher provides individual feedback and structured exercises, guiding the student to create an outline with clear topic sentences before writing. Over time, the student improves coherence in their writing.

Individualized Instruction in an adaptability process is just to modify language, tone, and style based on the audience, purpose, and communicative situation.

For example: A student writes an email to a professor but uses informal phrases like "Hey, what's up?" instead of "Dear Professor, I hope you are doing well." The teacher provides personalized exercises focusing on formal email writing and gives feedback on how to adapt language for academic settings.

M.A.K. Halliday⁶ [3]– In his Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, Halliday emphasized that discourse competence is shaped by context, purpose, and audience. Personalized learning ensures students develop discourse skills relevant to their specific needs and interests. Halliday's SFL theory suggests that language learning should focus on meaning and function rather than just structure. Individualized approaches help students develop discourse competence by allowing them to explore language in real-life contexts relevant to their personal and academic needs.

Halliday identified three key functions of language that shape discursive competence:

1. **Ideational function:** Expressing ideas and experiences (e.g., explaining a concept in an essay).
2. **Interpersonal function:** Managing relationships and social roles (e.g., using politeness strategies in speech).
3. **Textual function:** Organizing discourse logically and coherently (e.g., structuring a paragraph effectively). Halliday supported progressive learning, where students build on their prior knowledge. Teachers should scaffold discourse learning by gradually increasing task complexity. As an example: Start with sentence construction, move to paragraph writing, then develop full arguments in essays.

Peter Skehan⁷[6], a leading researcher in second language acquisition, primarily focuses on cognitive processes in language learning. His work on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Individual Differences in Language Learning provides insights into how an individual approach can enhance discursive competence.

Skehan's Key Views on Individual Approaches in Discursive Competence that students have different cognitive abilities, such as memory capacity, processing speed, and attention control. He highlighted an individualized approach should adapt to each learner's cognitive strengths and weaknesses.⁸

For example: Some students may need more structured tasks to develop coherence, while others may excel in fluency-focused tasks.

⁶ Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Edward Arnold.

⁷ Robinson, P., & Skehan, P. (2008). *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning*.

⁸ Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford University Press.



Skehan⁹[8] argues that learners must balance fluency (flow of speech), accuracy (grammatical correctness), and complexity (sophistication of language use). Individualized teaching should prioritize one of these aspects based on the learner's needs.

For example: A student struggling with fluency may benefit from interactive speaking tasks, while a student lacking complexity may need analytical writing exercises.

Skehan believes that tasks should be personalized based on learners' cognitive profiles and prior knowledge. He advocates for graded tasks, where students progressively develop their discourse competence.

For example: A teacher can design simpler debate activities for beginners and more analytical discussions for advanced learners.

Conclusion

Developing high school students' discursive competence through an individualized approach enhances their ability to communicate effectively in various contexts. The insights from scholars such as Vygotsky, Bruner, Van Dijk, Halliday, Nunan, and Skehan demonstrate that personalizing instruction leads to greater coherence, adaptability, and critical thinking in discourse.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding highlight the importance of providing structured yet flexible support that gradually fosters independent discourse skills. Bruner's constructivist learning theory emphasizes active engagement in meaningful communication, while Nunan and Skehan advocate for task-based learning that aligns with students' cognitive abilities. Van Dijk's focus on coherence, adaptability, and critical thinking reinforces the need for personalized discourse strategies, enabling students to refine their communication skills progressively.

Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory underlines the role of context, purpose, and audience in shaping discursive competence. His emphasis on the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of language suggests that instruction should be tailored to students' academic and social needs. Similarly, Skehan's work on task-based learning and individual differences highlights the necessity of adapting tasks to learners' cognitive strengths, ensuring a balanced development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

By integrating personalized learning techniques, scaffolding, and communicative activities, students can strengthen their discourse competence in a way that aligns with their unique learning styles. The use of differentiated instruction, targeted feedback, and real-life discourse tasks ensures that students develop the ability to express their ideas clearly, logically, and persuasively.

Ultimately, an individualized approach to discourse competence not only improves students' academic success but also prepares them for effective communication in their future professional and social lives. Education systems should prioritize personalized discourse instruction, allowing students to build confidence, engage critically with texts, and adapt their language use to different communicative situations.

⁹ Skehan, P. (2003). Task-Based Instruction. *Language Teaching*, 36(1), 1-14.



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