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Modern Information and Communication Technologies in the Development of Learners' Discourse Skills

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Abstract

This paper addresses the issue of students' discursive skills development via new modern information and communication technologies (ICT). The authors discuss the notion of discourse, define the structure of the discourse competence, and develop a nomenclature of discursive skills, which can be developed by the use of modern information and communication technologies.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Importance

One of the dominant issues in the field of modern language education is the optimization of the learning process. In this regard, it is clear that the more methodical solutions offered, the more productive the search for new ways of foreign language learning and teaching.

Researchers have noted, firstly, a strengthening of the communicative orientation of the educational process, which means more than knowledge of a foreign language - phonetics, grammar and vocabulary, but also the ability to use the language in real communication situations in accordance with its rules and, secondly, the spread of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) in pedagogy, contributing to learning intensification and

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individualization. As a consequence, there is a need to prepare students for orientation in a multilingual community, for “dialogical cooperation”, for expression and achievement of communicative goals of partners in communication, with the help of modern ICT.

1.2. Definitions

“Discourse” and “discourse competence” are key concepts in this paper. However, scholars have not reached an agreement on the definitions of these terms. In the middle of the twentieth century discourse was defined as a sequence of related sentences or speech acts, and, in this interpretation, the notion of discourse was considered close to the notion of “text”. But by the end of the twentieth century the term “discourse” was considered as a complex of communicative phenomenon as a system of knowledge, which, in addition to text, includes some extralinguistic factors necessary for a full understanding of the text: knowledge of the world, attitudes, opinions, goals, etc. Thus, discourse is not viewed solely from the standpoint of syntax and semantics.

There are so many different definitions of discourse in the modern literature in which researchers tried to reflect communicative orientation and structure of the concept. For example, Arutyunova (Arutyunova, 1990) defines discourse as a coherent text, coupled with extra-linguistic, socio-cultural, psychological and other pragmatic aspects of the language. In his definitions of discourse, Karasik (Karasik, 2000, 2004) notes that this is a text immersed in the situation of communication, in which “many dimensions” are permissible, as well as a large number of complementary approaches to the study, including pragmalinguistic, structural-linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and linguocultural approaches. Definition of the term “discourse competence” is also very important for didactic purposes. The special significance of discourse competence is stated in works by Almazova (Almazova, 2003), who brings this competence to the fore, as she believes that its formation in the students’ acting is the primary goal of foreign language learning. The main purpose of education, according to Almazova, is to prepare highly qualified specialists in various spheres, who are capable of full international cooperation; it is assumed that they have the skills to apply adequate strategies of verbal behavior in the course of professional intercultural communication, taking into account, the certain forms of interaction between people in a communicative situation.

According to Bastrikova (Bastrikova, 2004) discursive competence is the ability to generate and interpret different types of discourse, which requires the ability to use and interpret language constructs (words) to create text, as well as skills of organization of a coherent text. In her works, Bastrikova focuses on the ability to achieve compliance with the text of thought, which must be able to effectively use the cords - conjunctions, pronouns, adverbs, and other grammatical means. A similar definition is given by Kolesnikova & Dolgina (Kolesnikova & Dolgina, 2008), stressing the importance of knowledge and skills in the process of creating texts of various functional styles and, consequently, the ability to choose linguistic tools with the type of utterances. In addition to knowledge of the peculiarities inherent in certain types of discourse, Shchukin (Shchukin, 2004) highlights the skill of using a variety of strategies to create and interpret texts.

However, the most complete, in our opinion, is the definition of discursive competence proposed by Popova (Popova, 2011), who understands it as the ability to create a coherent verbal expression, taking into account the thematic organization, cohesion, coherence, effectiveness and rhetorical logic within the real situation of communication and adequate functional style.

Analysis of these definitions shows that most linguists define discourse as other than a result of communication, and as a proper verbal behavior, the process of actualization of the author's speech intentions and the interpretation of these intentions by the recipient/recipients in a particular communicative situation, and the result of this process is the text. Therefore it can be argued that every discourse is a text, but not every text can be a discourse.

Since the discourse is seen as a process and is determined from two perspectives - the author’s and the recipient’s - one should not talk about writing, but discourse-oriented writing, not about speech, but discourse-oriented speaking, not about listening but discourse-oriented listening and not about reading, but discourse-oriented reading.

Thus, from the productive side of communication (the author’s position), discourse is understood as the process of encoding information in accordance with lexical, grammatical and syntactical rules, taking into account the stylistic, genre, social, cultural, psychological and emotional factors, with the use of cohesion and coherence in order to achieve a communicative goal - to convey information to the recipient. From the receptive side of communication (the recipient’s position), discourse is the process of decoding information in accordance with lexical, grammatical

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