

MODERN PROBLEMS OF LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THEIR SOLUTIONS (BASED ON THE AZERBAIJANI EXPERIENCE)

Ruslan Mammad oglu Abdullayev

Associate Professor, Department of Humanities,
Azerbaijan State University of Oil and Industry PhD in Philology
E-mail: dr.ruslanabdulla@gmail.com

Abstract:

The article analyzes the current state of literacy instruction in primary schools, the pedagogical and psychological problems encountered in this process, and possible ways to overcome them. The author emphasizes the difficulties arising in mastering sound-letter correlations and highlights the importance of an individual approach in developing students' reading and writing skills, as well as the effective use of digital resources. Modern methods applied in the Azerbaijani education system—such as the phonetic-analytic-synthetic method, game-based learning technologies, and interactive teaching formats—are presented as illustrative examples of effective literacy instruction.

Keywords: literacy instruction, primary education, reading skills, writing skills, methodology, phonetic-analytic-synthetic method, individual approach.

Современные проблемы обучения грамоте в начальной школе и пути их решения (на основе азербайджанского опыта)

Аннотация:

В статье анализируется современное состояние обучения грамоте в начальных классах, педагогические и психологические проблемы, возникающие в этом процессе, а также возможные пути их преодоления. Автор акцентирует внимание на трудностях, возникающих при усвоении звуко-буквенных соответствий, и подчёркивает важность индивидуального подхода в развитии у учащихся навыков чтения и письма, а также эффективного использования цифровых ресурсов. Современные методы, применяемые в системе образования Азербайджана — такие как фонетико-аналитико-синтетический метод, игровые технологии и интерактивные формы обучения — представлены в качестве примеров эффективного обучения грамоте.

Ключевые слова: обучение грамоте, начальное образование, навыки чтения, навыки письма, методика, фонетико-аналитико-синтетический метод, индивидуальный подход.

Introduction

Literacy instruction constitutes the foundation of primary education and represents a crucial stage that influences all subsequent learning activities of the student. At this stage, the formation of reading and writing skills is not merely a

technical process but also a complex psychological and pedagogical phenomenon that lays the groundwork for thinking, comprehension, and speech development.

In recent years, the content and methodology of literacy instruction in Azerbaijani primary schools have been renewed, with integrative and communicative approaches implemented within the framework of the national curriculum. However, in the modern educational environment, several emerging factors—such as the decline in reading habits, attention disorders, dependence on technology, and the passive involvement of parents in the learning process—have created new challenges for effective literacy instruction.

1. Modern Problems of Literacy Instruction

A review of the history of literacy instruction shows that three main methods have traditionally been used in the teaching of reading and writing:

1. **Analytical method**
2. **Synthetic method**
3. **Analytical-synthetic method**

The **analytical method** is based on the analysis from the whole to the part. In this approach, the teaching process begins with speech, from which sentences are identified, then words are separated from sentences, syllables from words, and finally sounds (letters) from syllables. Thus, the analysis proceeds from the general to the particular.

In contrast, the **synthetic method** starts with the teaching of letters and their corresponding sounds. After mastering these, learners move on to reading syllables without first separating them into individual sounds, and finally, to reading complete words. The process moves from the particular to the general, from the parts to the whole. Each letter is associated with its sound, and the number of sounds corresponds to the number of letters.

The **analytical-synthetic method** is considered the most appropriate approach for literacy instruction. In primary school practice, two variations of this method are applied during the literacy teaching stage:

1. **Sound analysis-composition method**
2. **Sound-syllable analysis-composition method** (1, p. 176–177)

In the modern primary education system, literacy instruction is accompanied by a range of **objective and subjective difficulties**, which continue to affect the efficiency of reading and writing skill development.

Weakness of Phonemic Awareness

A significant number of students are unable to correctly distinguish between sounds, which leads to frequent spelling errors. The foundation of speech development work lies in the proper cultivation of sound culture. From the very first stages of literacy instruction, the teacher must pay careful attention to the development of students' phonemic hearing, ensuring that they can accurately perceive all sounds of their native language and differentiate between phonetically similar sounds and words.

Beginning in early childhood education, it is essential to cultivate the sound culture of speech by teaching children to pronounce words clearly, articulate thick (velarized) and thin (palatalized) sounds correctly, and use stress appropriately

within words. To foster the sound culture of speech, teachers should develop the articulatory apparatus responsible for speech production, teach the correct pronunciation of vowels and consonants, and organize playful activities that imitate the sounds of animals and objects. In addition, storytelling, reading aloud, and holding musical or rhythmic group games several times a week are highly beneficial.

During these activities, children should regularly listen to radio and television programs as well as audio recordings featuring precise and clear speech. The concept of “**sound culture of speech**” encompasses the set of pronunciation qualities that characterize a child’s verbal expression—such as articulation of speech sounds, diction, intonation, stress, tempo, pauses, facial expression, and gesture.

By the time a child enters school, they should have developed basic phonemic awareness: the ability to articulate all sounds of the native language distinctly, to identify and determine the number and sequence of sounds and letters within a word, and to distinguish words that differ by a single phoneme.

Work in this area is carried out in two main directions:

1. Development of the articulatory apparatus and the phonetic aspects of active speech;
2. Development of auditory perception, attention, and phonemic hearing.

(2, p. 74–75)

Lack of Motivation

The decline in students’ interest in reading is largely attributed to the dominance of technological devices in their daily lives. Motivation in learning is generally classified into two categories: **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** motivation, both serving as sources that drive students toward learning activities. The desire to learn may stem from the learner’s own willingness and effort, or it may be based on external rewards, which constitutes extrinsic motivation. However, these two types of motivation are closely interrelated.

For the successful completion of the language learning process, learners must possess both a high level of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. **Intrinsic motivation** refers to a state in which an individual strives for achievement, experiences a sense of competence and autonomy, and fulfills higher-level psychological needs. Above all, a strong intrinsic motivation—reflecting a person’s natural curiosity and desire to learn—significantly increases the likelihood of success in language learning. When an individual sets a specific learning goal, intrinsic motivation is activated, enhancing their potential for achievement. Curiosity, the need to learn, the desire for mastery, skill development, and personal growth are common sources of intrinsic motivation.

Optimistic individuals, who believe that circumstances will improve, tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to pessimistic ones. **Extrinsic motivation**, on the other hand, involves external factors and influences that originate outside the individual. Observations based on long-term pedagogical practice indicate that both types of motivation fluctuate throughout the educational process: while intrinsic motivation is typically stronger in primary school, the influence of external stimuli tends to increase in later grades. (3, p. 254)

Parental Passivity

The lack of parental involvement and supervision in reading and writing tasks at home significantly hinders the learning process. As in the past, the family continues to play a crucial role today in the development of children’s language abilities, in their formation as morally sound individuals, in ensuring their future success and happiness, and in nurturing responsible citizens who preserve and transmit traditional values to future generations. Indeed, there is a strong correlation between a child’s home environment and their behavioral development.

Although language learning begins in the womb, it is increasingly common today to observe that many parents make little effort to foster their children’s linguistic and communicative abilities. Moreover, a growing number of parents tend to lack a sense of responsibility in this regard. Many spend most of their time engaged with television and social media, neglecting active participation in their child’s educational development.

In addition, children are often raised in the care of extended family members—such as grandparents, aunts, or other relatives—rather than their own parents. Families frequently assume that by providing their children with expensive toys and technological devices, they have fulfilled their parental duties. However, it must be understood that meeting a child’s physical needs alone is insufficient for their holistic development.

Therefore, families—and especially parents—must recognize and fulfill their essential responsibilities in their children’s education, creating a supportive home environment that promotes intellectual growth, language development, and emotional well-being. (4, p. 67–68)

Outdated Teaching Materials and Limited Use of Modern Instructional Technologies

The quality of education in any country largely depends on the competence and innovation of its teachers. Teachers are individuals who shape society by influencing every member of it. Today, science and technology are developing at a remarkable pace, and the primary goal of this ongoing progress is to serve humanity. However, these rapid developments have also transformed the responsibilities of teachers.

In the modern educational context, many primary school teachers face difficulties in effectively utilizing updated teaching technologies and resources. Considering this situation, teacher education institutions must ensure that the training of future educators aligns with current educational demands. They should prepare teachers who are capable of designing and applying modern instructional materials and technologies in their classrooms.

Prospective teachers must be trained in the use of modern tools and equipment, and the pedagogical advantages of such resources should be clearly explained to them. Continuous professional development is essential for teachers to remain effective and relevant. Therefore, regular supervision and professional development programs should be implemented to guide teachers in adapting to technological innovations.

Through such efforts, teachers will not only acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to integrate educational technologies into their teaching practices but will

also be better equipped to help students adapt to the demands of the contemporary world. (5, p. 107)

Interlevel Differences: Reading Speed and Comprehension among Students

One of the major challenges observed in the process of literacy education in primary grades is the significant variation in students’ reading abilities within the same classroom. Although they belong to the same age group, children often display substantial differences in reading speed, text comprehension, understanding of logical relationships, and the ability to distinguish sounds and syllables. These disparities can be attributed to biological, psychological, and social factors.

While some students acquire the skills of accurate, fluent, and expressive reading in a relatively short period, others experience persistent difficulties related to pronunciation, attention, and memory. The imbalance between reading speed and comprehension directly affects the quality of instruction: students who read quickly tend to engage in mechanical reading without understanding the content, whereas slower readers, despite grasping the meaning, lag behind due to differences in pace.

In the context of Azerbaijani primary education, this issue is particularly evident in the first and second grades. Observations conducted in various schools show that differences in reading speed among students can sometimes reach a two- to threefold gap. Such variation poses considerable challenges for teachers in lesson planning and in the implementation of differentiated instructional approaches.

2. Solutions Implemented in the Azerbaijani Context

In recent years, a number of innovative measures have been taken within the Azerbaijani education system to address the aforementioned challenges in literacy instruction.

1. Improvement of the Phonetic-Analytic-Synthetic Method.

This method enables students to gradually master the sound–letter relationship and develop natural reading skills. Teachers systematically work on the pronunciation of sounds, their graphical representation, and their semantic meaning, thereby reinforcing the connection between phonetics and comprehension.

2. Application of Game-Based Learning Technologies.

Games such as “*Find the Sound*,” “*Recognize the Letter*,” “*Build the Word*,” and “*Reading Chain*” enhance students’ motivation and engagement while simultaneously strengthening attention and memory.

3. Use of Digital Resources.

Electronic textbooks, interactive exercises, and audio-visual tools—such as the “Mother Tongue” module available on the *edu.gov.az* platform—make literacy instruction more visual, engaging, and accessible.

4. Individualized and Differentiated Instruction.

Teachers adopt varied instructional strategies based on students’ individual abilities, organizing distinct learning activities for both advanced and struggling readers.

5. Focus on Speech Culture.

Literacy education is not limited to technical reading skills; it also involves correct pronunciation, comprehension of meaning, and the development of oral communication abilities.

3. The Teacher’s Role and Methodological Preparation

The primary responsibility for successful literacy instruction rests with the teacher. The teacher must organize the stages of sound, letter, word, sentence, and text acquisition in pedagogical sequence, fostering students’ ability to read independently. In modern pedagogy, the teacher’s role extends beyond that of a knowledge transmitter to that of a facilitator who inspires curiosity and active participation.

Furthermore, incorporating new methodological approaches to literacy instruction into professional development and in-service teacher training programs remains one of the key priorities of the Azerbaijani education system.

Conclusion

In the contemporary educational context, literacy instruction in primary grades must be reconsidered from both scientific-methodological and psychological perspectives. The Azerbaijani experience demonstrates that the effectiveness of literacy education largely depends on the teacher’s professionalism, the motivational nature of the instruction, and the proper integration of digital learning environments.

The systematic application of the phonetic-analytic-synthetic method, the expansion of game-based learning technologies, and the active use of interactive digital resources not only contribute to the development of reading and writing skills among primary school students but also enhance their speech, thinking, and creative abilities.

References

1. Cəfərova N. B. İbtidai siniflərdə Azərbaycan dilinin tədrisi metodikası. I hissə. (Dərslik). Bakı-2016, ADPU-nəş. 403 s.
2. Məmmədova Y. Kiçikyaşlıların təhsilində nitq inkişafı üzrə işin məzmunu // Azərbaycan Respublikasının Təhsil Problemləri İnstitutu, Elmi əsərlər 2014 / 2, səh. 74-78
3. Kərimov S., Arslan M. Yabancı dil olaraq türkçe temel dil becerilerinin öğretiminde öğrenci motivasyonun sağlanmasında kullanılan yöntemler //Journal of Social Research and Behavioral Sciences, Volume: 8 Issue: 15 Year: 2022, səh.250-265
4. Ali Fuat ARICI *Erken Çocukluk Dil Gelişiminde Ailenin Rolü* //Türkiye Eğitim Dergisi 2016, Cilt 1, Sayı 1, s. 66-78
5. Duygu ELVAN, Halil MUTLUBAŞ Eğitim-Öğretim Faaliyetlerinde Teknolojinin Kullanımı Ve Teknolojinin Sağladığı Yararlar // Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, Mustafa Kemal University Journal of the Faculty of Education Yıl/Year: 2020, Cilt/Volume: 4, Sayı/Issue: 6, s. 100-109