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THE IMPORTANCE OF READING LITERACY IN DEVELOPING CREATIVE THINKING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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Abstract

This article examines the pedagogical significance of reading literacy in developing creative thinking among primary school pupils, its place in the educational process, and the opportunities it offers for developing pupils' creative thinking. It also analyzes the use of methods that support work with texts, problem-based questions, creative tasks, independent thinking, and the development of imagination in reading literacy lessons.

Keywords: primary education, reading literacy, creative thinking, creative cognition, work with texts, independent thinking, innovative methods, speech competence.

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and rapidly developing information technologies, one of the key tasks facing the education system is to nurture individuals who think independently, have a creative approach, and can make sound decisions in problem situations. The primary education stage is especially important in shaping pupils' intellectual potential, worldview, speech development, and creative abilities.

Developing reading literacy in primary grades is not limited to pupils reading a text fluently and expressively. It also encompasses complex mental activities such

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as understanding the content of a text, analyzing information, grasping the author's viewpoint, responding to events and phenomena, drawing conclusions, and expressing one's own opinion independently. In this respect, reading literacy is an important pedagogical tool for developing creative thinking.

Literature Review

The problem of creative thinking is one of the most widely studied research areas in world pedagogy and psychology. In particular, the American psychologist J. P. Guilford linked creativity with divergent thinking and paid special attention to a person's ability to propose several solutions to a single problem. According to his views, creative thinking is characterized by fluency, flexibility, and originality (Guilford, 1950).

E. P. Torrance studied creative thinking as a process involving the generation and development of ideas, the discovery of unconventional solutions, and the creation of new products. His work on assessing creative thinking provides an important theoretical basis for identifying pupils' creative potential in the educational process (Torrance, 1974).

L. S. Vygotsky substantiated the importance of the social environment, communication, and education in a child's mental development. In his view, creative activity is associated with the process of reworking human experience and creating new combinations (Vygotsky, 2004).

In international studies of reading literacy, particularly the PIRLS and PISA assessment programs, special attention is paid to the skills of understanding, interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating texts. In the PIRLS 2021 assessment framework, reading literacy is interpreted as a competence related to reading and understanding texts in order to participate actively in society and achieve individual goals (Mullis & Martin, 2019).

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Within the PISA 2022 assessment framework developed by the OECD, reading literacy is likewise defined in connection with the activities of understanding, evaluating, reflecting on, and using information (OECD, 2023).

An analysis of these scientific approaches shows that reading literacy and creative thinking are closely interrelated pedagogical phenomena. However, in order to develop creative thinking in primary school pupils, it is necessary to clarify, from a methodological standpoint, what system of tasks and what consistent sequence of didactic stages should be used in reading literacy lessons.

From this standpoint, the present study focuses on systematizing the didactic potential of reading literacy lessons for developing creative thinking.

Main Part

Creative thinking is a person's ability, drawing on existing knowledge and experience, to generate new ideas, find unconventional solutions to problems, evaluate events and phenomena from different points of view, and put forward original ideas. To develop such abilities in primary school children, the educational process must be organized with their age and psychological characteristics in mind.

Reading literacy lessons create broad opportunities for expanding pupils' range of thought, enriching their imagination, and increasing their creative activity. While working with literary, popular science, and informational texts, pupils encounter various characters, events, and real-life situations. This helps them develop skills of observation, analytical thinking, comparison, and drawing independent conclusions.

In developing creative thinking through reading literacy, attention should first of all be paid to work with the text. Rather than merely reading a text aloud to pupils or having them retell its content, it is appropriate to assign tasks such as expressing independent opinions about its content, evaluating the characters' actions, and making predictions about how events might continue.

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For example, pupils can be asked the following questions:
– What would you do if you were in the place of the main character?
– If you could change the ending of the story, how would you end it?
– How do you evaluate the character's actions in the work?
– Could this event have ended differently?
– How would events develop if a new character were added to the text?
Such questions encourage pupils to reflect independently, generate new ideas, and justify their views, rather than repeat ready-made answers.
It is effective to use a number of interactive methods in reading literacy lessons to develop creative thinking.

The "Create the Continuation Yourself" method. Pupils are read the opening part of a story or fairy tale. They then create their own versions of how events might continue and end. This method develops children's imagination, independent thinking, and creative speech.

The "Letter to the Character" method. Pupils write a letter to a character from the work they have read. In the letter they may give the character advice, comment on the character's actions, or ask questions. This method develops empathy, written expression of ideas, and figurative thinking skills.

The "If I Were the Author..." method. Based on the content of the text they have read, pupils choose a new title, change the events, or create an alternative ending. As a result, they gain a deeper understanding of the text's content while also learning to approach it creatively.

The "Problem Situation" method. Pupils are presented with a problem faced by a character in the text they have read. They propose several ways of solving

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this problem and justify their solutions. This method promotes the mutual development of critical and creative thinking.

In addition, using methods such as clustering, brainstorming, the Venn diagram, INSERT, role-playing games, and small-group work in reading literacy lessons also yields positive results.

The teacher's pedagogical skill also plays an important role in developing creative thinking. The teacher should respond respectfully to every independent idea pupils express, encourage them to think freely, and teach them not to be afraid of making mistakes. Rather than limiting the lesson to a search for a single correct answer, supporting different opinions and approaches helps create a creative environment.

The following criteria can be considered when assessing pupils' level of creative thinking:

• **Fluency of ideas** – the ability to put forward many ideas and thoughts on a given topic.

• **Flexibility of ideas** – the ability to approach a problem from different points of view.

• **Originality** – the ability to propose unconventional and independent ideas.

• **Justification of ideas** – the ability to support one's views with evidence.

• **Creative expression** – the ability to create a new story, ending, or character based on the content of the text.

On the basis of these criteria, it is possible to monitor pupils' developmental dynamics, identify their individual potential, and improve the educational process.

Thus, organizing reading literacy lessons on the basis of creative tasks, problem-based questions, text analysis, and methods oriented toward independent thinking creates an important pedagogical condition for developing the creative potential of primary school pupils.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, reading literacy has important educational and upbringing significance in developing creative thinking in primary school pupils. This is because, in the process of reading, pupils not only absorb the content of a text but also acquire skills such as independent thinking, analysis, comparison, drawing conclusions, and approaching problems creatively.

The following recommendations can be put forward to increase the effectiveness of reading literacy lessons:

1. Regularly use open-ended questions in lessons that allow pupils to think independently.
2. Develop creative tasks based on literary and informational texts.
3. Organize exercises aimed at creating alternative endings to texts, inventing new characters, and re-imagining events.
4. Teach pupils to express their thoughts freely and to respect the views of others.
5. When assessing creative thinking, pay attention not only to the correct answer but also to the originality and soundness of the reasoning.

Therefore, organizing reading literacy lessons on the basis of a creative approach contributes to developing the intellectual potential of primary school pupils and to their formation as independent-thinking and creative individuals.

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