

THE ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Turunova Zarina Ne'matovna

Teacher at Asia international university

Abstract: This article explores the significance of mother tongue instruction in primary education as a foundation for cognitive, linguistic, and social development. The early years of schooling are critical for forming language competence, literacy skills, and communicative abilities. Teaching the mother tongue systematically enhances students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills while supporting their intellectual growth and cultural identity. The paper discusses pedagogical principles, instructional methods, challenges in classroom practice, and the importance of integrating language skills in primary education. The study concludes that effective mother tongue instruction ensures academic success and lifelong learning readiness.

Keywords: primary education, mother tongue instruction, literacy development, language competence, communicative skills, early childhood education, pedagogy, curriculum development

Mother tongue instruction in primary education plays a fundamental role in shaping a child's intellectual and personal development. The primary school years represent a crucial stage during which children acquire structured knowledge of their native language. At this stage, language is not only a subject of study but also a tool for learning other disciplines. A strong foundation in the mother tongue supports overall academic achievement, enhances comprehension skills, and strengthens cognitive processes such as thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving.

In early education, children enter school with basic oral language skills acquired through family and social interaction. However, formal schooling transforms these spontaneous language abilities into systematic linguistic competence. Students begin to learn grammar rules, vocabulary expansion, sentence structure, spelling conventions, and punctuation usage. Through structured lessons, they gradually develop literacy skills that enable them to read fluently and write accurately. This process is essential because literacy serves as the basis for all further learning.

Teaching the mother tongue in primary education contributes significantly to the development of communicative competence. Students learn how to express their thoughts clearly, construct meaningful sentences, participate in discussions, and understand written texts. Listening and speaking activities foster confidence and social interaction, while reading and writing tasks enhance analytical thinking. When language instruction is interactive and engaging, learners become active participants in communication rather than passive recipients of information.

Pedagogically, mother tongue instruction in primary school should follow developmental principles. Lessons must be age-appropriate, interactive, and connected to students' real-life experiences. Storytelling, reading aloud, dialogue-based activities, role-playing, and creative writing exercises help children internalize language patterns naturally. Teachers play a central role in modeling correct pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and expressive speech. The classroom environment should encourage students to speak freely, ask questions, and share ideas without fear of making mistakes.

Reading instruction is particularly important in mother tongue education. Developing reading fluency and comprehension skills allows students to access knowledge across all subjects. Through exposure to literary texts, children also develop imagination, empathy, and moral values. Literature in the mother tongue strengthens cultural awareness and national identity, helping students appreciate their heritage and traditions. Thus, language education is closely linked to cultural transmission and socialization.

Writing instruction complements reading development. In primary education, students begin with simple sentences and gradually progress to composing short paragraphs and narratives. Writing tasks improve logical thinking and organization of ideas. Teachers should guide students in planning, drafting, and revising their work. Constructive feedback helps learners recognize their strengths and improve weaknesses. Continuous practice is essential for developing coherent and expressive written communication.

One of the challenges in mother tongue instruction is addressing diverse learning abilities within the classroom. Some students quickly grasp linguistic concepts, while others may struggle with reading or writing skills. Differentiated instruction, individualized support, and formative assessment help teachers respond effectively to these differences. Encouraging parental involvement in reading activities at home also reinforces classroom learning.

Modern educational approaches emphasize integrating language skills rather than teaching them in isolation. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be interconnected within meaningful contexts. Project-based learning, collaborative group work, and cross-curricular activities allow students to apply language skills in authentic situations. Technology can also support instruction through digital storytelling, interactive exercises, and multimedia resources, provided that it complements traditional teaching methods.

In conclusion, mother tongue instruction in primary education is essential for building literacy, cognitive development, and cultural identity. A strong command of the native language enables students to succeed academically and communicate effectively throughout their lives. By applying student-centered methodologies, promoting interactive learning, and ensuring continuous assessment, educators can create a solid linguistic foundation that supports lifelong learning and personal growth.

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