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DEVELOPING IMAGINATIVE THINKING THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS AND INTERACTIVE METHODS IN NATIVE LANGUAGE CLASSES

Esayeva Dlaferuz Azamat qizi
Master's Student, Alisher Navoiy Tashkent State
University of Uzbek Language and Literature
Specialty: 70110701 – Uzbek Language and Literature
Scientific Supervisor: Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences (DSc), Professor
K.Mavlonova

Abstract.This article presents the structure, didactic foundations, and experimental effectiveness of a specially designed workbook titled "Figurative Thinking – Eloquence" aimed at developing figurative thinking skills among 5th-grade students in mother tongue lessons. The study also incorporates a teacher survey and student diagnostic tasks as part of its methodological evidence base. The workbook's three parts – "World of Wonders", "Journey to the Galaxy", and "On the Wings of Dreams" – engage students in cognitive-aesthetic activities ranging from identifying personification in nature descriptions to creating fantastical models, composing myths, and writing motivational texts. Experimental results showed that the average score of students in the experimental group rose from 34.8 to 54.6 points, and the proportion of high-achieving students increased from 10% to 36.7%. These findings confirm the high effectiveness of the workbook-based methodological system in developing figurative thinking in mother tongue education.

Keywords: figurative thinking, mother tongue education, 5th grade, workbook, teacher survey, diagnostic tasks, personification, interactive methods, experimental study, cognitive-aesthetic activity.

The modern educational paradigm is based on the idea of transforming learners from recipients of knowledge into creators of knowledge (Bruner, 1966; Piaget, 1950). In mother tongue education, this idea is realized not only through students' mastery of grammatical rules but also through their ability to perceive linguistic units within an artistic and aesthetic context and to develop independent text-creation skills.

Imaginative thinking is the process by which individuals perceive and process reality through concrete images, mental representations, metaphors, and associations (Vygotsky, 1934; Rubinstein, 2002). It enables students to move beyond the external form of words to their deeper layers of meaning, from literal description to symbolic interpretation, and from mere information acquisition to an aesthetic understanding of language and reality.

At the beginning of the study, a survey conducted among teachers (n = 30) revealed that 86.7% of the participants considered the development of imaginative thinking to be "very important" for lesson effectiveness. At the same time, 73.3% stated that the tasks provided in current textbooks are "partially sufficient but require additional methodological support" in this area. The survey also showed that more than 60% of teachers either use mnemonic techniques only for complex topics or do not use them at all. These findings clearly confirm the need for a specialized methodological tool.

A system of summative diagnostic tasks designed for students was also an important component of the research. These tasks covered six areas: picture description, the magic pencil, shape completion, associative words, creative storytelling, and comparison of figurative

expressions. They enabled a comprehensive assessment of students' initial level of imaginative thinking.

An analysis of the existing literature (G'ulomov, 1992; Mahmudov, 2007; Qosimova et al., 2009; Yo'ldoshev, 2007) indicates that although the general theoretical foundations of imaginative thinking in mother tongue education have been developed, there is still a lack of a comprehensive and practically tested methodological tool specifically designed for Grade 5 students. To address this issue, a three-part workbook structure was developed and systematically implemented in the teaching process.

Research Objective: To develop a methodology for enhancing imaginative thinking skills among Grade 5 students based on the workbook *"Imaginative Thinking – The Beauty of Speech"* and to verify its effectiveness through experimental testing.

The following methods were employed in the study: (1) theoretical analysis – the works of scholars in pedagogy, psychology, and teaching methodology were examined; (2) observation – students' activities during classroom instruction were monitored; (3) interviews and questionnaires – the methodological needs of teachers and students were identified; (4) pedagogical experiment – the workbook-based instructional system was tested; and (5) statistical analysis – the obtained results were processed and compared.

The experiment was conducted during the 2024–2026 academic years with the participation of Grade 5 students from general secondary schools. The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n = 30) and a control group (n = 30). To ensure that the groups had comparable initial levels, a diagnostic assessment was administered before the experiment. The results showed that the initial scores were similar (experimental group: M = 34.8 points; control group: M = 34.1 points), and the difference was not statistically significant.

Key Findings of the Teacher Survey

The teacher survey (n = 30) identified several important methodological issues. The majority of teachers (56.7%) relied primarily on memorizing ready-made rules and providing examples when teaching linguistic concepts. In contrast, only 30% of teachers encouraged students to independently discover images and meanings through the analysis of literary texts.

The methods considered most effective for developing imaginative thinking were distributed as follows: mind mapping – 76.7%, visualization (working with pictures) – 73.3%, metaphorical tasks – 66.7%, and creative dictation and composition activities – 60%.

In addition, teachers reported that students experienced the greatest difficulty in the stage of visualizing abstract concepts, with 50% identifying this as the most challenging aspect of imaginative representation.

Table 3. Key Findings of the Teacher Survey

Survey Question	**Most Frequently Selected Response**	**Percentage (%)**
Impact of imaginative thinking on lesson effectiveness	Yes, very important	86.7%

Sufficiency of such tasks in textbooks	Partially sufficient; additional support is needed	73.3%
Level of use of mnemonic techniques	Only in complex topics / not used at all	63.3%
Most effective method (highest number of responses)	Mind Mapping	76.7%
Stage where students experience the greatest difficulty	Visualizing abstract concepts	50.0%
Most needed type of methodological support	Colorful and visual didactic materials	70.0%

System of Summative Diagnostic Tasks

The system of summative diagnostic tasks designed for students provided the initial measurement at the diagnostic stage. The tasks covered six areas:

(1) Picture description – observing a given landscape and writing a description along with associations; (2) "Magic Pencil" – creating and describing an imaginative fictional world; (3) Shape completion – continuing a given outline to create a new image and expressing it in words; (4) Associative words – writing personal interpretations of the words *Time, Seasons, Colors,* and *Universe*; (5) Creative story – producing an original text beginning with the prompt: "One day the stars in the sky fell to the earth…"; (6) Comparison of figurative expressions – matching simple sentences with appropriate literary expressions.

The initial results of these tasks showed that 43.3% of students demonstrated a satisfactory level, while 16.7% were at a low level, indicating that imaginative thinking skills were not yet fully developed. In Task 4 (associative words), responses to the "Colors" prompt were mostly object-based: *blue* – "sky", *green* – "tree", *yellow* – "sun". This finding directly informed the methodological basis for Task 3 of the workbook ("Filling in a table based on the text 'Colors'").

Structure of the Exercise Book and Description of Its Tasks

The workbook *"Imaginative Thinking – The Beauty of Speech"* consists of three parts: Part I "The World of Miracles", Part II "Journey to the Galaxy", and Part III "On the Wings of Dreams". Each section guides students toward developing imaginative thinking at different cognitive stages. Assessment was carried out based on a 65-point comprehensive evaluation system:

Table 1. Structure of the Comprehensive Assessment Criteria

No.	Area	Assessed Skills	Max Sco	Link with Survey/Diagnostics

			re	
1	Text analysis and personificatio n	Understanding artistic devices, identifying and justifying metaphors	5	Survey: Question 2
2	Artistic perception and attitude	Emotional response to text, expressing feelings through colors	5	Diagnostic Task 4
3	Logical-creative coding	Decoding patterns, creating coherent narratives from words	10	Survey: Question 5
4	Spatial imagination and inventiveness	Designing new planets/spaceships, communication skills	10	Diagnostic Task 2
5	Mythological and aesthetic thinking	Naming visual images, creating myths	10	Survey: Question 5
6	Psychological and figurative description	Expressing inner emotions in artistic form	5	Diagnostic Task 5
7	Social modeling	Developing humanistic rules and principles	10	—
8	Strategic planning	Creating future models, motivational writing	10	Survey: Question 8
	TOTAL		**65**	

Part I – “The World of Miracles” (Tasks 1–4)

The first task is based on the text *“Spring”* and is aimed at identifying elements of animation and personification. Students analyze expressions such as “the cold breath of winter,” “the grass smiled at the sun,” “the breeze plays like a cheerful child,” and “the joyful laughter of nature,” and explain why such expressions are used in relation to nature. This task directly

corresponds to the teaching approach identified in the survey as the most effective: "discovering images through literary text analysis."

The second task is dedicated to studying an excerpt from Ray Bradbury's *"A Day of Summer."* In the text, metaphorical expressions such as "the sun like a golden coin," "the sky like light blue glass," "a living carpet," and "eternal darkness knocking at the door" are interpreted by students in connection with mood and emotion.

The third task involves completing a table based on the text *"Colors."* This task was developed as a methodological response to the issue identified in the summative diagnostic tasks (item 4), namely that the color–object association had not yet been transformed into an emotional-aesthetic semiotic understanding of color.

The fourth task, *"Mysterious Colors,"* consists of two stages: first, students decode color-coded letters to form nature-related words; second, they create a short story with a title based on the generated words. This task integrates the methods most supported in the teacher survey—"associative mapping" (76.7%) and "metaphorical tasks"—into a practical learning activity.

Part II – "Journey to the Galaxy" (Tasks 5–8)

The fifth task asks students to imagine and discover a new, previously unseen and unexplored planet based on an illustration of the Solar System. This task directly relies on the "visualization (working with images)" method identified by teachers in the survey as important, and it elevates the creative imagination skills previously developed in Diagnostic Task 2 ("Magic Pencil") to a higher cognitive level.

The sixth task is based on an excerpt from Sa'dulla Qurbonov's *"A Day in the Galaxy."* Through a dialogue between Ahmad and an alien, students are required to (1) formulate questions about what could be discussed with an extraterrestrial being, and (2) design a new invention that could repair a malfunctioning spacecraft.

In Tasks Seven and Eight, based on the text *"Constellations of the Sky,"* students engage in visual-associative thinking by creating a new constellation and composing a myth about it. Myth creation represents one of the highest forms of mythological thinking, symbolic interpretation, and creative compositional skills.

Part III – "On the Wings of Dreams" (Tasks 9–12)

The ninth task requires students to close their eyes, imagine flying on the wings of dreams, and answer four questions in a figurative way. This task develops the skill identified in Diagnostic Task 5 (a creative story beginning with "One day the stars in the sky fell to the earth…") by extending it to a new theme and richer linguistic means.

In the tenth task, students imagine themselves stranded on an unknown island and create a "Book of Rules" to govern it. This social modeling task combines imaginative thinking with legal awareness and moral reasoning, practically demonstrating the importance of imaginative thinking in developing communicative competence, as emphasized by teachers in the survey.

Tasks eleven and twelve involve selecting words from the "Map of Dreams" and creating a text describing the path to achieving one's dreams. These tasks develop strategic planning and motivational writing skills. Based on visual and colorful didactic materials—identified as

necessary by 70% of teachers in the survey—this final task serves as the concluding methodological component of the workbook.

Results of the Ascertaining Stage. In the initial diagnostic assessment, most students were able to identify personification in animation-based tasks but could not explain why it was used. In item 6 of the summative diagnostic tasks (comparison of figurative expressions), students managed to correctly match only 1–2 out of 3 pairs. In the "Colors" task, the responses were object-based: blue – "sky," green – "tree," yellow – "sun." This indicated that imaginative thinking skills had not yet been firmly developed.

Results of the Formative Stage. After the systematic implementation of the workbook's eight directions, the following qualitative changes were observed. In the animation and personification direction, students began to study the texts "Spring" and "A Day in Summer" and justify the aesthetic function of artistic expressive means. In the color–emotion association direction, in the experimental group the connection of colors with mood, psychological state, and memory became stronger: blue – "endless dream," green – "new life," yellow – "warm memory," purple – "mysterious night," etc. In the spatial imagination direction, original names and images appeared such as "Sokinor Planet," "Nurafshon Valley," "silent rains," and "a spacecraft that moves by thought."

Table 2. Dynamics of Imaginative Thinking Skill Levels in the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Stage	High (55–65 pts)	Medium (35–54 pts)	Satisfactory (20–34 pts)	Low (0–19 pts)	Mean score
Experimental	Initial	3 n. (10%)	9 n. (30%)	13 n. (43.3%)	5 n. (16.7%)	34.8
Experimental	Final	11 n. (36.7%)	15 n. (50%)	4 n. (13.3%)	0 n. (0%)	54.6
Control	Initial	3 n. (10%)	10 n. (33.3%)	12 n. (40%)	5 n. (16.7%)	34.1
Control	Final	6 n. (20%)	13 n. (43.3%)	9 n. (30%)	2 n. (6.7%)	42.3

In the experimental group, the mean score increased from 34.8 to 54.6 (+19.8 points, an increase of 56.9%). The proportion of students at the high level rose from 10% to 36.7%, while the low level decreased from 16.7% to 0%.

In the control group, a positive dynamic was also observed (34.1 → 42.3 points, +8.2 points, an increase of 24.0%), however it was significantly weaker compared to the experimental group.

The obtained results formed the basis for several important pedagogical conclusions. First, the three-part structure of the workbook functioned as a methodological progression that guided

students from familiar themes (nature, colors) to unconventional (cosmos, mythology) and personal (dreams, planning) topics. This corresponds to Vygotsky's (1934) concept of the "zone of proximal development."

Second, the methods of associative mapping and metaphorical tasks, highly evaluated by teachers in the survey, were fully implemented in Tasks 4 and 8 of the workbook. These tasks proved to be the areas that ensured the highest growth in the experimental group, confirming methodological consistency between the survey and experimental results.

Third, the problem identified in item 6 of the summative diagnostic tasks—the inability of students to connect simple sentences with their figurative expressions—was consistently eliminated across all three parts of the workbook. In the final assessment, this indicator showed significant improvement.

Fourth, 73.3% of teachers in the survey stated that such tasks are only "partially sufficient" in existing textbooks. The experimental results quantitatively confirmed that the workbook *"Imaginative Thinking – The Beauty of Speech"* fills this methodological gap.

Limitations of the study. The experiment was conducted only at the Grade 5 level; effectiveness at other grade levels requires further research. In addition, differences in technical resources between urban and rural schools, as well as teachers' adaptation to the new methodology, may have influenced the results.

Conclusions Based on the Research Results

1. The methodological needs identified in the teacher survey—visual materials (70%), associative mapping (76.7%), and metaphorical tasks (66.7%)—were consistently and systematically implemented across all three parts of the workbook *"Imaginative Thinking – The Beauty of Speech."* This demonstrates the methodological validity of the study and its alignment with practical educational needs.

2. The initial problems identified in the summative diagnostic tasks—object-based interpretation of colors, inability to compare figurative expressions, and weak abstract imagination—were purposefully addressed through the structured sequence of workbook tasks.

3. In the experimental group, the average score increased by 56.9%, while the proportion of high-level students increased by 3.7 times. These indicators were twice as high as those observed in the control group.

4. The three-part structure of the workbook—*"The World of Miracles," "Journey to the Galaxy,"* and *"On the Wings of Dreams"*—functioned as a methodological system consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development," guiding students from familiar objects to personal and creative expression.

Practical Recommendations.It is recommended that mother tongue teachers apply the workbook at all stages of the lesson: motivational introduction (associative questions), main activity (text analysis, coding, myth creation), and conclusion (reflection, cinquain). Future research may focus on adapting this methodology for Grades 4 and 6, as well as integrating digital tools (Canva, Padlet, Quizlet) to enhance its effectiveness.

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