Journal: "Social Sciences: Theory and Practice"

ISSN: 3093-9186 Volume 1/Issue 3/October/2026

https://doi.org

Designing Independent Study Tasks in Mother Tongue Textbooks: As a Linguodidactic Problem

Axmedova Maloxat

Professor , Department of Pedagogy, University of Tashkent for Applied Sciences,Tashkent,Uzbekistan

Email: malohataxmedova1971@gmail.com; orcid: 0000-0003-4440-1028.

Abstract: This article examines the pedagogical, psychological, and methodological foundations for improving independent learning and learning tasks in mother-tongue education. It clarifies the relationship among questions, tasks, and exercises and explains the value of a pragmatic approach to designing independent assignments. The article analyzes the content and functions of tasks and exercises in mother-tongue textbooks, including their potential to develop students' independent inquiry and communicative skills. Based on this analysis, it outlines methodological approaches to systematizing learning tasks, aligning them with the requirements of credit-module education, and using them purposefully in the learning process.

Keywords: pedagogical, psychological, and methodological foundations, mother tongue, linguodidactic needs, credit-module system.

Introduction

In today's educational environment, developing the didactic-methodological competence of future mother tongue teachers—including the rational use of hybrid learning opportunities and the proper organization of independent learning activities—is becoming increasingly urgent. Scientific and methodological literature discusses in detail the content, practical benefits, and impact of independent study tasks on students' professional readiness. Within the credit-module system, developing students' methodological competence, expanding the opportunities for distance and independent learning, and adapting traditional and non-traditional forms of teaching to philological education require improving linguodethodological support.

Updating the system of independent tasks in a hybrid learning environment is particularly crucial, as the methodological preparation of a future teacher should not be limited solely to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. They must also be prepared to perform practical tasks such as lesson planning, selecting educational materials, organizing student activities, and assessing learning outcomes. Although research has been conducted on independent study, communicative activities, and task design in native language teaching methodology, the need to examine the pragmatic and linguodidactic aspects of tasks within a unified system under the credit-module education conditions still remains.

The Action Strategy for five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017–2021 defines the tasks of improving the education system and expanding access to quality educational services [1]. From the perspective of these requirements, it is important to study independent tasks in mother tongue subjects according to their content, pragmatic function, and linguodethodological features. Such an approach serves to determine the pedagogical and didactic value of tasks, adapt them to the educational process, and improve methods for their practical application.

Along with the widespread introduction of the credit-module system in the higher education of our republic, attention to developing students' independent working skills is also intensifying.

Mother tongue subjects and their teaching methodology are organized on the basis of a competence-based approach, which envisions developing listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing skills alongside the enhancement of linguistic knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a didactic system and technological model that foster methodological competence and to determine the conditions for their practical implementation.

The topic of the article is consistent with the tasks defined in a number of regulatory documents related to education. In particular, the tasks outlined in the Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-4997 of May 13, 2016, No. PF-4947 of February 7, 2017, No. PF-2789 of February 17, 2017, Resolutions No. PQ-2909 of April 20, 2017, No. VM-304 of May 22, 2017, and No. PQ-4479 of October 4, 2019, cover areas related to education, research activities, and the development of the state language.

Literature review

In scientific research on the methodology of teaching the mother tongue, issues related to developing students' oral and written speech, organizing independent study, and supporting creative thinking have been studied from various perspectives. The works of Sh. Yusupova [3, p. 137] and N. Dadajonova [2, p. 123] highlight the methodology of working on students' speech in Uzbek language education. The works of such scholars as A. G'ulomov, M. Qodirov, M. Ernazarova, A. Bobomurodova, N. Allavutdinova, and V. Karimjonova are connected with the methodology of using independent tasks and developing creative thinking in the process of teaching the mother tongue [15, p. 388]. Meanwhile, T. Yusupova researched methods of teaching the main parts of a sentence [3, p. 22].

Scientific sources in this direction also include the works of A. Nurmonov and A. Sobirov [8, p. 160], B. Mengliyev [6, p. 248], L. R. Raupova [9, p. 230], B. To'xliyev, Sh. Yusupova, T. Ziyodova, O. Oxunjonova, and D. Jumashev [12, p. 152]. These studies discuss theoretical and methodological issues of language education and approaches to developing speech skills. Furthermore, the works of O. Roziqov [11, p. 103], N. Mahmudov, A. Nurmonov, A. Sobirov, V. Qodirov, Z. Jo'raboyeva [5, p. 224], and A. Hamroyev focus on the content of education, students' creative activity, as well as the principles of consistency, continuity, consciousness, and interrelatedness in the educational process [13, p. 242].

One of the essential tasks of mother tongue education is to prepare future specialists to express their opinions independently and reasonably [14, pp. 78–87]. Textbooks serve as an important didactic tool in accomplishing this task. The content of the textbook, along with its questions and independent tasks, guides the students' learning process, helping them consolidate acquired knowledge and apply it in practical activities.

The "Pedagogical Encyclopedia" describes a textbook as the primary educational literature that methodically presents knowledge on a specific subject based on state educational standards approved by the state, meeting scientific and methodological requirements [17, p. 253]. However, the function of a textbook is not limited to presenting knowledge. It also determines the structure of learning activity: the student reads the text, completes the task, checks it, finds a solution, and justifies the answer. These actions may be explicitly expressed in the textbook or implied within its content [18, p. 73].

Definitions related to the role of the textbook in the educational system are also provided in the "Annotated Dictionary of Pedagogical Sciences" compiled by J. Hasanboyev, X. To'raqulov, M. Haydarov, and O. Hasanboyevalar. Based on these views, a textbook can be interpreted as a source that elucidates the content of a specific academic subject based on didactic requirements and serves to organize the student's cognitive activity.

In this sense, a textbook can be viewed as an information model of the pedagogical system. It reflects specific stages of the educational process, actions that must be performed, and ways to verify mastery. Textbooks work even more effectively when enriched with resources such as anthologies, collections of exercises and tasks, dictionaries, reference books, supplementary reading materials, atlases, and maps. Modern educational literature allows for the formation of skills such as searching for additional information through independent tasks, analyzing text, approaching content creatively and critically, supplementing content, and presenting results.

The pedagogical and psychological views of L. S. Vygotsky also demonstrate the necessity of adapting the content of independent tasks to the cognitive capabilities of students [20, pp. 80–87]. Tasks should not be aimed merely at testing memorized theoretical information, but should also encourage thinking, analysis, identifying cause-and-effect relationships between phenomena, understanding the relationship between form and content, comparison, and drawing creative conclusions. In this regard, the complexity of tasks must be determined in accordance with the student's level of preparation and linguodidactic needs.

Taking into account the levels of cognitive activity, sensory processes are involved at the perceptual stage, while processes such as memory, imagination, perception, and attention are engaged at more complex stages. Instead of excessively multiplying tasks based on mechanical memorization, assignments that activate high-level thinking and speech and expand worldviews should also be provided. Such tasks allow students to see connections between cause, effect, and solution, compare form with content, contrast ideas, and demonstrate a critical-creative approach.

Methods and materials

The study analyzed independent study tasks, questions, and exercises presented in mother tongue textbooks, study guides, and scientific-methodological sources. During the analysis, the content of the tasks, the level of independence expected from the student, and their roles in consolidating theoretical knowledge and developing speech skills were taken into consideration. Methods of source study, description, comparison, and generalization were applied.

The analysis took into account that not all students studying in the primary education field of higher education become linguistics-methodology specialists. Therefore, the content of independent tasks must be adapted according to the audience, the field of study, and the objective of mastery. An analysis of the textbook "Mother Tongue Teaching Methodology" authored by A. G'ulomov, M. Qodirov, M. Ernazarova, A. Bobomurodova, N. Allavutdinova, and V. Karimjonova [10, pp. 140–147] revealed that a major portion of the independent tasks is aimed at performing grammatical analysis, teaching and reinforcing grammatical regularities, and developing theoretical knowledge related to morphology. At the same time, the methodology of formulating questions is not sufficiently disclosed as a distinct system within the textbook.

An analysis of the study guide "Uzbek Language" prepared for Russian-language groups in 2004 by M. Mirqosimova, Sh. Alimova, O. Zoitova, and N. Umarova also demonstrates that tasks and questions are occasionally used for the same purpose. Since textbooks serve as a source of knowledge both during classroom sessions and in extracurricular independent study, the composition of educational materials, the structure of questions, and the purpose of tasks within them must be thoroughly defined.

Within the credit-module system, independent study tasks are considered a tool that enables students to plan their learning activities, search for information, and apply acquired knowledge in practical situations. For this reason, tasks should be structured to guide students toward research and problem-solving rather than mere reproduction of ready-made information. In this process, the

instructor does not act as a person who provides all answers in advance, but rather as a specialist who organizes and guides the student's research. It is advisable to formulate task development and evaluation criteria by taking local and international experience into account.

The text underlying the analysis also emphasizes that the indicator for evaluating teaching effectiveness should be greater than one, while the indicator for assessing cognitive level should be greater than zero. Since the calculation procedures for these metrics are not disclosed in detail, it is important to supplement them with precise measurement criteria and indicators during practical assessment.

The analysis also draws attention to organizational factors that may hinder the introduction of innovative methods. Specifically, delivering pre-prepared information to the entire group may seem easier for some instructors than conducting interactive, inquiry-based learning and collaboration with students. Under such an approach, the student's responsibility for completing independent tasks increases, while the instructor assumes the role of a facilitator and process manager. At the same time, evaluation criteria for task outcomes must be clearly defined in advance across all forms of independent study. In the fields of philology, Uzbek language, and literature, it is appropriate to develop these criteria by accounting for domestic and foreign experiences.

Preparation for completing an independent task, executing it consciously, following a sequential workflow, and verifying the results are interrelated processes. Even when the functions of questions, exercises, and tasks are distinguished, they complement one another within educational activities. Therefore, the task system should account for content harmony, step-by-step progression, logical consistency, adaptability to student needs, and the possibility of application in real speech situations.

Results

The analyzed educational literature demonstrates that independent tasks perform a variety of functions. While some tasks serve to determine students' initial literacy and speech preparedness, others are aimed at consolidating grammatical knowledge, expressing thoughts coherently, or analyzing specific linguistic phenomena. For example, in an educational publication issued in 2009, it is recommended to evaluate several indicators to determine the speech preparedness of children at the preparatory stage. The content of the evaluation areas provided in that source is presented below while preserving their original substance:

Reading skills: fluent reading; syllable-by-syllable reading; reading by letters or inaccurate reading; knowing most letters yet being unable to read words; recognizing only certain letters.

Writing skills: writing all letters and forming words in printed or written form; writing only certain letters; the writing skill is not yet formed.

Readiness for sound analysis: dividing words into syllables; distinguishing sounds within a word or syllable; pronouncing sounds correctly; mispronouncing certain sounds; paying attention to voice volume and diction characteristics.

Oral connected speech — reciting a poem: knowing three or more poems and reciting them expressively; knowing one or two poems yet being hesitant to recite; inability to recite poems from memory.

Oral connected speech — storytelling: knowing one or more fairy tales and retelling them independently; attempting to tell a fairy tale while knowing it, but failing to fully convey the content; the lack of storytelling skills or absence of effort to learn it.

Oral connected speech — expression of thoughts: For instance, students' connected speech is evaluated through the task "Describe what you see in the picture": forming a narrative or several

sentences using more than 20 words; uttering several sentences with the help of 10–20 words; giving a connected response using up to 10 words; or limiting oneself to a short response of 3–4 words [15, pp. 18–24].

Depending on their content, grammatical tasks can be divided into morphological and syntactic exercises. Morphological exercises serve to consolidate knowledge about word structure, word formation, affixes, parts of speech, and independent and auxiliary words. They also develop practical skills regarding morphological categories such as declension and conjugation. A task sample provided in one of the sources is as follows: "Task 3. Complete the sentence by inserting the appropriate noun-forming affix from the parentheses in place of the dots: 'Yomonning bir qil___i ortiq' (-iq, -ik, -ig‘)." This example is aimed at choosing the morphological form and paying attention to the structure of the word.

Syntactic exercises consolidate knowledge regarding sentences, phrases, types of sentences based on the purpose of expression, sentence parts, and simple and compound sentences. The following examples are found in educational literature: "Insert appropriate objects in place of the dots. A person's face is.....warm. A foolish person relies on....." Another task requires converting direct speech into indirect speech: "'If the people strive, their hope will not vanish in vain,' said Sayramov with a meaningful smile; 'May you not have wheat bread, but have a sweet word,' says our wise people [12, p. 9]." Such exercises are aimed at applying grammatical knowledge practically within speech material.

Another practical example found in textbooks is the game "This word belongs to us." To conduct it, the teacher presents nouns using a board or projection tools. Students are given time to isolate abstract nouns among them and explain their meanings. The list of words includes: book, happiness, throne, freedom, peace, emotion, sumalak [traditional dish], joy, spring, wheat, mill, love, picture, liberty, bravery, value, and devotion. The group that identifies the words quickly and correctly is recognized as the winner [16, pp. 145–152]. Along with activating participants, this game practices the skills of comprehending word meanings and working in a group.

The analysis shows that in order for independent study tasks to be effective in mastering the content of the mother tongue, they must serve not only for repetition but also for understanding and solving real-life problems. When a task encourages students to formulate their own thoughts, provide arguments, and draw conclusions, its educational value increases. The questions given in the textbook "Modern Uzbek Language" authored by R. R. Sayfullaeva, B. R. Mengliyev, and L. R. Raupova are also structured in a way that prompts students to reason [19, pp. 168–171]. For instance, they include the following questions:

What is the object of study in lexicology?

In what directions is a word studied as a language unit?

In which section of lexicology are the semantic features of a word—monosemy and polysemy, general and specific, abstract and concrete, primary and derivative, literal and figurative meanings—examined?

Explain the enrichment of the vocabulary stock of the language through lexicology.

What is the difference between theoretical and practical lexicology?

What is the lexical level unit called in the mother tongue from a theoretical approach?

Explain the difference between a linguistic unit and a speech unit.

Explain the features of a lexeme.

How is a word interpreted as a unit?

What is meant when a lexeme is said to have a single sememe at the linguistic stage?

How would you explain the speech realization of a lexeme?

Through what stages does the elevation of a speech derivative word to the linguistic level take place?

What is called a lexeme with a narrowed meaning that has not lost its derivational nature, i.e., has retained the trace of the formal aspect of the mold in itself, yet is detached from the mold semantically, and whose meaning cannot be derived from the right (content) side of the mold?

1. What is a simplified lexeme?
2. What do you know about a radicalized lexeme?
3. What is meant by the outer shell of a lexeme?
4. Discuss the relationship between sememe and concept.
5. In essence, how many types of semes exist, and what are they?
6. When does a situation occur where the denotative seme weakens and the expressive seme strengthens?
7. How are semes classified according to their level?
8. Explain the realization of the sememe as a speech lexical meaning.
9. What is taken into account when speaking of the readiness of the sememe versus the unreadiness of the speech meaning?
10. How do you explain the repeatability of the sememe and the unrepeatability of the speech meaning?
11. How is a derivative meaning generated, and what types exist?
12. What is a metaphorical meaning?
13. What is understood by naming a part by the name of the whole, or the whole by the name of a part?
14. What can you say about a derivative meaning generated on the basis of functional equivalence?
15. What consequences do linguistic changes in lexeme semantics lead to?
16. What are synonymy, antonymy, gradynymy, and hyponymy?
17. What characteristic does the dominant lexeme in a synonymic series possess?
18. What kind of opposition constitutes the logical basis of antonyms, and how do they occur?
19. Into which types are antonyms divided according to their structure?
20. What are the general laws of dialectics that manifest themselves in the lexical gradynymic series?
21. Discuss unrestricted vocabulary.
22. Discuss restricted vocabulary.

The provided examples indicate the necessity of differentiating independent tasks according to the purpose, content, and expected outcome of learning activities. Although questions, exercises, and tasks are closely related, their didactic functions are not identical: a question may be aimed at determining information or stimulating thought; an exercise implies repetitive activity to reinforce a specific mental or practical action; while a task combines purpose, conditions, and the expected outcome. Designing them on a pragmatic basis takes into account the speech situation, the interlocutor or audience, the purpose of the assignment, and the format of the response.

During the research analysis, several interrelated directions for developing independent tasks were identified. First, it is necessary to distinguish the pedagogical, psychological, and linguodidactic functions of questions, exercises, and tasks, and select them in alignment with the purpose of working with the text. Second, depending on the speech situation, it is important to consider the levels of questioning the interlocutor, explaining, and substantiating thoughts. Third,

clear criteria must be established for explaining based on infographics, designing independent tasks, and evaluating completed work.

Fourth, defining pedagogical educational trajectories theoretically and practically, as well as developing skills in searching for and selecting electronic bibliographic information related to mother tongue education, expands independent reading opportunities. Fifth, utilizing media education tools enables students to independently master educational materials in various formats and make purposeful use of didactic resources. This process encompasses not only completing the task but also activities such as information selection, processing, analysis, and result presentation.

Examining the state of task utilization in higher education demonstrated the necessity of more precisely defining the differences between their types and functions. To ensure that the didactic provision of independent task design serves to develop the content of mother tongue education, it must rely on the principles of contextual compatibility, differential-semantic precision, logical consistency, and step-by-step sequencing. Furthermore, systematicity and consistency must be maintained in innovative and information-based methodological approaches, and independent activities and assessment mechanisms tailored to the credit-module system should be interconnected.

The process of developing independent tasks also envisions the opportunity to foster media-technological, communicative, methodical, pedagogical-psychological, informational, creative, innovative, and special competencies. Therefore, the form of presenting questions, exercises, and tasks in textbooks must be evaluated by taking into account the student's cognitive level, independence in task execution, and ability to summarize results. Studies dedicated to improving independent study tasks in recent years also demonstrate the necessity of a deeper exploration of the linguodidactic and methodological aspects of this problem.

At the same integrative time, expressing the linguodidactic and pedagogical foundations of designing independent tasks in the form of a model map helps to clearly demonstrate the connection between the components of the methodological process. Developing an integrative-methodical approach to improving independent study tasks in higher education institutions based on the activities of the Information and Resource Center (IRC) is also one of the key directions. This entails analyzing experiences related to the internal educational activities of higher education institutions, local self-governance practices, and the activities of educational institutions with independent management.

The prospects for developing speech competence within the credit-module system depend on mechanisms that allow for the recognition of independent study outcomes, transparent assessment of learning activities, and enabling students to determine their own trajectories. By studying advanced experiences, improving didactic-methodical provision, and utilizing the activities of the information and resource center, it is possible to enrich the resource base of independent tasks. Practices supporting self-governance and independent educational activities in higher education institutions are also among the aspects that need to be explored in this direction.

Discussion

In teaching the mother tongue, it is necessary to consistently introduce innovative approaches based on independent study tasks. To achieve this, it is important to improve the system of scientific, methodological, psychological, and pedagogical support, as well as to make targeted use of the achievements of Uzbek ethnolinguistics in mother tongue education. Tasks should stimulate students' independent research and direct them to apply their knowledge in specific speech situations.

The value of a textbook is not determined solely by the volume of theoretical information it contains. One of its essential functions is to offer independent tasks that teach students to properly utilize the rich potential of the mother tongue. The goal of higher education is not only to train specialists with knowledge in linguistics, but also to shape individuals who can clearly express their thoughts using language tools, engage in creative thinking, and put their knowledge into practice. Therefore, the improvement of independent tasks must be carried out in connection with didactic and pedagogical principles.

In developing students' speech skills, the use of dictionaries, texts, and various communicative situations, conveying content related to the national language and spirituality, and preparing future specialists for diverse communication conditions play a significant role. For this purpose, independent tasks must require students not merely to repeat information, but also to plan, express, and analyze their own thoughts.

Current curricula and textbooks remain an essential tool for organizing independent study within the credit-module system. In higher education, a textbook serves as a foundational resource for both students and instructors, both during and outside the classroom. Therefore, the content, structure, and execution conditions of the independent tasks within it deserve special attention. Tasks must be harmonious with lesson objectives and learning outcomes, and should also guide students' independent actions.

Electronic textbooks can utilize the capabilities of modern media technologies to integrate multiple information sources into a single educational environment. In such an environment, dictionaries, audio and video materials, collections of exercises and tasks, tests, visual aids, and electronic resources are presented in an interconnected manner. Independent study tasks should serve as the primary methodological tool that ensures students navigate purposefully among these resources, guiding them toward selection and mastery.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis indicate the necessity of further improving the content and methodology of independent study tasks in mother tongue textbooks. New-generation educational literature must harmonize with the principles of the credit-module system, student-centered education, and the requirements for transparent outcome assessment. Tasks within textbooks should be aimed at developing skills in working with texts, preparing essays and reports, conducting informational and bibliographic research, utilizing graphic organizers, and expressing thoughts logically.

Although certain tasks encountered in higher education and general secondary education textbooks are close in content, the methodology for designing independent study tasks is not always systematically manifested within them. In some cases, the quality of tasks remains dependent on the author's personal methodological experience. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a consistent linguodidactic methodology that demonstrates the functional differences between questions, exercises, and tasks, and teaches how to select them in accordance with goals and outcomes.

Overall, improving independent study tasks based on pragmatic, contextual, and step-by-step approaches helps develop students' speech competence, independent thinking, and ability to work with information. This work should be carried out in conjunction with updating the content of textbooks, making effective use of electronic and media-educational resources, and evaluating educational tasks based on precise criteria. Continuing subsequent theoretical and practical research in this direction will serve to strengthen the didactic and linguodidactic foundations of mother tongue education

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