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DIGITAL STORYTELLING TECHNOLOGY AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING THE SPEECH COMPETENCE OF 5TH–6TH GRADE STUDENTS IN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE LESSONS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The article explores the didactic potential of "Digital Storytelling" as a tool for the targeted development of speech competence in 5th and 6th-grade students during Russian language lessons in secondary schools of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The author clarifies the structure of speech competence relative to this age group and reveals the connection between students' narrative activities and the formation of monologic and dialogic speech, vocabulary enrichment, and the development of coherence and expressiveness in communication. The study presents a typology of digital storytelling tasks, differentiated by the level of linguistic autonomy. The results of the experimental teaching confirm a positive trend in the development of speech competence within the experimental classes.

Introduction. The problem of developing students' speech skills is central to the methodology of teaching the Russian language at all levels of education. In grades 5–6,

schoolchildren undergo a qualitative leap in their linguistic development: their vocabulary expands, sentence syntax becomes more complex, and the ability to produce coherent monologic texts begins to take shape. At the same time, it is during this period that educators often observe a decline in students' communicative activity: public speaking causes anxiety, and the independent production of text becomes a challenge. Finding pedagogical tools capable of simultaneously reducing speech anxiety and ensuring the systematic development of speech competence is an urgent methodological task.

“Digital Storytelling” technology offers fundamentally new opportunities for addressing this issue. Unlike traditional forms of text-based work (such as summaries or essays), a digital story involves a multi-channel realization of the author's intent: the student not only writes the text but also records the voiceover, selects visual elements, and edits the final product. Such multisensory activity creates a powerful motivational impulse and fosters a distinct sense of authorship regarding one’s own linguistic creation.

While the potential of Digital Storytelling for foreign language teaching is extensively covered in international literature [Nguyen, 2011; Xu, Park, Baek, 2011; Chung, 2006], its application specifically as a means of developing speech competence in Russian language lessons (as a second language) within the multilingual environment of Uzbekistani schools remains practically unexamined. This article aims to fill this gap.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of a typology of differentiated tasks for creating digital stories, aimed at the consistent development of all components of speech competence in 5th–6th grade students, as well as in the experimental verification of their effectiveness within the context of schools in Uzbekistan.

Methodology. The objective of the study is to theoretically substantiate and methodically describe the use of "Digital Storytelling" technology as a means of developing the speech competence of 5th–6th grade students in Russian language lessons, and to experimentally verify its effectiveness.

To achieve this objective, the following tasks were defined:

• To clarify the content and structure of speech competence for 5th–6th grade students within the context of Russian language instruction;

• To identify the mechanisms through which narrative activity influences the development of speech competence;

• To develop a typology of tasks for creating digital stories, taking into account the students' level of linguistic autonomy;

• To determine diagnostic tools and conduct a pedagogical experiment.

The research is based on the communicative-activity approach (E.A. Bystrova, T.A. Ladyzhenskaya, M.R. Lvov), the psycholinguistic theory of speech activity (A.A. Leontiev, N.I. Zhinkin), and the concept of narrative education (J. Bruner, D. Herman).

The empirical framework includes: pedagogical observation, analysis of student assignments, teacher surveys, and quantitative data processing (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, $p < 0.05$).

Теоретические основы исследования

2.1. Speech Competence of 5th–6th Grade Students: Component Structure

Following E. A. Bystrova, we interpret speech competence as a set of language skills that ensure a student's full participation in communication: the ability to comprehend others' texts (receptive skills) and to produce one's own (productive skills) in various communicative situations [Bystrova, 2007]. Within the structure of speech competence, we distinguish four interconnected components:

• Lexical Component: The richness of the active vocabulary, precision in word choice, and the ability to paraphrase.

• Grammatical-Syntactic Component: The variety of syntactic structures used and the grammatical correctness of the utterance.

• Textual Component: The coherence, consistency, and semantic integrity of the produced text; mastery of narrative structure (exposition — rising action — climax — resolution).

• Expressive Component: The use of figurative and expressive language resources, as well as the intonational delivery of oral speech.

It is precisely the narrative genre of the digital story that possesses the unique capacity to activate all four components simultaneously: the student selects specific words (lexis), constructs sentences (syntax), organizes the plot (text), and imbues the story with emotional resonance (expressiveness).

2.2. Narrative Activity as a Foundation for Speech Development

Jerome Bruner convincingly demonstrated that narrative — or storytelling — is a fundamental cognitive and linguistic mechanism: human beings comprehend the world primarily through stories [Bruner, 1986]. At the age of 11–13 (5th–6th grades), narrative thinking reaches a qualitatively new level: students become capable of constructing multifaceted plots, introducing a narrator’s perspective, and conveying the internal states of characters. For this reason, creating digital stories at this age is not merely motivating but is a psychologically organic form of activity.

Digital Storytelling enhances narrative activity through its multimodal (poly-coded) nature: the student is required to coordinate the verbal and visual planes of the narrative, which significantly complicates and deepens the work on the text. Research indicates that students who create digital stories edit their texts, on average, 3 to 4 times more actively than when writing traditional essays [Xu, Park, Baek, 2011]. It is precisely within this editing process that the most intensive growth of speech competence occurs.

Results and Discussion. The key methodological contribution of this research is the development of a typology of tasks, differentiated by the student's level of linguistic autonomy. The typology includes three levels, each of which implies a certain degree of reliance on ready-made linguistic and structural models (Table 1).

Table 1 — Typology of Digital Storytelling Tasks (Grades 5–6) by Level of Linguistic Autonomy

Level	Task Type	Linguistic Scaffolding (Support)	Target Competence Components
I (Reproductive)	Narrating a prepared text with selection of illustrations	Full script text, storyboard plan, image bank	**Expressive** (intonation, pace, pausing); **Lexical** (activation of passive vocabulary)
II (Partially Productive)	Completing a story based on a given opening or plan	Story exposition (2–3 sentences), 5–6 point outline, keywords	**Textual** (narrative structure); **Grammatical-Syntactic** (variety of constructions)
III (Productive)	Independent creation of a digital story on a topic	Topic, genre (memoir / reportage / fairy tale), keywords	**All components** of speech competence; **author's perspective**; **expressiveness**

The transition between levels is not rigid (i.e., not strictly tied to a specific grade or academic quarter) but flexible, depending on the current level of a particular student's speech development and the complexity of the linguistic material being studied. This differentiation allows for the inclusion of students with varying levels of Russian language proficiency in Digital Storytelling activities. This is particularly crucial in the multilingual environment of

schools in Uzbekistan, where classes often consist of children with significantly different levels of Russian speech competence.

Throughout the academic year, each student creates at least four digital stories: two at Levels I–II (first semester) and two at Levels II–III (second semester). The story topics correlate with the content of the curriculum units:

- "Lexis" → "The History of a Single Word";
- "The Noun" → "An Animate Object Tells Its Story";
- "The Text" → "Summer Memories";
- "The Adverb" → "How I Learned Something New".

Lesson Fragment Example

Lesson Topic: "Figurative and Expressive Language Resources: Metaphor" (6th Grade).

Activity Type: Creating a digital story titled "Metaphors of My City" (Level II–III; two 45-minute sessions + homework).

Lesson 1 (Preparatory). Students listen to a model digital story about their hometown, where metaphors are intentionally highlighted in the text.

- Task: Identify the metaphors and determine the imagery each one creates.
- Pair Work: Students compile their own "metaphor bank" about the city (10–12 images).
- Mini-Workshop: The teacher demonstrates how a single object can be described using three different metaphors (e.g., the sun as a coin, a searchlight, or a sunflower).

Homework: Write a story script (10–12 sentences) using at least five metaphors; select 5–7 photos or drawings for the visual sequence.

Lesson 2 (Production and Presentation). Students record their scripts (using a smartphone) and assemble a slideshow in Canva or PowerPoint.

- Peer Review: Three stories are screened for the class, followed by an oral discussion based on specific criteria: the accuracy of metaphors, the alignment of images with the text, and vocal expressiveness.
- Interaction: The student-author answers questions from the audience.
- Target Speech Skills: Monologic delivery, argumentation of evaluation, and active listening.

Conclusion. The study conducted confirms that "Digital Storytelling" technology is an effective and didactically sound tool for developing the speech competence of 5th–6th grade students in Russian language lessons. The narrative nature of a digital story ensures the simultaneous activation of all components of speech competence: lexical, grammatical-

syntactic, textual, and expressive. The developed typology of differentiated tasks allows for the inclusion of students with varying levels of Russian language proficiency, which is of fundamental importance for the multilingual educational environment of Uzbekistan.

The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that the proposed task typology and the described methodological system can be implemented by Russian language teachers directly in the educational process without the need for specialized technical equipment—students' smartphones and free presentation editors are sufficient.

Directions for further research include: A comparative analysis of the impact of Digital Storytelling on the speech development of students learning Russian as a native language versus as a non-native language;

The development of a system for assessing speech competence using corpus-based methods for analyzing student-produced texts.

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