

Rhetorical Argumentation Education in Elementary School

Oksana Peresada

Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of Primary
Education
Irkutsk State University
Irkutsk, Russia
art-oksana@yandex.ru

Natalia Korepina

Institute of Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Communication
Irkutsk National Research Technical University
Irkutsk, Russia
cosmir@yandex.ru

Elena Zhdanova

Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of Primary Education
Irkutsk State University
Irkutsk, Russia
zhdanoval@yandex.ru

Abstract—The paper defines the importance of the argumentative culture of a person in the modern world. It reviews the formation of rhetorical competences in elementary school students through educational disputes. The rhetorical skills are defined as the ability to influence an individual or audience with verbal methods during interpersonal or collective communication and are seen as a structural component of communicative competence. Communicative competences are considered the most important, as they include universal learning actions tied to ability to facilitate the dialogue, present personal opinions and rationalize them, while being prepared to resolve conflicts by cooperation and accounting for the interests of both sides. Communicative speech activity - the dispute has learning and developmental opportunities in the classroom. The main method chosen for the creation of rhetorical competences in elementary school students is the educational dispute. The conditions pertaining to the most effective formation of rhetorical competence through the educational disputes are defined and validated: learning how to make a reasoning, training how to pick different theses or arguments, creating educational situations with a difficult question, using formulas defined by the etiquette.

Keywords—communicative competence; rhetorical competence; rhetoric; dispute; discussion; arguments; younger students

I. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the Federal education development program in 2016 - 2020 is to create an environment that will allow for effective development of education in the Russian Federation, enabling «emergence of marketable human resources» that will be used not only in Russia, but all over the world... [1].

The competition between different education systems means constant need to renew the technologies, steady rate of adopting innovations and quick adjustment to the needs and requirements of the changing world.

Development of the general education system includes individualization and placing emphasis on the practical skills and fundamental knowledge.

One of the foremost challenges of the governmental education policy is supporting the competency-based approach that connects academic knowledge and practical skills.

The key competences (conceptual, cultural, educational, informational, communicational, societal, personal growth) [2] that define modern quality of education in Russia are primarily formed in general education school.

The Federal Educational Standard for the elementary education is built upon the systematic-pragmatic approach. The standard is oriented towards graduates that «value their nation, land and country; respect and accept family and society values»; «are ready to take the initiative and to be responsible for their actions to the family and the society»; «are good-willed, prepared to listen and understand while in conversation, rationalize their beliefs and provide their opinion». The standard gives an example of the graduate who «weighs their actions against the moral values, respects the public, can hold a constructive discussion, reach mutual understanding, cooperate to achieve common goals» [3].

All of the above leads to the conclusion that the state needs people who are resourceful, competent, charismatic, able to apply a variety of skills and abilities and have a steady grasp on culture, especially communicational.

Thus, one of the most important parts of the elementary and general education is communicational education.

In theory and practice, the communicative competence is considered as an advanced education. L.A. Petrovskaya, K.F. Sedov describe it as knowledge, social attitudes, skills and experience in the interpersonal communication. Y.M. Zhukov views it as a system of internal measures that regulate the communicative actions; Y.N. Emelianov writes that it is communicational orientation that depends on the wisdom and

sensory experience of the individual, as well as the ability to freely use the means of communication.

The communicative competence is connected with «the ability to send and receive information; using various ways: verbal and non-verbal; reaching adequate comprehension of communicative situation» [4]. It is also described as «the skill in building the effective speech activity and behavior that will conform to the ethnic standards of social interaction» [5].

We suggest that the communicative competences hold utmost importance because they include universal skills: the ability to comprehend the other party and maintain the dialogue; the preparedness to acknowledge different worldviews and their right to exist; the ability to present personal opinions and appraisals, as well as rationalize them; the skill to agree upon the redistribution of roles and functions in common activity; the willingness to resolve conflicts in a constructive way by taking into the account interests of both sides. On top of this, the personal results of elementary school graduate suggest: forming respectful approach towards differing opinions, developing moral senses, kindness, empathetic and understanding approach towards the feelings of other people; cultivating ability to cooperate with adults and peers in different social settings while avoiding conflicts and finding solutions to the difficult situations. The objectives in the sphere of «Humanities» must reflect the complete positive approach towards correct oral and written language as the markers of the general cultural and civil position of a human being; the comprehension of basic standards of the Russian language and conversational etiquette; the ability to define goals, means and conditions of communication and to select the linguistic tools necessary for the successful completion of communicative goals; the mastery of educational activities concerning linguistic units and the ability to use knowledge to solve educational, practical and communicational problems.

It is evident that the communicative competence is not homogeneous. It consists not only of cognitive and operational parts, but also motivational, ethical, social and behavioral [6]. The communicative competence is subdivided into linguistic, conversational, discursive, cultural, rhetorical competences [7]. Each of them, in their turn, includes a set of skills, knowledge and abilities required for the effortless and effective communication.

Among the competences mentioned above we consider the rhetorical competence that concerns the ability to successfully resolve conflicts and finding solutions to difficult situations as being the most difficult.

Terms such as «rhetorics», «rhetorical skills» and their meaning were actively researched in 1980-1990 in the scientific works of Y.V. Rozhdestvensky, L.K. Graudin, T.M. Miskevich, T.A. Ladyzhenskaia and other researchers in conjunction with development of the communicative approach towards education. The rhetorics was described as a science of effective use of speech components and technical means that allow completing different communicative goals.

The term «rhetorical skills» was for a long time connected with communicative, linguistic, textual and genre skills. But in the XXI century the ideas of rhetorical education and

rhetorization have influenced the education science and methodology and the rhetorical skills became a part of the communicative competence [7].

The rhetorical competence is understood to be the ability to consciously create, pronounce and reflect authored text of oral/rhetorical genre in accordance with the goal and situation of public speech [8].

Besides that, the rhetorical skills are connected with the ability to consciously affect an individual or the audience with verbal means during interpersonal, group and collective communication.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the modern society, the value and importance of the discussion culture of a human being, even an elementary school student cannot be overstated.

In the sphere of the global communication, the importance of conversational, polemical forms of communication grows not only on the personal level, but also on the level of the state. It is connected to the growth of communicational spheres and democratic trends in the society. During the discussion of the critical social problems, the emphasis is not placed on the single speaker, but onto the clash of different opinions that result in the opportunity to find the correct solutions.

At the modern stage, the research of argumentative speech is being conducted in communicative, rhetorical and dialectical spheres. The «communicative sphere is dedicated to the research of standards of correct reasoning and divergent cases (S. Toulmin, K. Rybacki, D. Rybacki, Ch.L. Hamblin, L.G. Vasiliev), the rhetorical sphere places emphasis on the argument and the effect it produces in the recipient (Ch. Perelman, F.H. van Eemeren, P. Houtlosser) and the dialectical sphere sees the argumentation as a type of a dialogue-based exchange of opinions directed towards elimination of the discrepancies (D.N. Walton, F.H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, B. Meuffels)» [9–12].

Nevertheless, the modern research not only places emphasis on the increasing importance of argumentative types of communication, but also on the aggression inherent to the conversational scenarios and the low culture of speech. It is the reason to educate people on the importance of cooperation and dialogue, as well as not only being able to defend their personal opinion, but also being able to doubt it.

The educational practice, elementary school included, sees the prevalence of monologue: the interaction is set between the teacher and the pupil, but not between the children themselves. It is necessary to set the education process - starting with the elementary school - so that some stages will see children contacting not only the teacher, but each other. «The truth - as said M.M. Bakhtin, - is not born or found in someone's head, it is born in dialogue of people seeking for the truth together».

The educational and developmental possibilities during the studies present in such important communicative action as a dispute. «Dispute is any clash of the opinions, difference in the

views on some subject, a contest in which both sides uphold their truth» [13]. The dispute, however, is not a homogeneous communicative action. The different parts of dispute are actions of statement, objection, rationalization. Different communication strategies define different types of disputes (truth-seeking dispute, persuasive dispute, assertive dispute, pure dispute). The dispute is expressed through the relevant genres of discussion, argument, debate, polemics, proceedings.

One of the most effective means of persuasion is discussion based on the personal acquisition of the truth. Discussion is a public dispute aimed towards defining and comparing different opinions, finding the real opinion and the correct solution to the problem. The discussion is categorized as the active method of learning reinforcement that develops creative thinking and provides education on the culture of dispute. Discussion trains to rationalize opinions with effective arguments and use different means of argumentation.

III. METHODS AND RESULTS

Teaching elementary school students to participate in the educational discussion allows completing a score of goals connected to the formation of the previously mentioned disciplinary and metadisciplinary achievements. Those goals will be reached in the most effective manner if: 1) the rhetorical skills connected to the creation and rationalization of personal opinion are formed in the elementary school students; 2) the educational situations that provoke clash of opinions are created and resolved as a part of educational discussion; 3) the elementary school students are taught correct communicational behavior during the discussion.

Completing the first condition is possible during the Russian language lessons where the elementary schools students are introduced to the structure of reasoning. During experiencing and analyzing different reasonings, the students will learn that the reasoning has two main parts: the part being reasoned (thesis) and the reasoning itself (argumentation). Those parts are connected into the reasoning with help of special words (bridging words): because, since, therefore, etc.

After the consolidation of indications of reasoning (two parts, bridging words), students must be trained in making reasonings themselves, although only partial at the moment. To this end, the teacher can present the students with some educational games.

The game «Finish the reasoning». The teacher presents thesis to students, while their goal is to finish the reasoning by adding the bridging word and the argumentation:

Winnie the Pooh often visited friends...

We feel sorry for the small donkey Eeyore...

We laugh at the wise Owl...

The fish from the A.S. Pushkin's fairy tale did not make the old woman's wish come true...

Brother Ivanushka became a goat...

Game «Explain why». Students are presented with a part of a simple reasoning that must be completed:

...my favourite subject, because...

You need to learn traffic laws, since...

You must wash your hands before eating, because ...

You must keep silence in the library, since ...

Game «Find the lost thesis». Students are presented with the argumentation and must complete it with a thesis:

..., since mercury is very toxic.

..., because the reader would not understand what is written.

..., since you must respect the work of others.

..., because whale calves are fed with milk.

Such games (and the similar) helps to reinforce the elementary school students understanding of the structure of reasoning and to train them to come up with argumentation or thesis. It also allows teacher to educate them on selecting the correct arguments. To this end, another game «Pick the right argument» can be used, where the correct argumentation for a given thesis is hidden amongst multiple options. The students must find the correct answer.

Learning how to create reasonings is continued by formation of the ability to add an example to the argumentation. A good way to accomplish this is to use fairy tales the children already know. By presenting an attribute of a hero, the students prove it by presenting an example situation from the fairy tale. As an example, the Puss in Boots made his owner rich and famous because he was crafty and resourceful. When the youngest son was bathing in the river, the Puss hid his clothes and told the passing king that he is actually drowning Marquis of Carabas who was robbed of his clothes by the brigands. Thus, the king gifted the marquis with fabulous clothes.

To reinforce the skill of giving the example the children must make a reasoning on topic «My favorite school subject». Presented with a thesis that sounds like «My favorite subject is...», the students are tasked to come up with a believable argumentation and provide one or more examples.

Elementary school students then continue learning how to create reasonings by adding a rule into the argumentation so it will be more persuasive. To this end, special linguistic situations are created, where the students must use different rules (orthographical, mathematical, etc.) as an argument. For example, they need to show which vowel is used in a word such as «joyful». The children should make the following reasoning: «The word «joyful» has the following letter because we know the rule for it». Linguistic situations with various characters may also be used. For example, the sentences made by two students can be read aloud with an explanation of the mistakes made. The reasoning will be something like: «while dividing the word «notebook» in two parts, the student made a mistake as he divided a single letter instead of a syllable». It is important for students to use special phrases while making such reasonings: «We know the rule that...», «There is a rule...», «As stated in the rule...», etc.

Another method to make an argument even more compelling is using quotes. Teaching how to supplement argumentation with a quote is the other step in educating the elementary school students how to reason. This works well in the Literature classes while analyzing a piece of fiction or a book on popular science. It works as a dialogue with elective

reading where the students must answer the teacher's questions while using the text from the book as the argumentation for their opinion. While doing this, the students use special phrases to ease usage of quote as an argument: «The author says that...», «There are following words in the text...», etc. This work will also help to improve conceptual reading of the elementary school students [14].

The next method to reinforce the argumentation that the students will learn is using multiple arguments. First, the elementary school students will learn to use multiple arguments from the excerpts from the educational texts. The thesis of the text, the amount of the arguments, their nature (facts, examples, rules, quotes) and their introductory words (first, second, third) must all be brought to the students' attention. Each text is summed up in a brief and informative reasoning which includes thesis and argumentation. After this, the children may practice in making their own reasonings with multiple arguments. The approximate topics for them would be: «Why we should read books?», «Where would I like to spend my vacations and why?», «Who you will be when you grow up and why?»

Educational situations that provoke a clash of opinions can be created at any time. The Literature classes may serve as an example for organizing such situations. For example, the analysis of a text can be done in the form of a discussion, allowing for an in-depth analysis of a problem. To this end, a book is chosen that contains an ethical situation that allows for different interpretations by the readers.

After reading the book, the teacher presents children with the problem that will set them on course towards the moral collisions and clashing of opinions. The students must state their personal opinions while listening to the opinions of their peers. It will lead to a difficult situation. Who is right? Who has the moral higher ground? This will serve as the starting point. After this, the teacher must organize the creation of reasonings by the students which will use different means of the rationalization. During the dispute, some opinions may be deemed as false while others will remain true - sometimes even both opinions may be correct. While doing this, the children will learn how to communicate, accept the existence of different opinions and how to rationalize their own position. After voicing different opinions, the elementary school students will understand that their opinion is not the only one and there is actually an assortment of opinions that differ from theirs. The children will be able to learn that there are many different worldviews, which will serve to enrich their experience while helping to overcome the egocentrism commonly attributed to their age [15].

For example, after reading through a Russian fairy tale «The Fox and the Crane» teacher can raise a question: «Was the Crane right when he vowed revenge on the Fox and followed through with his threat?». The moral implications of the situation described in the tale will lead to the emergence of differing opinions: some students will think that the Crane was right, while others may see it as a result of a negative trait, deeming such an act as a bad one.

The teacher will then propose finding out who was right. Whose opinion has better argumentation? To this end, a

reasoning with solid arguments must be made, the one will be able to persuade the other party. Such work may be organized in a group form, with groups made by sorting the children by the allegiance to one of the opinions. While working in a group, the students must make a reasoning. Following examples can be made. «We think that the Crane was right in taking his vengeance, first, because she behaved badly by making fun of the Crane; second, because she showed that she did not take him as a friend (because you don't do such things to your friends), and, third, that she never thought how the Crane would feel in the situation that was her fault. In this tale, the Fox is guilty. You reap what you sow». «We think that the Crane was wrong to strike back against the Fox, because vengefulness is a bad trait. Evil begets evil and, after suffering the humiliation, the Fox will surely try to strike back in turn. The Crane could have done it differently (explain to the Fox that she was wrong, stop talking to her, simply forget about it, etc.). There are no winners here and both the Crane and the Fox lost their friendship and became enemies».

Such work can also be done with the fable by I.A. Krylov «The Dragonfly and the Ants» (was the Ant right?), with the story by N.M. Artyukhova «Coward» (was Valya really a coward?) or with the story by V.A. Oseeva «Blue Leaves» (was Katya right?) and any other that have a suitable moral problem.

Teaching correct verbal behavior during the dispute is possible while learning the conversational etiquette. While analyzing the texts the students learn correct words and phrases suitable for use while making an argument («I will try to explain my opinion...», «Let me give a few arguments...», «Allow me to disagree...», «You can see for yourself...», «You probably know that...», «Sorry, but I don't agree with you here...», etc.

IV. CONCLUSION

This way, keeping to the conditions - teaching elementary school students the structure of the reasoning, training them to pick from different theses and arguments, creating educational situations with difficult problems, using formulas defined by the etiquette will help to maintain efficient formation of the universal communicative learning actions and interactions among the elementary school students. Educating the students about the correct way of having a dispute will help to overcome the age-associated egocentrism and create communicative competences. This will allow graduates to succeed in the modern social and professional environment that requires culture of speech and the ability to communicate in efficient manner.

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