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INCREASING THE LEVEL OF DISCURSIVE COMPETENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT HIGH SCHOOL

Abstract

The article examines the systematic development of high school students' discursive competence in English language teaching. The study aims to develop a methodological model integrating communicative, task-based, and genre-based approaches. The research methods include theoretical analysis, comparative synthesis, and pedagogical modeling. A four-stage cycle is proposed, encompassing discourse observation, planning, communicative task performance, and reflection. The model is designed to develop coherence and cohesion, turn-taking management, appropriate genre and register selection, and pragmatic appropriateness. Its implementation involves discussions, debates, role-play situations, problem-solving tasks, storytelling, and digital multimodal projects. An analytical assessment framework based on five criteria is presented, along with practical recommendations for teachers. The model is described not as the outcome of an empirical experiment but as a theoretically grounded framework ready for subsequent validation in school practice.

Keywords: discursive competence, English language teaching, communicative task, digital multimodality, assessment

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ЖОҒАРЫ СЫНЫПТАРДА АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУ БАРЫСЫНДА ДИСКУРСЫҚ ҚҰЗЫРЕТТІЛІК ДЕҢГЕЙІН АРТТЫРУ

Аңдатпа

Мақалада жоғары сынып оқушыларының ағылшын тіліндегі дискурсивтік құзыреттілігін жүйелі дамыту мәселесі қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты - коммуникативтік, тапсырмаға негізделген және жанрлық оқыту қағидаларын біріктіретін әдістемелік модель ұсыну. Теориялық талдау, салыстырмалы синтез және педагогикалық модельдеу әдістері қолданылды. Нәтижесінде мәтіннің тұтастығын, байланыстылығын, сөйлеу кезегін басқаруды, жанр мен регистрді таңдауды және прагматикалық сәйкестікті қамтитын төрт кезеңді цикл әзірленді. Цикл дискурсты байқау, жоспарлау, орындау және рефлексия кезеңдерінен тұрады. Оны пікірталас, дебат, рөлдік жағдаят, проблемалық тапсырма, әңгімелеу және цифрлық мультимодальды жоба арқылы жүзеге асыру ұсынылады. Мақалада бес критерийден тұратын аналитикалық бағалау жүйесі мен мұғалімге арналған практикалық ұсынымдар берілген. Ұсынылған модель нақты эксперимент нәтижесі ретінде емес, мектеп жағдайында тексеруге дайын теориялық-әдістемелік құрылым ретінде сипатталады.

Кілт сөздер: дискурсивтік құзыреттілік, ағылшын тілін оқыту, коммуникативтік тапсырма, цифрлық мультимодальдылық, бағалау

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ПОВЫШЕНИЕ УРОВНЯ ДИСКУРСИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В СТАРШИХ КЛАССАХ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается системное развитие дискурсивной компетенции старшеклассников при обучении английскому языку. Цель исследования состоит в разработке методической модели, объединяющей коммуникативный, заданный и жанровый подходы. Используются методы теоретического анализа, сравнительного синтеза и педагогического моделирования. Предложен четырехэтапный цикл, охватывающий наблюдение за дискурсом, планирование, выполнение коммуникативной задачи и рефлексия. Модель направлена на развитие связности и цельности высказывания, управление очередностью реплик, выбор жанра и регистра, а также прагматическую уместность. Ее реализация предполагает дискуссии, дебаты, ролевые ситуации, проблемные задания, рассказывание историй и цифровые мультимодальные проекты. Представлена аналитическая система оценивания по пяти критериям и сформулированы практические рекомендации для учителей. Модель описывается не как результат проведенного эксперимента, а как теоретически обоснованная структура, готовая к последующей проверке в школьной практике.

Ключевые слова: дискурсивная компетенция, обучение английскому языку, коммуникативное задание, цифровая мультимодальность, оценивание

Introduction

Successful English use at high school requires more than accurate sentences. Learners must connect ideas across turns and paragraphs, signal relationships, maintain a topic, adjust register, and respond to other speakers. These abilities form discursive competence, the part of language ability that turns separate linguistic resources into purposeful communication. The issue is particularly important in upper-secondary education because students increasingly participate in presentations, discussions, project work, written argumentation, and digitally mediated interaction. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages treats reception, production, interaction, mediation, and pragmatic competence as interdependent dimensions of language use and provides descriptors that emphasize coherence, thematic development, turn-taking, and propositional precision [1]. This orientation shifts classroom attention from isolated forms to sustained meaning-making.

The theoretical basis of communicative language teaching also supports this shift. Canale and Swain distinguished grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse-related, and strategic dimensions of communicative ability, showing that knowledge of rules does not automatically produce effective communication [2]. A learner may control vocabulary and grammar but still produce disconnected statements, repeat the same linking devices, ignore a partner's contribution, or use an unsuitable style. Such performance indicates a gap between sentence-level knowledge and the capacity to construct discourse.

High-school instruction may maintain this gap when lessons are dominated by short answers, predetermined dialogues, translation, or decontextualized grammar practice. These activities support accuracy but give limited practice in managing a complete communicative event.

Students need recurring opportunities to interpret authentic discourse, plan extended contributions, negotiate meaning, and revise performance after feedback.

The aim of this theoretical and methodological study is to design a coherent model for increasing discursive competence in English language teaching at high school. The research question is: how can communicative, task-based, genre-based, and digitally supported practices be organized into a teachable cycle that develops both individual text construction and interactional control? The scientific novelty lies in the proposed Discourse Competence Development Cycle, which integrates noticing, planning, performance, and reflective reconstruction with a five-criterion assessment framework. Because no primary classroom dataset was supplied, the article does not report experimental gains. It presents a model that can be implemented and tested in a subsequent school-based study.

To specify the construct underlying this study, discursive competence can be defined as the ability to organize spoken, written, and multimodal language into coherent, cohesive, contextually appropriate communication. In the pedagogically motivated model developed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell, discourse competence occupies a central position because linguistic, actional, sociocultural, and strategic resources become communicatively meaningful through their organization in discourse [3]. This view is valuable for school instruction: it prevents teachers from reducing discourse to a list of connectors and requires attention to how ideas, intentions, identities, and relationships are managed over time.

Cohesion is the visible linguistic dimension of this organization. Reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical relations help listeners and readers trace meaning across clauses. Halliday and Hasan established that such ties contribute to texture, although the presence of cohesive devices alone does not guarantee a coherent message [4]. In classroom practice, students therefore need to examine both form and function. For example, they should identify what a pronoun refers to, why a contrast marker is used, how lexical repetition maintains a topic, and whether the sequence of propositions supports the intended argument.

Coherence depends on the conceptual organization that a listener or reader can infer. A coherent contribution has a recognizable purpose, a controlled topic, relevant support, and an intelligible progression. It may follow a problem-solution, claim-evidence, cause-effect, chronological, or comparison structure. Genre awareness helps learners predict these patterns, while register awareness guides vocabulary, stance, politeness, and formality. Pragmatic appropriateness connects discourse to participants and situation.

Spoken discourse adds the challenge of co-construction. Participants must enter and leave turns, show active listening, repair misunderstanding, invite clarification, develop another speaker's idea, and disagree without closing interaction. Research on interactional competence describes performance as jointly achieved rather than as the sum of independent speaking turns [5]. Consequently, assessment should not reward fluency alone. It should also capture responsiveness, topic development, listener support, and the ability to maintain a productive exchange.

For this study, discursive competence is operationalized through five components: coherence; cohesion; interaction management; genre and register control; and pragmatic appropriateness. Strategic competence supports them when learners paraphrase, request help, reformulate, or plan. Multimodal resources contribute when images, captions, voice, and sequence clarify meaning. This definition supplies the objectives and assessment criteria for the proposed model.

Materials and methods

The study used theoretical analysis, comparative synthesis, and pedagogical modelling. The material covered communicative and discourse competence, cohesion, interaction, speaking instruction, task-based learning, and digital multimodal composing. Official framework documentation and peer-reviewed publications were prioritized. The analysis compared constructs, instructional principles, scaffolding, assessment, and relevance to secondary language learning.

The modelling procedure grouped recurrent features into five components, mapped classroom practices to observable evidence, and sequenced them by the support learners require before, during, and after communication. Constructive alignment required the discourse feature, task, feedback, and assessment evidence to address the same objective.

The model also draws on a holistic approach connecting awareness, input, planning, performance, feedback, repetition, and reflection [6]. These principles were adapted for written and multimodal discourse. The method establishes conceptual coherence and testability, not causal effectiveness. Empirical validation would require comparable pre- and post-tasks, trained raters, and a documented instructional period.

Results and discussion

The theoretical synthesis yields a proposed Discourse Competence Development Cycle consisting of four recurring phases: Notice, Design, Perform, and Reconstruct. The phases can be completed within one extended lesson or distributed across a short unit. Each cycle focuses on one communicative event, such as a discussion, debate, story, problem-solving meeting, explanatory presentation, review, or digital narrative. The teacher begins with the discourse outcome and then chooses language support. This backward sequence prevents the lesson from becoming a collection of unrelated vocabulary, grammar, and technology activities.

During Notice, learners study a short authentic or teacher-curated model. They identify purpose, audience, stages, topic progression, cohesive signals, turn-taking moves, and register. A transcript can distinguish claims, evidence, responses, and repair. Students may compare an effective model with a fragmented version and explain why one is easier to follow. Audio and video make pacing, intonation, listener responses, and multimodal cues observable. The purpose is guided noticing, not imitation.

During Design, learners create a discourse plan rather than a full script. The plan contains the intended outcome, two or three stages, key ideas, possible evidence, interaction moves, and a limited bank of useful expressions. Task-based instruction is relevant here because a meaningful outcome gives learners a reason to select and adapt language while planning support reduces avoidable overload [7]. A problem-solving group might allocate roles and agree on decision criteria; a debater might prepare a claim, warrant, counterargument, and concession; a storyteller might organize setting, disruption, response, and resolution. The teacher differentiates support through planning frames, discourse-marker banks, model openings, or optional challenge prompts.

During Perform, students use English to complete the communicative task. Pair and group discussions should include an information or opinion gap so that participants must listen and respond. Debate develops claim-evidence relations and controlled disagreement. Role-play requires register and pragmatic adjustment. Storytelling develops temporal coherence and reference. Text reconstruction makes cohesive relations visible through sequencing decisions. Repetition with a new partner retains the communicative purpose while improving organization and delivery.

Genre-based scaffolding strengthens this phase when it makes social purpose and structural choices explicit without prescribing identical texts. Genre pedagogy treats successful performance as access to recognizable ways of organizing meaning for particular communities [8]. In high-school English, teachers can jointly deconstruct a model, jointly construct one response with the class, and then move toward independent production. Scaffolds should be removed gradually. If students continue reading complete scripts, the activity measures prepared reading rather than discursive control.

Collaboration should produce accountable discourse, not simply divide labour. Collaborative writing research shows the value of shared planning, negotiation, and joint revision when learners have a reason to discuss language and content choices [9]. A useful protocol assigns rotating functions such as facilitator, evidence checker, coherence monitor, and summarizer. Roles guide attention but should not restrict participation. After the task, each student should still produce an individual oral or written reflection so that the teacher can distinguish group success from individual learning.

Digital work extends audiences and modes. Students can record an explanation, annotate a transcript, rearrange a shared outline, comment on an argument, or create a short digital story. A systematic review of multimodality in English classrooms identifies mode selection and explicit metalanguage as pedagogical concerns [10]. Research on secondary classrooms shows that digital multimodal composition can connect language, identity, and purposeful production when learners receive design and linguistic support [11]. Teachers should limit tools, protect privacy, provide non-digital alternatives, and assess how modes contribute to meaning.

During Reconstruct, learners use evidence to improve the discourse. They review a recording, transcript, collaborative document, or observer notes; select one successful feature and one priority for revision; and then reproduce a key segment. The revision may involve moving an idea, replacing an unclear reference, adding a response to a partner, adjusting register, or deleting a connector that does not express the intended relation. A genre-based model for assessing digital multimodal composing demonstrates the importance of linking communicative purpose, organization, language, and modal choices within one assessment logic [12]. The same principle applies here: feedback must describe the effectiveness of the whole communicative event, not count isolated errors.

A four-lesson unit illustrates the cycle. Lesson one compares discussion clips and establishes success criteria. Lesson two introduces a community problem and supports planning with claim-evidence and turn-taking prompts. Lesson three records a group discussion, followed by peer assessment and a targeted mini-lesson. Lesson four repeats the discussion with changed roles and adds individual reflection. The sequence provides comparable evidence without presenting hypothetical scores as completed research.

The principal result of the theoretical synthesis is a teachable alignment between construct, activity, evidence, and feedback. The five-component construct identifies what discursive competence means; the four-phase cycle identifies how it can be practised; the communicative event supplies observable evidence; and reconstruction turns assessment into further learning. This alignment addresses a common weakness in language lessons where teachers state a broad speaking objective but assess grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency without examining how the message is organized or co-constructed.

Assessment can use five criteria scored from 0 to 3: coherence; cohesion; interaction management; genre and register control; and pragmatic appropriateness. A score of 0 indicates that the feature is absent or prevents communication. A score of 1 indicates emerging control with frequent breakdowns or heavy support. A score of 2 indicates generally effective control with occasional lapses. A score of 3 indicates sustained, flexible, and audience-appropriate control. The maximum score is 15. Descriptors should be adapted to the target task, and samples should be discussed before grading. For a written text, interaction management can be reframed as anticipation of the reader and response to alternative positions; for a group discussion, it includes turn entry, uptake, clarification, and repair.

The model predicts improvement through three mechanisms. Repeated noticing builds an explicit repertoire of discourse options. Supported performance shifts this knowledge into communicative use. Reconstruction makes comparison possible between intention and evidence. Digital recordings and shared texts strengthen the third mechanism because they preserve performance for review, but they do not replace teacher judgement or peer dialogue. Current research on digital multimodal composing calls for closer attention to task design, learner agency, assessment, and the relationship between linguistic development and modal choices [13]. The proposed cycle responds by placing technology inside an explicit learning sequence.

The model has not been validated with a defined school sample. Its phases and criteria require testing across proficiency levels, genres, and contexts. Raters need training because judgments of coherence and pragmatic appropriateness can vary, while digital production may create access differences. Future research should report context, establish inter-rater agreement, and compare component scores rather than only a total speaking score. Student reflections could help explain transfer to new tasks.

For classroom implementation, teachers should select one discourse focus for each cycle. The model text, task instructions, observation sheet, and feedback should foreground that focus. Short, frequent cycles are manageable and let learners apply feedback while the earlier performance is still memorable.

Feedback should begin with meaning and organization. Teachers can ask whether the audience understood the purpose, where the topic became unclear, and which contribution advanced the discussion. Language correction then targets patterns that affected the discourse. Peer feedback should use no more than two criteria. Students should rehearse, repeat, and reconstruct before a final judgment.

Schools can implement the model with ordinary resources. A phone recorder, word processor, shared slide, printed transcript, or paper cards are sufficient. Consent and privacy procedures are necessary when recordings or online platforms are used, and public posting should never be required. For mixed-proficiency classes, the teacher can vary planning support, task complexity, and expected length while keeping the same communicative purpose. Progress should be documented through a small portfolio containing an initial sample, one annotated reflection, a reconstructed sample, and the rubric.

Conclusion

Discursive competence gives learners control over communication beyond the sentence. It integrates coherence, cohesion, interaction management, genre and register awareness, and pragmatic appropriateness. High-school instruction can develop these abilities when students repeatedly analyse complete communicative events, plan for a real outcome, perform with others, and reconstruct their discourse from evidence.

The Discourse Competence Development Cycle offers a practical structure for this work. Its contribution is the alignment of four instructional phases with five assessment criteria across spoken, written, and multimodal tasks. The model does not claim measured effectiveness without classroom data. It provides a transparent basis for implementation and empirical testing, enabling future studies to examine which components improve, under what conditions, and whether learners transfer them to unfamiliar audiences and genres.

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