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METHODS AIMED AT DEVELOPING ASSOCIATIVE THINKING IN STUDENTS

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Abstract
This article explores the concept of associative thinking, its significance in the educational process, and effective methods for developing this type of thinking in students. Associative thinking fosters creativity, rapid and independent expression of ideas among learners. The techniques presented by the author contribute to enhancing students' communication skills, enriching their vocabulary, and expanding their imagination within classroom settings.

Keywords: Associative thinking, creativity, figurative thinking, methodology, education, students, independent thinking, speech development, vocabulary.

Introduction

The socio-economic reforms being implemented in our country, in line with the goals of building a developed state, set the task of improving the quality of students' education and upbringing, as well as introducing modern forms and methods of instruction. Implementing this task, based on the requirements of a learner-centered educational strategy, necessitates the early development of logical and connected thinking among primary school students. In the modern educational process, increasing student engagement and developing their independent thinking skills are among the key objectives. In this, associative thinking holds particular importance. Associative thinking is the process of perceiving a concept or idea by linking it with other concepts and images. This type of thinking plays a crucial role in shaping students' creativity, quick reasoning, and both oral and written language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

One of the significant forms of human cognition is associative thinking. Associative thinking is the process of generating new ideas by forming connections between knowledge, concepts, images, and phenomena already present in a person's mind. This type of thinking is the foundation of creativity and often plays an important role in solving problems in art, literature, science, and everyday life. Thinking itself is understood as the process of reflecting and reasoning to reach a conclusion about a specific event or phenomenon. Thinking also requires activity that corresponds to purposeful action. In primary education, thinking is an activity aimed at mastering educational elements and performing operations on them.

To develop logical thinking in primary school students, the lessons taught, the extracurricular activities organized, and especially the purposeful questions and oral exercises presented in the process, all hold significant importance.

The term association (from the Latin associatio – "to connect") refers to an image, concept, or thought that arises in the mind in connection with something else. For example, when people hear the word "bird," many of them immediately think of images such as "flight," "wings," or "freedom." This is a product of associative thinking.

Associative thinking is important for the following reasons:

- It fosters fast and free thinking;
- It strengthens creative approaches;
- It expands vocabulary;
- It opens the path to figurative thinking;
- It helps quickly grasp logical connections.

Methods aimed at developing associative thinking include:

Word Association Method: The teacher says a word, and students must quickly name several words connected to it.

Example: "sun" – warmth, light, summer, rays, energy, etc.

Outcome: Students develop the ability to recognize connections between words and express ideas quickly.

Thinking Through Metaphor and Comparison: Students are tasked with comparing something to something else.

Example: "A book is an ocean of knowledge," "A teacher is a guiding star."

Outcome: Develops figurative and creative thinking.

Descriptive Questions: Students are given imaginative or unconventional questions, for example: "If time had a color, what would it be?" "What sound does silence make?"

Outcome: Teaches students to express thoughts freely and in unexpected directions.

Creating Mind Maps: Starting from a main topic, students write the core concept and link ideas and words associated with it using connecting lines.

Outcome: Improves the ability to understand topics systematically and group ideas.

Storytelling with Stimulus Words: The teacher provides 3–5 words, and students create a short story or scenario using them.

Outcome: Develops imagination, creative expression, and articulation skills.

Brainstorming: Students are given a problem or topic and are encouraged to share ideas freely, quickly, and in many variations. Ideas are not evaluated; the main goal is free thinking.

Outcome: Fosters finding new and unconventional solutions and improves teamwork skills.

Associative thinking has the following characteristics:

Relevance and Connection: There is logical or emotional linkage between ideas.

Imagery: It is often visualized through images, making it especially accessible to children's thinking.

Speed: It helps generate new ideas by quickly moving from one thought to another.
Creativity: It constantly motivates individuals to seek new solutions.
Now let us turn to the ideas of many researchers who have worked on developing connected and logical thinking in students: Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, developed the theory of cognitive development, which emphasizes the role of logical thinking in the learning process. According to him, children develop in stages of cognitive growth, and logical thinking develops when they interact with their environment and learn methods for solving problems.
Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who developed the concept of the "zone of proximal development," which refers to the range of skills a child can develop with the help of an adult or a more experienced peer. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction in the learning process and believed that logical thinking develops through dialogue and collaboration.
Maria Montessori was an Italian educator who developed a child-centered approach to education that highlights the importance of self-directed learning and hands-on experiences. Montessori demonstrated that children learn best through exploration and discovery and concluded that logical thinking develops through solving practical problems and engaging in a variety of experiences.
Seymour Papert was a South African mathematician and computer scientist who introduced the concept of "constructionism," which underscores the role of building and creating in the learning process. Papert believed that children learn most effectively when they actively engage in making and constructing and that logical thinking develops through problem-solving and implementation activities.
In general, the ideas of these and other scholars have contributed to our understanding of how logical thinking develops in connection with associative thinking and how it can be cultivated through effective instructional strategies. Developing logical thinking skills is a vital part of the learning process, especially for young students.
However, several challenges can arise in the process of developing logical thinking abilities in students. Primary school children may not be interested in activities that require logical thinking, which can make it difficult for teachers to engage them in exercises and tasks that cultivate this skill. Young learners also have shorter attention spans, which can make it hard for them to focus on complex logical reasoning tasks for extended periods. Students who speak a different language or come from diverse cultural backgrounds may struggle to understand complex logical concepts presented in another language or cultural context.

CONCLUSION

Developing associative thinking in school education plays a significant role in nurturing students' creativity and ability to think freely. Such methods help enrich students' communication culture, expand their vocabulary, and foster independent thinking skills. Teachers should consistently incorporate tasks that stimulate associative thinking into the lesson process.
The development of associative thinking is a crucial factor in shaping children's cognitive, language, and speech activities in primary education. Through this type of thinking, students

approach the events around them in unique ways, learn to adopt fresh perspectives, and prepare for creative activity. In this process, teachers should use methodical approaches to activate students' thinking.

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