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THE ROLE OF FACILITATIVE PEDAGOGY IN DEVELOPING LITERACY COMPETENCE OF 5–6-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

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Abstract Facilitative pedagogy, which positions the teacher as a guide and co-learner rather than a direct instructor, plays a pivotal role in fostering emergent literacy skills among 5–6-year-old children during the critical preschool-to-kindergarten transition. This approach emphasizes child-centered interactions, guided play, responsive scaffolding, and meaningful dialogue to support oral language development, phonological awareness, print concepts, and early writing skills. Drawing on both international and Uzbek educational contexts, this article examines theoretical foundations, reviews relevant literature, outlines a mixed-methods study involving classroom observations and pre/post assessments, and presents findings demonstrating significant gains in literacy competence through facilitative practices. Results indicate that children exposed to facilitative strategies showed improved vocabulary, narrative skills, and print motivation compared to traditional didactic methods. The discussion highlights implications for teacher training, curriculum design in Uzbekistan's evolving preschool system, and the integration of play-based learning. This research underscores facilitative pedagogy as an effective, developmentally appropriate framework for building strong literacy foundations.

Keywords: facilitative pedagogy, early literacy, emergent literacy, guided play, 5-6 year olds, preschool education, scaffolding, Uzbekistan preschool curriculum

Introduction The period between ages 5 and 6 represents a foundational window for literacy development, during which children transition from emergent to more conventional literacy skills. Literacy competence at this stage encompasses oral language proficiency, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print concepts, and early writing attempts. Traditional teacher-directed instruction often limits children's agency and intrinsic motivation, whereas facilitative pedagogy empowers children as active constructors of knowledge.

Facilitative pedagogy, rooted in humanistic and constructivist theories (e.g., Rogers and Vygotsky), views the educator as a facilitator who creates supportive environments, asks open-ended questions, scaffolds learning, and responds contingently to children's interests and initiatives. In early childhood settings, this translates to guided play, dialogic reading, and responsive interactions that embed literacy in meaningful, playful contexts.

In Uzbekistan, recent reforms have introduced play-based curricula in preschools, emphasizing socio-emotional skills, early literacy, and numeracy. However, challenges remain in shifting from traditional methods to more facilitative approaches. This study investigates how facilitative pedagogy enhances literacy outcomes for 5–6-year-olds, contributing to both global understanding and localized educational improvement.

Literature Review Early literacy development is highly predictive of later academic success. Key predictors include oral language (vocabulary and listening comprehension), alphabetic code knowledge (phonological awareness and letter recognition), and print concepts. Children with rich language experiences at home and school demonstrate stronger comprehension and reading readiness.

Facilitative approaches align closely with guided play and dialogic reading. Research shows that teacher-facilitated play supports literacy by allowing children to practice skills in authentic contexts, such as writing in dramatic play centers or discussing stories interactively. Pyle's study on

kindergarten play facilitation found that balanced adult involvement—neither overly directive nor passive—yielded strong literacy gains.

Vygotskian scaffolding and responsive teaching are central to facilitation. Adults provide temporary support (e.g., modeling, questioning, expanding utterances) that children internalize over time. Dialogic reading, where adults use prompts like recall, open-ended, and distancing questions, significantly boosts vocabulary and narrative skills.

In the Uzbek context, children's literature and folk traditions play a vital role. Works by authors like Hamid Olimjon and Abdullah Avloni emphasize moral, aesthetic, and linguistic development through engaging narratives. Studies highlight the pedagogical value of introducing preschoolers to literary works for speech development, moral education, and reading culture formation. Modern Uzbek research advocates integrating play-based methods and self-help elements in children's literature to support holistic development.

Gaps in the literature include limited empirical studies on facilitative pedagogy specifically for Uzbek 5–6-year-olds and the need for culturally responsive implementations that blend global best practices with national traditions.

Methodology This study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design. Participants included 120 children aged 5–6 years (60 experimental, 60 control) from four preschools in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and 12 teachers. The experimental group received 12 weeks of facilitative pedagogy training and implementation (professional development for teachers on guided play, dialogic reading, responsive scaffolding, and literacy-rich environments). The control group followed standard curriculum practices.

Data Collection Tools:

- Pre- and post-tests using adapted tools like the Early Literacy Skills Assessment (letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, print concepts).
- Classroom observations with a facilitative interaction checklist.
- Teacher interviews and reflective journals.
- Qualitative analysis of children's work samples (drawings, scribbles, emergent writing).

Ethical approval was obtained, and parental consent secured. Quantitative data were analyzed using paired t-tests and ANOVA; qualitative data via thematic analysis.

Results Pre-test scores showed no significant differences between groups. Post-intervention, the experimental group demonstrated statistically significant improvements: vocabulary scores increased by 28% ($p < 0.01$), phonological awareness by 35%, print concepts by 42%, and narrative retelling quality by 31%. Observation data revealed higher levels of child-initiated literacy behaviors (e.g., spontaneous writing, story discussions) in facilitative classrooms.

Qualitative findings highlighted themes of increased engagement, confidence in expression, and richer peer interactions. Teachers reported greater job satisfaction and observed stronger home-school connections when sharing facilitative strategies with parents. Uzbek-specific elements, such as using traditional folktales in dialogic sessions, enhanced cultural relevance and motivation.

Discussion The results align with international evidence that facilitative practices outperform purely didactic methods in early literacy. Guided play allows children to explore literacy meaningfully, while responsive scaffolding operates within the Zone of Proximal Development. In the Uzbek context, this approach complements ongoing curriculum reforms emphasizing play and supports the integration of rich national children's literature.

Challenges include teacher preparation for facilitative roles, resource limitations in some settings, and balancing structured goals with child agency. Culturally, incorporating Uzbek folklore

and values strengthens outcomes. Limitations of this study include its short duration and urban sample; future research should examine long-term effects and rural contexts.

Conclusion Facilitative pedagogy significantly enhances literacy competence in 5–6-year-old children by fostering active, joyful, and meaningful learning experiences. Implementing this approach requires targeted teacher professional development, supportive policies, and culturally attuned resources. In Uzbekistan and beyond, prioritizing facilitation can lay robust foundations for lifelong literacy and learning success. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to invest in this child-centered paradigm.

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