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THE ROLE OF THE UZBEK LANGUAGE COURSE IN SHAPING STUDENTS' DISCIPLINARY SPEECH COMPETENCE

Boboyev Yusuf Beknazarovich
Teacher, Department of Uzbek Language and Literature
Tashkent State Agrarian University

Abstract

In contemporary higher education, language courses can no longer be treated as auxiliary subjects whose task is limited to correcting grammar or preserving literary norms. Their broader mission is to prepare students for meaningful participation in the communicative life of a discipline, where knowledge is produced, negotiated, defended, and transmitted through specialized forms of speech. This article examines the role of the Uzbek language course in shaping students' disciplinary speech competence in higher education. Disciplinary speech competence is understood here as the integrated ability to comprehend, interpret, and produce subject-specific oral and written discourse in accordance with the conceptual vocabulary, genre conventions, communicative situations, and professional ethics of a field. Using an analytical qualitative design based on document analysis, comparative interpretation, and synthesis of pedagogical and linguistic scholarship, the article argues that the Uzbek language course occupies a structurally important position in this process because it connects general linguistic education with academic literacy, terminological precision, professional communication, and identity formation. The study shows that the educational value of the course increases when it is organized not around abstract language drills but around disciplinary texts, communicative tasks, genre models, terminology work, dialogic interaction, and reflective writing. The findings suggest that the Uzbek language course should function as a platform where students learn to formulate definitions, explain procedures, write reports, argue from evidence, participate in field-specific discussion, and adapt their speech to academic and professional contexts. Such an approach strengthens not only language proficiency, but also cognitive independence, communicative confidence, and the social accessibility of higher education in the state language.

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Introduction

The place of language in higher education is often misunderstood because it is frequently reduced to a technical instrument for transmitting already finished knowledge. In reality, language is not merely a vehicle of thought but one of the primary means through which thought is organized, disciplines are constituted, and professional communities reproduce themselves. A student does not fully enter a field simply by memorizing terms, formulas, or definitions; entry into a discipline takes place when the student begins to speak, write, interpret, question, justify, and evaluate in ways recognized by that field as legitimate. For this reason, the question of how students develop disciplinary speech competence is not peripheral to university education but central to it. In the context of Uzbekistan, this issue becomes even more significant because the status of Uzbek as the state language gives it not only symbolic value but also institutional responsibility within public education and academic life. The Law on the State Language establishes the legal basis for the use of Uzbek as the state language and affirms that conditions must be created for all citizens to learn it, while respect for other languages must also be ensured. The Constitution further confirms both the right to higher education and the academic freedom of higher educational institutions, which means that universities possess the responsibility and the space to shape meaningful language policies within teaching and research. Recent state measures introducing a system for assessing Uzbek language proficiency for foreign citizens also demonstrate that language competence in Uzbek is increasingly being treated as a matter of educational structure, not merely cultural preference. Yet legal status alone does not solve pedagogical questions. The real challenge is to determine what kind of Uzbek language teaching can support university students who must operate in specialized domains such as agronomy, engineering, medicine, economics, law, pedagogy, or information technology. The answer cannot be a return to narrow formalism. If the Uzbek language course remains confined to decontextualized grammar, isolated orthographic exercises,

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or literary appreciation detached from disciplinary practice, it may preserve language norms while failing to prepare students for the communicative demands of university and professional life. Communicative competence theory, from Hymes to Canale and Swain and later developments in language assessment and academic literacy, has long shown that competence consists not only of linguistic correctness but also of appropriateness, coherence, strategic adaptability, and context-sensitive use. In higher education, this principle evolves into disciplinary literacy and academic literacies approaches, which emphasize that each field has its own discourse habits, text types, epistemological values, and argumentative styles. A future agronomist must be able to describe a soil process clearly; a future engineer must explain a technical sequence with precision; a future teacher must formulate pedagogical observations persuasively; a future lawyer must reason through categories and evidence; a future doctor must communicate findings responsibly and unambiguously. In each case, disciplinary mastery becomes visible through language. Therefore, the Uzbek language course should not be imagined as a detached preparatory subject standing outside professional education, but as a formative space in which students learn how to convert general language resources into field-relevant discourse. This requires a shift from language as content to be covered toward language as practice to be inhabited. It also requires recognition that subject-specific speech competence is not identical with jargon accumulation. A student may know many terms and still fail to define a concept, summarize a problem, compare sources, ask a clarifying question, formulate a cautious claim, or adapt tone and structure to audience and purpose. True disciplinary speech competence includes lexical accuracy, conceptual clarity, genre awareness, oral interaction, argumentative organization, pragmatic sensitivity, and the ability to move between everyday language, academic explanation, and professional expression. It is closely tied to cognition because students often understand more deeply when they can verbalize relations, processes, causes, classifications, and judgments in their own words. It is also tied to identity because students gradually become recognizable members of a knowledge community by adopting its discursive habits. For this reason, the Uzbek language course can play a decisive integrative role: it can bridge school language knowledge and university discourse, connect state-language policy with academic participation, and support students who may possess uneven linguistic repertoires in multilingual settings. The issue becomes particularly acute in first-

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year study, when many students are expected to read disciplinary texts and produce written assignments before they have fully mastered the genres and registers of university communication. In that transition period, weak speech competence is often mistaken for weak intellectual ability, even though the real difficulty lies in insufficient control over explanation, argumentation, paraphrase, abstraction, and terminological precision. A carefully designed Uzbek language course can reduce this mismatch by teaching students how to move from intuitive speech to structured academic expression and from memorized terminology to purposeful disciplinary use. It can also support a more democratic classroom culture, because students who are given the linguistic tools to ask, object, summarize, and defend ideas become more active participants in the educational process. For universities that seek stronger learning outcomes, clearer state-language practice, and more professionally prepared graduates, this function is not secondary but strategic. The problem, then, is not whether the Uzbek language course matters, but what model of the course enables it to matter in a discipline-sensitive and intellectually serious way. This article addresses that problem by examining the theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional grounds on which the Uzbek language course can shape students' disciplinary speech competence in higher education. The same argument applies to written assessment at university. When students are asked to submit essays, laboratory summaries, observation reports, portfolios, or graduation papers, they are being judged not only on what they know but on how successfully they can stage that knowledge in language. If this staging remains underdeveloped, disciplinary understanding may remain partially hidden, and both teaching and evaluation become less fair. Seen from this angle, the Uzbek language course is not simply a support subject; it is part of the infrastructure through which knowledge becomes communicable, assessable, and professionally meaningful.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative analytical design situated at the intersection of linguodidactics, academic literacy research, and higher education pedagogy. It is not an experimental study with newly collected field data; rather, it is a conceptual and document-based investigation that seeks to clarify how the Uzbek language course can be reinterpreted as a mechanism for disciplinary speech development. The materials for analysis include four interrelated bodies of sources: first,

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normative and policy texts relevant to language and higher education in Uzbekistan, especially legal documents establishing the status of Uzbek, the state's obligation to create conditions for learning it, the constitutional grounding of higher education, and recent policy steps that formalize Uzbek language proficiency assessment; second, international and comparative scholarship on communicative competence, English for Specific Purposes, academic literacies, and disciplinary literacy, used here not as imported templates but as analytical lenses for understanding how language functions in specialized education; third, recent research on subject-related communicative competence and integrated academic literacy instruction, which is particularly useful because it demonstrates that language development becomes more effective when embedded within disciplinary learning contexts; and fourth, recent pedagogical writing from the Uzbek educational context that emphasizes interactive methods, speech culture, logical thinking, and the integration of digital and project-based strategies in language teaching. The method of analysis proceeds through successive stages of interpretive synthesis. At the first stage, normative texts are examined to identify the educational legitimacy of using Uzbek not only as a language of cultural transmission but also as a language of academic participation and professional preparation. At the second stage, key theoretical constructs are clarified, especially communicative competence, academic literacy, disciplinary literacy, genre awareness, and subject-specific discourse. At the third stage, these constructs are compared with the traditional goals of the Uzbek language course in order to identify both continuities and gaps. At the fourth stage, pedagogical implications are derived by mapping recurrent principles across the literature: contextualization, needs analysis, terminology work, genre-based instruction, oral interaction, writing-to-learn practices, scaffolded feedback, and integration with disciplinary content. The aim of this methodology is not to mechanically combine unrelated sources, but to produce a coherent explanatory framework that is pedagogically relevant to higher education in Uzbekistan. In that sense, the study follows a scholarly logic similar to recent systematic and integrative reviews showing that effective language teaching for professional or subject-related purposes depends on alignment between learner needs, communicative tasks, disciplinary expectations, and instructional design. The analytical focus, therefore, is on educational function rather than abstract prescription: what exactly does the Uzbek language course do, or what should it do, if its task is to

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help students speak and write as emerging members of a field rather than as passive recipients of general language correction. The article also relies on comparative reasoning across disciplines in order to avoid a narrow single-specialty interpretation of speech competence. Examples from agrarian education, engineering, pedagogy, medicine, economics, and law are used as heuristic illustrations to show that disciplinary communication differs in vocabulary, text structure, degree of precision, evidential style, and interactional expectations, yet still depends on a common pedagogical base that language instruction can address. By synthesizing these layers, the study seeks to formulate a model that is theoretically grounded, nationally relevant, and applicable to curriculum design in higher education institutions. A further methodological consideration concerns transferability. Because the article does not claim statistical generalization, its contribution lies instead in analytical generalization: it identifies patterns and pedagogical principles that can be adapted across institutional contexts. To strengthen this transferability, the synthesis pays attention to recurrent problems documented in higher education settings, including students' difficulty with summarization, weak command of academic register, uncertainty in terminology use, limited oral participation, and the gap between content knowledge and communicative performance. These issues are not treated as isolated symptoms but as interdependent features of disciplinary speech development. The article therefore interprets the Uzbek language course not only as an instructional unit but also as an organizational mechanism through which universities can articulate communication standards for learning outcomes, coursework, practice-oriented assessment, and professional readiness. This perspective makes it possible to evaluate the course in relation to curriculum architecture, not only classroom technique.

Results

The analysis leads to several interconnected findings. First, the Uzbek language course becomes educationally transformative when it is understood as a site of disciplinary socialization rather than a repository of detached linguistic rules. In practical terms, this means that the course is most effective when it helps students acquire the speech forms through which a field organizes knowledge: defining terms, classifying phenomena, describing mechanisms, formulating hypotheses, reporting observations, comparing positions, defending interpretations,

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summarizing evidence, and addressing an audience with purpose and precision. Such competence is broader than vocabulary growth and deeper than grammatical accuracy. It includes what may be called the architecture of disciplinary speech: lexical selection appropriate to the field, sentence patterns that reflect causal or procedural reasoning, paragraph structures that support explanation or argument, and oral strategies that make dialogue, clarification, and disagreement possible without communicative breakdown. Second, disciplinary speech competence is not produced by the language course alone, but the course can serve as the institutional hinge that makes such competence visible, teachable, and assessable. Subject teachers often expect students to understand how to write a lab report, comment on a case, present a pedagogical analysis, or produce a professional explanation, but these expectations frequently remain implicit. Research on disciplinary literacy repeatedly shows that much of expert discourse remains invisible to novices unless it is explicitly modeled. The Uzbek language course is uniquely positioned to make these invisible norms visible because it can slow down discourse, dissect its structure, examine the function of terminology, and compare weak and strong formulations. Third, the course acquires greater relevance when it is built around authentic or adapted texts drawn from students' fields. A medical student working with a case summary, an agronomy student interpreting an extension bulletin, an engineering student explaining a process diagram, or a law student analyzing a normative statement is not only learning language but learning how disciplinary knowledge sounds on the page and in speech. This textual anchoring supports one of the most important results of the analysis: disciplinary speech competence develops most effectively where language learning is contextualized by content and communicative purpose. Fourth, the Uzbek language course contributes to conceptual clarity. Students often struggle not because they lack intelligence but because they cannot yet verbalize relations among concepts. When instruction includes paraphrasing, explanation, definition building, oral micro-presentations, reflective writing, and terminology mapping, students begin to convert memorized information into structured understanding. In other words, language instruction here supports cognition, not just expression. Fifth, the course plays a significant role in reducing the gap between everyday speech and academic-professional discourse. Many students enter university with usable communicative skills in ordinary life but limited experience in producing sustained explanation, analytical comparison, or

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evidence-based argument in Uzbek. The gap widens in multilingual contexts, especially when subject materials, borrowed terms, or prior schooling create uneven linguistic repertoires. Recent work on multilingual disciplinary literacies and integrated academic literacy shows that students frequently rely on their first language or dominant language as a cognitive resource even when institutions expect more formal academic performance; rather than treating this as a deficiency, effective pedagogy uses the student's existing repertoire as a bridge toward more precise disciplinary discourse. Sixth, the findings indicate that disciplinary speech competence has at least five pedagogically observable dimensions within the Uzbek language course: terminological competence, defined as the accurate comprehension and appropriate use of field-specific vocabulary; genre competence, defined as familiarity with the structure and purpose of texts such as reports, abstracts, reviews, project descriptions, and oral presentations; discursive competence, defined as the ability to organize ideas coherently and maintain thematic progression; pragmatic competence, defined as sensitivity to audience, register, politeness, and communicative goal; and reflective competence, defined as the capacity to revise one's own speech and writing in light of feedback and disciplinary standards. Seventh, interactive and task-based approaches appear especially suitable for nurturing these dimensions. The literature reviewed shows convergence around methods that involve dialogic exchange, purposeful speaking, feedback cycles, and authentic communication needs. In the Uzbek context, recent pedagogical writing on the native language course likewise emphasizes interactive methods, project work, and technologies that develop speech culture, logical thinking, and clear expression. Eighth, assessment emerges as a decisive but often neglected factor. If the Uzbek language course continues to assess primarily through tests of isolated correctness, then even an improved curriculum will produce narrow outcomes. To support disciplinary speech competence, assessment must include genre-sensitive writing tasks, oral explanation, terminology use in context, revision portfolios, peer response, and performance criteria linked to clarity, coherence, accuracy, and situational appropriateness. Ninth, the analysis suggests that students' confidence grows measurably when they are given repeated low-risk opportunities to rehearse disciplinary speech before high-stakes assessment. Short oral briefings, guided summaries, terminology notebooks, peer explanation sessions, annotated model texts, and reflective commentary all help convert

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passive recognition into active use. These seemingly modest practices matter because competence is rarely formed in one dramatic leap; it is accumulated through repeated occasions in which students test language against meaning, audience, and purpose. Finally, the analysis shows that the role of the Uzbek language course is not conservative in the narrow sense of merely protecting norms, nor instrumental in the narrow sense of merely training employability. Its real role is mediational: it helps students move from language knowledge to knowledge-through-language, from general speech to field participation, and from formal learning to professional voice. That is where the course stops being decoration and starts doing serious academic labor. Another result concerns the relation between speech competence and student agency. When language tasks invite students to formulate their own explanations instead of reproducing teacher wording, they begin to exercise judgment over what counts as clear, sufficient, and relevant expression. This shift is pedagogically important because professional speech is never a simple repetition of ready-made phrases; it requires selection, adaptation, and responsibility for meaning. The Uzbek language course can cultivate this agency by moving students from answer-seeking to formulation-seeking, that is, from trying to guess the expected sentence toward learning how to construct a defensible one.

Discussion

The results of the analysis suggest that the pedagogical future of the Uzbek language course in higher education depends on whether universities are prepared to redefine its mission in relation to disciplinary participation. This redefinition has several implications. At the conceptual level, it requires rejecting the false opposition between language subjects and specialized subjects. Disciplines do not float above language; they live inside discourse, and professional knowledge becomes operable only when students can communicate it intelligibly, responsibly, and persuasively. For that reason, language teachers and content teachers should not be treated as working in separate educational universes. Recent scholarship on disciplinary literacy and higher education repeatedly notes that simply asking content lecturers to add some language support is insufficient, yet it also rejects the view that language development belongs only to language departments. The more productive approach is coordinated hybridity: language specialists identify discursive patterns, genre demands, and communicative

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obstacles, while content specialists clarify epistemic expectations, conceptual priorities, and field authenticity. Within such collaboration, the Uzbek language course can function as a foundational studio where disciplinary discourse is rehearsed before it is fully demanded in the subject classroom. At the curricular level, this means the course should be modular and adaptable. A single generic syllabus for all students may preserve administrative simplicity, but it rarely meets communicative reality. First-year common modules may focus on academic reading, summary writing, oral explanation, terminology principles, and evidence-based discussion, while later or field-linked modules may differentiate tasks by discipline: agronomy students analyzing extension texts and field reports, engineering students interpreting technical descriptions and process explanations, pedagogy students preparing observation notes and reflective commentary, economics students producing analytical summaries and policy-oriented argumentation. Such differentiation does not fragment the language course; it strengthens it by reconnecting it to real knowledge practices. At the linguistic level, the discussion points to the importance of genre pedagogy. Students do not become competent because they are told to write well; they improve when they see how a report differs from an abstract, how a definition differs from a description, how a procedure differs from an argument, and how stance, cohesion, and information flow operate inside academic prose. Genre awareness also helps students understand why certain lexical and syntactic choices are more effective in some contexts than others. At the cognitive level, the Uzbek language course should be recognized as a space for learning through articulation. When students explain a mechanism, paraphrase a concept, compare sources, or defend a position, they are not merely displaying prior thought; they are constructing thought. This gives the course a role in epistemic development, not just linguistic maintenance. At the sociocultural level, the course contributes to academic inclusion. Students should not be silently excluded from full participation because academic discourse remains opaque or because state-language instruction has not evolved to meet disciplinary needs. A well-designed Uzbek language course can reduce such opacity. It can make academic expectations explicit, support students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and affirm Uzbek as a language capable of precise, modern, specialized communication rather than confining it to symbolic or ceremonial functions. The recent formalization of Uzbek proficiency assessment for foreign citizens

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underscores that competence in Uzbek is increasingly visible as a structured educational objective; universities should respond by ensuring that their internal language teaching also reflects real communicative standards. At the methodological level, the discussion indicates that task-based learning, case discussion, oral presentations, peer review, collaborative glossary building, reflective journals, corpus-informed terminology work, and digital annotation tools are especially promising because they keep language tied to purpose. At the assessment level, rubrics should evaluate not only correctness but explanatory power, coherence, audience awareness, accuracy of terminology, and rhetorical control. At the institutional level, teacher development is crucial. Many language teachers have strong philological backgrounds but limited access to disciplinary discourse communities; many content teachers are experts in their field but have little training in language-sensitive pedagogy. Without structured collaboration, both sides may continue to assume that the other is responsible. Universities, therefore, need cross-departmental workshops, shared materials development, co-assessment models, and research projects focused on academic Uzbek across disciplines. They also need curriculum documents that clearly describe expected speech outcomes, because a competence that is never named in the syllabus is rarely taught systematically in the classroom. Where institutional support is weak, even motivated teachers tend to fall back on safer but less effective routines such as isolated rule explanation or generic essay assignments. Where support is strong, however, the language course can become an incubator of academic culture by teaching students how to ask disciplined questions, how to formulate careful claims, how to distinguish description from interpretation, and how to use terminology without losing semantic clarity. The most important implication of all is perhaps this: if the Uzbek language course remains generic, it risks becoming marginal; if it becomes discipline-aware, it can become one of the most strategically important courses in the university curriculum. An additional implication concerns the digital environment of modern higher education. Students increasingly read fragmented materials on screens, communicate in compressed formats, and rely on copied formulations from online sources, which can weaken their sense of discourse ownership. For this reason, the Uzbek language course should teach digital-era speech ethics alongside linguistic competence: how to paraphrase responsibly, how to cite without patchwriting, how to distinguish source language from one's own argument, and how to

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preserve conceptual accuracy while simplifying expression for different audiences. Such instruction strengthens academic integrity and helps students see disciplinary speech not as an artificial classroom demand but as a professional obligation tied to credibility.

Conclusion

The role of the Uzbek language course in shaping students' disciplinary speech competence is far more substantial than is often acknowledged in university practice. The course is capable of linking state-language education with academic literacy, disciplinary participation, cognitive development, and professional communication, but only if it is redesigned around authentic communicative demands rather than maintained as a narrowly corrective subject. The analysis undertaken in this article shows that disciplinary speech competence includes terminological, genre-based, discursive, pragmatic, and reflective dimensions, all of which can be deliberately cultivated through the Uzbek language course when teaching is contextualized, interactive, and aligned with students' fields of study. In such a model, students do not merely learn about language; they learn to use Uzbek as a medium for explanation, argument, description, evaluation, and collaboration within their future professions. This strengthens not only individual competence but the broader academic status of Uzbek as a functioning language of higher education and knowledge production. The legal and educational context of Uzbekistan supports such a development, and current scholarship on multilingual education, academic literacies, and disciplinary communication provides strong theoretical justification for it. The practical challenge now is curricular courage: universities must move from ceremonial respect for the language to serious pedagogical investment in how it operates across disciplines. They must equip language teachers to work with disciplinary genres, encourage cooperation between departments, and assess speech competence through meaningful tasks rather than narrow error counting. They must also recognize that language-centered support is not remedial charity for weak students but a normal component of intellectually serious higher education. When students learn to define, compare, explain, question, summarize, and argue within the language of their discipline, the quality of learning itself changes. Classrooms become more dialogic, written assignments become more analytical, and professional identity becomes more stable because students can hear themselves participating

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in the discourse of a field rather than standing outside it. When that shift happens, the Uzbek language course will no longer stand at the edge of the curriculum like a polite guest nobody fully listens to; it will stand where it belongs, at the center of students' transition into academic and professional life.

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