

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF WORKING ON WORD MEANING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL MOTHER TONGUE LESSONS

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Abstract. This paper outlines the methodological foundations, content, didactic principles, methods, and tools for working on word meanings in primary school native language lessons, as well as the importance of this work for developing students' lexical and speech competence. It argues that the process of mastering word meanings should not be limited to merely providing definitions for new words; instead, it must be structured around comprehension, semantic differentiation, contextual application, and incorporation into active speech. Furthermore, the didactic potential of using images, objects, context, question-and-answer exercises, comparisons, synonyms and antonyms, dictionary work, and creative tasks has been explored. Based on the age-related and psychological characteristics of primary school students, a methodological algorithm has been proposed: "perceiving the word – grasping the meaning – explaining – distinguishing – applying in context – using in independent speech."

Keywords: primary education, mother tongue, word meaning, vocabulary work, lexical competence, speech competence, semantic understanding, context, illustrated explanatory dictionary, methodological basis, vocabulary richness.

Introduction. One of the primary objectives of mother-tongue education at the primary level is to foster in students not only an understanding of linguistic phenomena but also the skills to apply them correctly and purposefully in practical speech activities. In this process, working on word meaning holds particular methodological significance, as a student's vocabulary is directly linked to their reading comprehension, ability to express thoughts—both orally and in writing—engagement in communication, and capacity for independent thinking.

The concept of working on word meaning is broad in scope, encompassing processes such as defining the meaning of new words, linking them to existing lexical units, understanding synonymic and antonymic relationships, distinguishing contextual meanings, perceiving words through images or objects, and applying them in speech. From this perspective, it is essential to organize work on word meaning in primary-grade mother-tongue lessons not merely as an isolated exercise or a brief stage of a lesson, but as a systematic methodological process that ensures the student's lexical and speech development.

Mastering the meaning of a word goes beyond a student simply memorizing a new lexical unit. The student must be able to visualize the object, attribute, action, or phenomenon the word represents, understand how it differs from other units, and use the word in an appropriate speech context. Therefore, the primary objective of the methodology for teaching word meaning can be defined as follows: ensuring that the student consciously grasps the meaning of the new word, integrates it into their existing lexical system, and incorporates it into active speech. To achieve this

goal, it is important—alongside providing ready-made explanations—to employ methods that encourage students to discover the meaning independently.

From a research perspective, it is advisable to organize the process of working on word meaning through the following sequential stages:

1. Motivational-contextual stage: the new word is introduced to the learner via a familiar situation, text, image, or conversation;
2. Semantic perception stage: the learner determines the word's meaning through observation, comparison, and answering questions;
3. Visual-semantic stage: the word is linked to an image, object, action, or situation;
4. Verbal-semantic stage: the learner attempts to explain the word's meaning in their own words;
5. Semantic relationship identification stage: the word's synonyms, antonyms, and units with similar or opposite meanings are identified;
6. Contextual application stage: the new word is used in various sentences and texts, and its meaning is clarified based on the context;
7. Productive-speech stage: the learner uses the new word to independently create a sentence, dialogue, or short text;
8. Reflexive-diagnostic stage: the learner re-evaluates the meaning and usage of the acquired word.

The key feature of this methodological sequence is that it facilitates the transition from "knowing" to "applying"—that is, from reproductive activity to productive activity.

In primary school native language lessons, the following methods are considered effective for clarifying and explaining word meanings: showing the object, explaining via images, demonstrating through actions, conveying meaning through context, explaining using synonyms or antonyms, providing brief definitions, analyzing word structure, making comparisons, using a question-and-answer format, consulting a dictionary, encouraging independent interpretation, and creating speech situations.

When selecting these methods, one must consider the nature of the word, the age and proficiency level of the primary school students, and the lesson's objective. For instance, while explaining the names of specific objects using pictures or real items is effective, it is more appropriate to clarify abstract concepts through context, comparison, and simple verbal explanations.

The significant role that imagery-based thinking plays for primary school students necessitates the use of visual aids when explaining word meanings.

Through the use of images, the object-related meaning of a word is revealed; a mental image of the new word is formed; the connection between the word and the object is reinforced; student interest is heightened; and a foundation for independent thinking is established.

However, an image should not serve merely as an illustration. It should engage the student in a process of observing, questioning, comparing, drawing conclusions, and expressing ideas verbally.

In this regard, the didactic potential of illustrated explanatory dictionaries is particularly significant. Such dictionaries integrate the word's graphic representation, name, simple definition, and an example of its usage.

A word's meaning often becomes most apparent within the context in which it is used. Therefore, it is essential to teach students to understand words not as isolated units, but as parts of sentences and texts. For example: "In spring, the gardens donned a green 'garment' (libos)." Although the literal meaning of the word *libos* relates to clothing, in this context, it is used to create a vivid image of the greenery covering the trees and plants. Through such examples, students begin to grasp how a word's meaning can shift depending on the context. Thus, contextual tasks not only develop the student's semantic thinking but also lay the groundwork for understanding the figurative and contextual meanings of words.

It is advisable to organize work on word meaning based on the following didactic principles: The principle of conscious engagement and active participation. Instead of passively accepting a word's meaning, the student actively strives to comprehend it. The principle of visual demonstration. The meaning of a word is linked, whenever possible, to an object, image, action, or situation.

The principle of consistency and systematic organization. Work on vocabulary is structured as a continuous, ongoing process rather than a one-time exercise. The principle of age-appropriateness. Tasks must align with the student's psychological and cognitive capabilities. The principle of a contextual approach. Word meaning is connected to real-life speech situations and texts. The principle of an individual approach. Differences in students' vocabulary and learning pace are taken into account. The principle of activity-based learning. The student not only learns a new word but also applies it in practical use.

To determine the effectiveness of the methodology for working on word meanings, it is necessary to regularly assess students' performance. The following criteria can be used for this purpose: semantic comprehension, visual-semantic association, verbal explanation, semantic differentiation, contextual understanding, and productive application.

Based on these criteria, students can be categorized into high, intermediate, and low proficiency levels. A student at the high level independently comprehends and explains word meanings, distinguishes between synonyms and antonyms, and uses new words in independent speech situations. An intermediate-level student grasps the core meaning but requires support when explaining or independently using the word. Conversely, a student at the low level faces significant difficulties in comprehending word meanings, identifying the connection between images and words, and using new words in speech.

Based on the research findings, the following methodological model for working on word meaning in primary school mother-tongue lessons can be proposed:

Objective → content → methods → tools → learning activity → diagnostics → result.

In terms of content, the work is structured around the following model: Word → image/object → explanation → context → semantic relationship → exercise → independent speech → reflection.

The scientific and methodological novelty of this model lies in the fact that the acquisition of word meaning is organized through the integration of linguistic knowledge, visual perception, semantic analysis, and speech activity.

Conclusion. Working on word meanings in primary school native language lessons is a crucial methodological prerequisite for developing students' vocabulary, speech competence, and semantic thinking. The research findings demonstrate that limiting work on word meanings merely to defining new words is methodologically insufficient. An effective methodology must systematically facilitate the student's perception of a word, comprehension of its meaning, ability to explain and distinguish it from other words, and capacity to use it in context and in independent speech. On this basis, the algorithm "word perception – meaning comprehension – association with visual imagery – verbal explanation – semantic differentiation – contextual application – productive speech activity – reflection" is proposed as a promising methodological model for addressing word meanings in primary school native language education.

Integrating this methodological approach with illustrated explanatory dictionaries, didactic materials, interactive tasks, and diagnostic tools fosters students' conscious and active mastery of word meanings.

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