

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING WORDS WITH OPPOSITE MEANINGS IN ELEMENTARY MOTHER TONGUE CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the theoretical foundations of teaching words with opposite meanings in primary mother tongue education, emphasizing cognitive knowledge, the creation of a cognitive-linguistic environment, and ensuring mutual understanding within a language-speaking community. It reveals the peculiarities of words with opposite meanings and promotes various methods to develop creative thinking in primary school students. The psychological and pedagogical conditions necessary for students' acquisition of antonyms and the development of their speech skills are thoroughly analyzed. Additionally, the article highlights the implementation of mother tongue education, considering children's perceptual processes, cognitive testing activities, and psychological states.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive knowledge, language, thinking, words with opposite meanings, linguocognitive approach, linguistic units.

INTRODUCTION

Language is indispensable for understanding the world. Linguistic tools—words, phrases, sentences, and their combinations—facilitate the comprehension of things, events, and realities, thereby forming ideas in students' minds. Each word names known entities, and nameless objects are rare within the human-discovered world. In early stages, children may know

words but struggle to associate them with corresponding objects. They recognize the word but fail to grasp its meaning, preventing a connection with real-world realities. Words not only name and define but also encapsulate ideas.

The linguocognitive approach to examining the lexical-semantic system in language does not create a



separate worldview; rather, it focuses on words that draw researchers' attention. This approach analyzes not the properties of linguistic tools but how individuals reflect the objective world in their minds using these tools, and how they attempt to employ them in speech. According to numerous researchers in this field, representing the world through language is a defining aspect of Homo sapiens' thinking, shaping the cognitive processes that children master. Understanding the principles of knowledge categorization requires considering the specific features of natural language. While language and thinking are distinct phenomena, they are the core objects of linguocognitive research, functioning as an inseparable unit.

Creating a cognitive-linguistic environment to ensure mutual understanding among a community of speakers is evident in the uniqueness of antonyms. The universal laws of thinking, particularly scientific thinking, apply rigorously to cognitive and communicative processes. Elementary school students perceive dominant contrasts such as right-left for visual appearance, big-small for size, black-white for color, light-dark for symbol, sweet-bitter for taste, hot-cold for temperature, and heavy-light for weight. These antonyms are fundamental contradictions in the universe model and, when learned during children's active mental development stages, significantly enhance intellectual functionality in the perception process.

Literature Review.

Since ancient times, people have been fascinated by the concepts of conflict and contradiction. Aristotle attempted to differentiate between “contradiction” and “conflict” According to him, a key characteristic of contradiction is the presence of an intermediate term between two opposing phenomena, whereas conflict

lacks such an intermediate concept. Despite extensive study, linguistics has yet to develop a universally accepted definition of antonyms. Theoretical literature on words with opposite meanings presents numerous ideas for defining this lexical phenomenon, with the primary concept of contradiction underpinning antonyms. [V.A. Ivanova 1982, 6] concludes that “the concept of words with opposite meanings reveals the semantics of antonyms”.

The contradictions perceived by humans contribute to the crystallization of a basic, yet integrated and ordered system from chaotic signals, forming the cognitive experience based on the perception of the reflected world without direct means [Popova ZD, Sternin IA 2007, 36]. [Lyons 1978, 485] identified “words with opposite meanings as one of the most important semantic relations in the language”. Antonyms are evaluated as a lexical-semantic category and as a linguistic universal arising from human mental activity.

The evolution of society and human thought has led to various new trends, including neuropsychology, which emerged to explore the characteristics of human thinking. According to [Demyankov 1994, 17], human behavior is linked to neuronal activity levels. From the moment humans recognized their unique position among living beings, they have pondered questions such as: How is human thought formed? How does the thought process occur? How does the human mind perceive and reproduce information about the world? Not only philosophy, logic, psychology, and biological sciences, but also cognitive linguistics, seek answers to these questions.

A child's success in education depends on their level of cognitive interest. If a child does not understand the purpose of the material or lacks the desire to understand it, teaching becomes impossible.



According to A. K. Markova, interest involves complex personality formation linked to various motivational processes. Cognitive interest is a primary motive in educational activity, serving as both a tool and a goal of the educational process. When considering the psychological and pedagogical basis for forming the concept of antonyms in elementary school students, it is essential to acknowledge that children's cognitive processes—thinking, attention, memory, and perception—are not fully developed. Pedagogical activities should focus on developing personal qualities that collectively enhance individual growth. The analysis of mother tongue education content shows that organizing language education during this period based on cognitive-pragmatic methods expands students' knowledge practically and theoretically, fostering their thinking skills.

METHODOLOGY

Human thinking is inextricably linked with language; every thought develops in connection with speech. The clarity of oral and written expression directly reflects the depth and precision of the underlying thought. It is well-known that preschool children's thinking is predominantly visual. Even in the 1st and 2nd grades, the mental activity of young schoolchildren resembles that of preschoolers. Consequently, educational material in primary classes is primarily presented visually during this period. Pupils of this age often evaluate objects and situations based solely on external characteristics. Their conclusions are drawn from visual perceptions rather than logical arguments, relying on the connection between judgment and received information.

Students' generalizations often involve clearly perceived features and characteristics of objects and events. The nature of elementary school students' thinking evolves from the 1st to the 3rd grade through

systematically conducted educational activities. As students progress, the amount of analytical knowledge requiring deep cause-and-effect relationships between concepts, facts, and events increases. By the 3rd grade, students understand gender-species relations between individual characteristics of concepts. They analyze judgments by classification, mentally compare parts, identify main ideas, and develop them consistently, reaching generalizations of specific things.

This gradual shift from visual and figurative thinking to higher-order thinking marks significant development. By the end of primary school, students exhibit increased research activity in their cognitive processes. At this stage, their research activity is characterized by increased independence and critical thinking. Independent thinking enables children to control their thought processes: setting research goals, hypothesizing cause-and-effect relationships, and evaluating known facts from new perspectives.

Human thinking inherently relies on cause-and-effect reasoning. Throughout life, people create models of situations, building understanding. Pupils at the active stage of reasoning can identify main ideas, combine them into coherent mental pictures, and progress to higher levels of thinking, developing judgment and reasoning. These skills facilitate the transition from logical to creative thinking.

Different methods should be employed to develop creative thinking in elementary school students. When determining the psychological and pedagogical conditions for students' acquisition of antonyms and their usage skills, it is crucial to consider their perception process, cognitive activity, and psychological state in mother tongue education. The more developed a child's perception, the faster they understand words, meanings, and combinations.



Perception development should be integrated into various activities for younger schoolchildren. It is known that the perception of 1st and 2nd graders is often imperfect and superficial.

Elementary students frequently make mistakes in understanding and distinguishing the meanings of complex and unfamiliar words, as well as in their speech usage. They may confuse letters, words with similar styles or pronunciations, or images of similar things. Often, these distinctions are accidental, as children at this age struggle to differentiate between important and unimportant concepts. To resolve the conflict between young students' concrete-figurative thinking and the abstract nature of linguistic concepts, it is essential to foster abstract thinking. Teachers must recognize the importance of practical work in students' mastery of linguistic concepts.

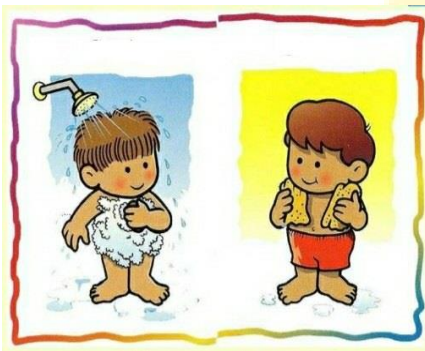
The process of mastering linguistic concepts is long and complex, comprising four stages:

1. Analysis of linguistic material.
2. Summary of characteristics.
3. Forming a definition of the concept.
4. Concretization of language concept teaching.

To address these tasks, educational electronic school dictionaries created by teachers can serve as valuable didactic materials. These dictionaries, tailored to elementary school mother tongue textbooks, help students grasp linguistic concepts effectively. The accompanying pictures aid in developing cognitive thinking and speech skills, facilitating the identification of antonyms.

For example:

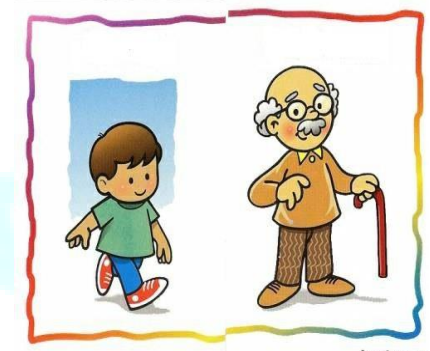
WET-DRY



DIRTY-CLEAN



YOUNG-OLD



By comparing side-by-side contrasting images, students can more easily understand that words describing different adjectives, such as dirty-clean, good-bad, and young-old, are semantically opposite to each other. A cognitive task is determined by using

pictures and asking questions to identify antonyms. Combining antonym pairs, which is considered a lexical concept, helps develop lexical skills in students. Antonyms are a universal phenomenon in language, playing a significant role in children's speech and



thinking. Learning antonyms during mother tongue education activates children’s vocabulary and improves their language use, thereby increasing their linguistic competence.

As primary school students advance to higher grades, they will need to master perception techniques, learn to observe and listen attentively, and distinguish important features of objects. Words play a crucial role in developing voluntary perception and attention in students. For first graders, words initiate the process of perception without the need for images. From the 1st grade, children begin to analyze an object when it is named. For example, when asked about the differences between a wardrobe and a TV, they might describe them as big and small, respectively. This practice encourages detailed analysis. While students in grades 1-2 require visualization to understand oral material, this need diminishes significantly by grades 3-4. During this period, the role of words in the child’s perception evolves. The perception of 1st and 2nd graders is characterized by emotionality, as they perceive the symbolic properties of words and objects more vividly. Visual aids are bright, lively, clearer, and better received. However, teachers should also strive to develop students’ perception in less visually stimulating ways.

In elementary grades, theoretical information about words with opposite meanings, as well as other lexical and grammatical groups, is not provided. Instead,

practical work with antonyms and observations on them help form the concept of antonyms in children. The system of practical exercises with antonyms consists of the following elements:

Identifying words with contradictory meanings in readable texts and explaining the contradiction.

Performing exercises involving antonyms and encouraging their active use.

Work with antonyms begins with the analysis of literary texts, followed by the inclusion of special tasks in mother tongue textbooks. Through analyzing language units, students learn and remember previously unknown antonyms. Regular repetition of antonyms and providing examples help students retain these words in their memory. By processing antonyms through completing tasks, students begin to use the acquired words in new speech situations. For example, a task for 3rd graders might involve finding antonyms in given sentences and filling in a table.

Examples of such tasks include:

“It suddenly got cold, the dog has no blanket”

“A lazy person eats by hiding, a hardworking person eats by finding” (proverb).

“A friend wants to do good, and an enemy wants to do evil”

“We go to school a short way”

Hot	
Tall	
Lazy	



Friend	
It's long	

If such processes are often conducted by the teacher, the development of cognitive processes in elementary grades will be faster.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting from the 2023 academic year, the new edition of elementary school mother tongue textbooks is structured into several parts. These include names, sentences and their types, sentence structure, speech and its types (oral and written speech), text and the difference between text and sentences, text composition (1st grade in part 1, 2nd grade in part 2), vocabulary and explanatory dictionaries (grade 2 in part 2), and polysemous words (grade 2 in part 2). Topic 19 of the 2nd-grade mother tongue textbook provides a brief and theoretically simple definition of antonyms for students: “For example, novvot is sweet, and garmdori is bitter”

Following this description, students are given Exercise 6. Students are tasked with explaining the meaning of these proverbs, writing words with opposite meanings next to each other, and identifying antonyms as examples (Grade 2 mother tongue, p. 76).

The teaching of words with opposite meanings in schools should be methodically explained, integrating modern approaches focused on the individual, practice, and systematic activity. Words expressing conflict are not only powerful stylistic tools but also help students visualize the world in terms of different conflicting concepts more clearly and figuratively.

To explain the law of contradiction and the nature of antonyms to elementary school students, it is essential to teach logical thinking through exercises on conflicting words, comparing, and contrasting their meanings. An analysis of primary grade mother tongue textbooks reveals that students are taught antonyms mainly through various tasks and exercises on lexical materials.

One challenge faced by teachers when explaining antonyms to elementary school students is the scarcity of exercises designed to activate antonyms in primary language textbooks, which do not meet modern language acquisition requirements. Despite this, the need to teach students the lexical richness of their mother tongue is evident, as it closely relates to the development of their thinking style. The exercises provided in the textbooks gradually help students understand the essence of antonyms and the active role of contradiction in lexical antonyms.

Furthermore, antonyms in mother tongue textbooks positively affect children's learning and understanding of the subject. In the mother tongue curriculum, students begin to understand the meanings of antonyms, develop basic grammatical concepts about them, and learn to identify, contrast, and effectively use antonyms in speech.

The learning of such language units for students continues consistently in other forms of teaching. The new textbooks for elementary school students reflect all the features of the mother tongue. However, the analysis of first-grade mother tongue textbooks shows



that exercises and assignments for working with antonyms are insufficient. Vocabulary assignments for learning antonyms and reinforcing the topic are rarely provided separately. Creating such dictionaries serves as a program to increase students' vocabulary and develop their thinking.

The incorporation of more exercises and assignments focused on antonyms in mother tongue education can significantly enhance students' understanding and usage of these important lexical units. This will not only improve their language competence but also develop their cognitive and analytical skills

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study underscores the pivotal role of words with opposite meanings in elementary mother tongue education, highlighted through the analysis of modern textbooks and pedagogical approaches. The integration of words with opposite meanings exercises in the curriculum serves as a critical methodological tool, enhancing students' lexical competence and fostering their cognitive development. Despite identified challenges such as the limited availability of dedicated antonym exercises in primary language textbooks, the significance of teaching these linguistic concepts remains clear. Words with opposite meanings not only enrich students' vocabulary but also deepen their understanding of semantic relationships and logical thinking processes.

The exploration of words with opposite meanings in elementary education reveals their fundamental contribution to language learning and cognitive growth. By engaging with words with opposite meanings, pupils not only grasp contrasting meanings but also refine their ability to analyze and interpret language nuances effectively. Moving forward, there is a recognized need to augment the presence of words with opposite meanings related activities in mother

tongue textbooks, ensuring comprehensive coverage and alignment with contemporary educational standards. This proactive approach will empower educators to cultivate a robust foundation in language skills among elementary school pupils, preparing them for broader academic and social contexts where linguistic proficiency is essential.

In essence, the incorporation of well-structured antonym exercises holds promise for enhancing both educational outcomes and the overall linguistic competence of young learners.

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