

LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR TEACHING WORD MEANINGS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article discusses the linguistic foundations and pedagogical conditions of teaching word meanings to primary school students. The role of word meaning in the language system, as well as the concepts of lexeme and seme, are analyzed on the basis of linguistic and methodological sources. Particular attention is paid to the phenomena of polysemy and homonymy, their linguistic nature, and their significance in developing students' semantic competence. The article also highlights the importance of synonymy, antonymy, and phraseological units in enriching learners' vocabulary and improving their speech activity. Furthermore, the linguodidactic possibilities of teaching polysemous words, methods of explaining meanings through context, and ways of developing lexical-semantic competence among primary school students are substantiated. The findings indicate that systematic work on word meanings contributes to the development of students' thinking skills, communicative abilities, and conscious attitudes toward their native language.

Keywords: word meaning, lexeme, seme, polysemy, polysemous words, homonymy, monosemy, synonymy, antonymy, phraseological units, linguistic semantics, lexicology, linguodidactics, communicative competence, lexical-semantic competence, primary education, mother tongue teaching, contextual analysis, vocabulary enrichment, speech activity.

Today, the process of teaching word meanings is considered an important factor in developing students' ability to understand language and form a conscious attitude toward it at the primary education stage. Every word embodies a certain semantic load, that is, a structure of meaning. In linguistics, this unit is regarded as

a *lexeme* and is composed of meaning components called *semes*. For example, according to the scholarly views of G.T. Zakhidova and N.M. Suleymanova, each lexeme contains a chain of related concepts (semantic structure). This phenomenon contributes to the formation of the foundations of analytical thinking in students as they comprehend words. "In linguistics, the complexity of word meanings is expressed through the phenomenon of *polysemy*, that is, multiple meanings. Polysemy refers to the situation in which a word with a single phonetic form acquires different meanings depending on the context. Teaching this phenomenon helps students develop contextual analysis skills and recognize semantic distinctions. At the same time, understanding the difference between polysemy and the phenomenon of *homonymy*—words that have the same external form but completely different meanings (for example, *ol* as a verb and *ol* as an adjective)—enhances students' linguistic sensitivity."

"According to N. Suleymanova, distinguishing such linguistic phenomena is of great importance as a component of semantic competence.

Furthermore, the use of synonymy, antonymy, and phraseological units serves as an important means of expanding students' lexical potential. Synonyms enable learners to distinguish subtle shades of meaning and express the same idea in different ways ('beautiful' – 'pretty' – 'graceful'). Antonyms, on the other hand, facilitate the understanding of opposite relationships and contribute to the development of logical thinking ('strong' – 'weak', 'white' – 'black'). Through phraseological units, students develop the ability to appreciate the artistic and aesthetic features of language. "During the process of teaching word meanings, linguodidactic approaches based on linguistics—such as teaching semantic structure, explaining the distinctions related to polysemy and homonymy, ensuring semantic accuracy through contextual interpretation, and enriching vocabulary through synonyms, antonyms, and phraseological units—serve as a foundation for the development of the speech activity of primary school students." In our view, the word is one of the most important and active units of the language system,

serving as the primary means of communication among people. Words are used constantly by individuals regardless of their profession, social status, educational background, or beliefs. The essential nature of a word is manifested in its lexical meaning, that is, in the content that reflects a particular object, feature, state, or phenomenon in human consciousness.

As in many other languages, the Uzbek language also contains words that possess several lexical meanings (two or more) within their semantic structure. These are known as *polysemous words*, and they are commonly used in both language and speech with multiple meanings. "According to analyses presented in scholarly literature and dictionaries, the term *polysemy* derives from the Greek word *poly* meaning 'many' and *sema* meaning 'sign' or 'meaning,' and it denotes the ability of a linguistic unit to have more than one meaning."

The phenomenon of expressing only one meaning in language is called *monosemy*, and a linguistic unit with such a characteristic is referred to as a *monosemantic unit*. In linguistics, monosemy is regarded as the lower boundary of polysemy. Terms belonging to various scientific fields are generally monosemantic, that is, they possess only one meaning.

The textbook *Modern Uzbek Literary Language*, co-authored by U. Tursunov, J. Muxtorov, and Sh. Rakhmatullayev, discusses lexical and semantic polysemy. The textbook also conditionally includes proper nouns among monosemantic lexemes. Even the most narrowly contextualized lexeme can be monosemantic: such a lexeme is associated only with lexemes belonging to a single semantic field (and sometimes even with a single lexeme), and it may not be used independently outside such connections. For example, lexemes such as *tanqid* ("criticism") and *o'taka* are highly restricted in context and carry only one meaning. Every lexeme is initially monosemantic at the time of its creation, emerging as the name of a particular object, feature, or relation. Later, it may come to denote other phenomena as well, thereby changing and developing its meaning. As a result, various semantic shifts occur within the lexeme, and a monosemantic lexeme

gradually becomes a polysemantic one. Such words are characterized by the presence of a single stable meaning as their semantic core. In all languages, linguistic units are generally classified into *monosemantic* (single-meaning) and *polysemantic* (multiple-meaning) units.

“In analyzing the types of primary and derived (dependent) meanings of a polysemous word, it is first necessary to learn the basic, primary meanings of the word in order to achieve practical mastery of the language. The dependent or derived meaning of a word does not provide a complete understanding of its semantics and does not enable its correct interpretation and appropriate use in speech.” According to scholars, it is difficult even to imagine a language in which every object, feature, or action is designated by a separate word. Such a language would be extremely difficult to learn and use. Therefore, polysemous words emerged in language. Language users tend to identify similarities among objects and phenomena around them and use existing words to name new objects, things, and events. In our view, the emergence of polysemy in the course of language development is closely connected with the growth of human thought and the economical use of linguistic units. The linguistic nature of polysemous words is manifested in the asymmetry between form and meaning, which ensures their dynamic and constantly changing character. Therefore, the phenomenon of polysemy is regarded as an important factor in the enrichment and semantic expansion of language.

“During the process of teaching Uzbek lexicology to primary school students, theoretical concepts such as the grammatical and lexical meanings of words, literal and figurative meanings, as well as monosemous and polysemous words, are not explicitly taught. Nevertheless, primary school students encounter polysemous words for the first time in textbooks, mainly in the texts included in the *Reading Literacy* textbook. However, they do not always realize that such words are being used in more than one meaning. Students begin to acquire an understanding of polysemous words through texts and oral speech. At first,

however, the existence of several meanings within a single word often causes surprise among learners.”

“The *Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language* provides the following definitions of the word *bosh* (‘head’) and its figurative meanings. The nominative meaning of the lexeme *bosh*, based on a specific denotation, is ‘the upper part of the body of a human being or an animal.’ On the basis of this primary meaning, a number of lexical-semantic variants have developed, including:

1. the beginning of a road;
2. the top of a mountain;
3. the source of a concern;
4. the beginning of a victory;
5. the cause of a conflict;
6. the head of a canal;
7. the beginning of a lecture;
8. the beginning of a lesson or activity;
9. chief specialist;
10. editor-in-chief, etc.

According to the extralinguistic associations of the lexeme *bosh*, the number of such meanings may continue to expand further.”

In our view, the primary goal of teaching the mother tongue to primary school students is to develop their ability to consciously understand and learn the meaning and essence of the words in our language.

According to the researcher G. Mamatova, “The conscious acquisition of polysemous words and the development of the ability to use them appropriately in speech require systematic vocabulary work in primary education.”

Working with students on the primary and figurative meanings of polysemous words through texts and exercises containing such words is not merely an ordinary activity in mother tongue and reading literacy classes. This process involves:

- promoting the intellectual and speech development of primary school students;
- fulfilling the scientific-theoretical and methodological tasks specified in the curriculum;
- developing students' understanding of figurative language and comparison as expressive devices;
- fostering students' ability to identify the relationships between the literal and figurative meanings of words.

According to S. Rahimov and B. Umurqulov, word meaning constitutes one of the most important components of the language system, since the expression and comprehension of meaning represent the primary purpose of language and serve to ensure communicative activity. In the authors' view, linguistic semantics studies both the vocabulary and grammatical structure of a language and, on this basis, establishes lexical-semantic and grammatical levels. Furthermore, linguistic semantics is concerned with identifying the objective meaning of a word, that is, the description of a particular linguistic unit within the language system. A generalized meaning associated with a word form or sentence and possessing a stable linguistic expression is interpreted as grammatical meaning.

Lexical and grammatical meanings are closely interconnected within words; therefore, a complete understanding of a word's semantics can only be achieved by taking both types of meaning into account.

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