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Research Article

Increasing Vocabulary Through Teaching Critical Thinking When Working on Word Meaning (On the Example of Primary Grades)

Submission Date: April 23, 2025, Accepted Date: May 19, 2025,

Published Date: June 21, 2025

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ijasr-05-06-09>

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the methodology of working on word meaning through teaching critical thinking as one of the effective ways to increase vocabulary in primary school students. The study theoretically substantiates the idea that teaching students critical thinking leads to an increase in vocabulary, speech competence, an expansion of their perception, imagination, logic, worldview, and the development of skills to complete complex tasks.

KEYWORDS

Word meaning, vocabulary, critical thinking, elementary school, methodology, language teaching, analysis, lesson process, logical thinking, communication skills, fluency.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern education system, it has become an urgent task to teach primary school students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to think, ask questions, and draw independent conclusions. In the process of language learning, especially by working on the meaning of words, primary school

students not only expand their vocabulary, but also acquire skills such as analyzing them based on a critical approach and identifying logical connections.

Today, one of the most important tasks in the educational process is to develop students' critical thinking skills, independent thinking, logical analysis, and the ability to justify their opinions. Especially at the primary education stage, the formation of these skills creates the foundation for children's successful studies at later stages of education.

The process of increasing the vocabulary of primary school students, expanding their vocabulary, and acquiring new words is an important factor in the development of their oral and written speech. In this process, working on the meaning of words - that is, activities such as explaining words, understanding them in context, comparing them, and identifying synonyms and antonyms - activates students' thinking.

In this regard, organizing work on word meaning based on critical thinking increases students' activity, teaches them to independently analyze, ask questions, and draw conclusions. This develops not only their vocabulary, but also their interest in language in general, their ability to understand the text, and their ability to clearly express their thoughts.

It is also worth noting that today's modern educational standards require students not only to acquire ready-made knowledge, but also to be ready to apply it in practice, analyze it and create new knowledge. Therefore, this topic - increasing vocabulary by teaching critical thinking when working on word meanings - fully meets the requirements of modern education and is relevant

from a scientific, theoretical and practical point of view.

Elementary school students think literally about the ideas and concepts they are given. That is, they are highly motivated to take what they are taught and express it as it is. Of course, critical thinking is not just about being able to do this; instead, teachers and parents need to lay the foundation for children's analytical skills during their elementary school years. As a result, when elementary school students are exposed to topics and ideas that require thinking and independent decision-making, they are more likely to use these skills effectively in the future. Simply put, it is not necessary to think clearly and rationally about a complex topic or idea, but rather to have a position on it and be able to articulate it. This means that, in addition to acquiring skills, our main task is to cultivate the attitude or mindset that allows elementary school students to learn to think analytically.

Critical thinking is the ability of a student to justify their own opinions, re-analyze existing knowledge, and propose alternative solutions. In language learning, these skills are developed by understanding the meanings of words, analyzing them in context, and understanding the differences between words.

The main areas of work on word meaning are:

Distinguishing the lexical and contextual meaning of a word;

Identifying synonyms and antonyms;



Distinguishing words with multiple meanings;

Determining meaning by constructing new sentences from words;

Grouping and classifying words (for example, according to subject, action, or adjective).

When working on word meanings, it is advisable to develop tasks on the topic by studying the following research methods in depth:

Analysis and synthesis method - in-depth study and generalization of scientific foundations based on theoretical literature, programs and textbooks on the topic.

Experimental method - conducting practical exercises in the primary classroom, analyzing the results.

Comparative method - comparing the effectiveness of critical thinking and traditional approaches.

Interview and questionnaire method - studying the opinions of students, parents and teachers.

Observation method - assessing the level of vocabulary and thinking of students by analyzing their participation and activity in the lesson.

Statistical methods - quantitative analysis of the results of the experiment.

Examples of critical thinking exercises and tasks:

“Why was this word chosen?” task: ask students to choose a specific word from the text and explain why it was used.

“True or False?” question asks students to find the context in which a word is used incorrectly.

“Explain the Difference” exercise: two words with similar meanings are presented and students try to explain the subtle difference in meaning between them.

Integrating a critical thinking approach into the process of working on word meaning significantly increases students' vocabulary at the primary education level. This approach ensures that children acquire language not only through memorization, but also through understanding and logical analysis. Therefore, this methodology is suitable and effective for modern education.

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