

The Main Types of Polysemous Words and The Content of Working on Polysemous Words in Primary School Textbooks

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Abstract: In the process of language learning, especially in primary education, understanding and effectively using polysemous words plays a crucial role in enhancing students' linguistic and cognitive abilities. This article discusses the main types of polysemous words and highlights the content and methodology of working on these words in primary school textbooks. Methodological approaches, linguistic features, and sample exercises are provided to support teachers in developing students' comprehension of polysemous words.

Keywords: Polysemy, context, mother tongue textbook, semantic relation, lexical-semantic category.

Introduction: In studying the semantic scope of a word, the phenomenon of polysemy is recognized as one of the essential theoretical and scientific foundations.

Polysemy refers to the characteristic of a single word form having several interrelated meanings. It manifests in two main forms:

- **Lexical polysemy** – the use of a word in primary and derived meanings;
- **Stylistic polysemy** – when a word gains emotional or figurative meaning in different speech styles.

In both cases, the meaning of a word is understood through its semantic load and contextual relationships.

In the Resolution No. PQ-4884 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated November 6, 2020, important tasks were defined to improve the general secondary education system based on modern demands. These include effectively using interactive methods in mother tongue education and fostering students' analytical thinking by teaching them to analyze word meanings within context.

Furthermore, the resolution highlights the necessity of developing methodological materials that stimulate speech activity and incorporating them into the educational process.

The ideas presented in this official document serve today as a crucial methodological foundation for studies aimed at helping primary school students

comprehend polysemous words, distinguish their contextual meanings, and use them appropriately in communicative situations.

Special attention is given to contextual analysis of polysemous words during lessons, using tasks enriched with illustrated examples, expressive interpretations, and visual tools to develop students' semantic thinking.

In the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-grade "Mother Tongue" textbooks, tasks related to polysemous words help students develop skills in differentiating between primary and derived meanings, understanding the function of a word in a text, and recognizing semantic relationships.

For example, by analyzing the various meanings of the word "foot" in contexts such as "a part of the body," "table legs," or "foot of the mountain," students develop competence in distinguishing semantic differences.

Such exercises promote analytical thinking, lexical sensitivity, and speech precision. These methodological approaches play an important role in enhancing students' overall speech activity and functional literacy.

Every native speaker must adequately understand the semantic layers of polysemous words in their language. To accurately express thoughts and emotions and consciously choose polysemous units according to context, one must grasp their semantic features.

Using polysemous words correctly and actively in

primary students' speech reduces unnecessary repetition of the same lexical units, thereby increasing clarity and expressiveness of speech.

Hence, in teaching the mother tongue to younger learners, the place and semantic potential of polysemous words deserve particular attention.

Up to now, numerous theoretical studies have been conducted in linguistics concerning the phenomenon of polysemy. Analyzing these studies provides a clear understanding of the types, classifications, and different definitions and approaches offered by various scholars.

In Uzbek linguistics, polysemous words have mostly been studied based on traditional approaches and system-structural principles. However, in recent years, some studies have also focused on analyzing how these words are reflected in dictionaries [48, p. 30].

Different researchers' works on polysemous words reveal not only varying definitions but also significant differences in classification approaches. According to E.V. Kuznetsova, polysemous words have a single main meaning, and their contextual meanings are explained in dictionaries. These meanings can also serve as tools for explaining each other [68, p. 60].

In Uzbek linguistics, such units that align with Kuznetsova's model are referred to as absolute polysemous words [68].

Linguists who have conducted in-depth analyses of polysemy in their research emphasize the importance of classifying these words into groups. For example, scholars such as A. Hojiyev, M. Mirtojiyev, and M. Hakimova, who have conducted specialized research in this area, categorize polysemous units based on whether their meanings are clearly distinguishable. They divide them into two types:

- Absolute polysemous words (also called doublets),
- Polysemantic polysemous words (also known as semantic polysemes) [19, p. 22].

Textbooks and manuals intended for students classify polysemous words as follows:

- Lexical polysemous words
- Grammatical polysemous words
- Lexical-phraseological polysemous words
- Stylistic polysemous words [34, p. 150].

According to A. Sharipova, the consistent development of linguistic science demands attention to how polysemous words are perceived, understood, differentiated by function, and used across social strata and within contextual environments. The classification of such lexical units serves as an important tool for in-

depth analysis.

The phenomenon of polysemy in language not only reflects the richness of the lexical layer but also prevents ambiguity and repetition in speech.

Based on V.G. Vilyuman's critical analysis of L.M. Vasilev's classification of polysemous words, it becomes evident that even today, there is no unified approach to strictly classifying polysemous words based on clear criteria. The scholar notes that the existing classification criteria lack precision [83, p. 66].

From these observations, we can conclude that within modern linguistics and semantic research, no consensus has yet been reached regarding the classification of polysemous words. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that the approaches of different researchers are being analyzed in harmony, based on grouped methodologies.

In traditional linguistics, polysemous words are generally categorized into the following two major groups:

1. Ideographic or polysemantic approach – based on subtle semantic differences among meanings;

2. Stylistically marked polysemous words – lexical units with emotional-expressive connotations that are actively used in stylistically distinct texts.

It is important to note that within semantic research, the term "ideographic polysemous words" has been widely discussed, but no common understanding has been reached among scholars regarding its precise usage.

In primary education, one of the key responsibilities of the teacher is to ensure the correct use of polysemous words by students and to identify and eliminate speech errors. The proper use of these words is closely connected to the speaker's language proficiency, age, cultural background, and several other factors.

It must be taken into account that individuals rely on their accumulated linguistic experience in their native language when communicating. As a result, they generally do not struggle when choosing appropriate words. However, as students learn to communicate in their native and other languages, they begin to feel the need to understand the essence of polysemous words.

Studying such lexical units helps them become acquainted with the fundamental rules of language.

Errors in the oral and written speech of primary school students stem from various factors, the main ones being:

1. First-grade students have not yet fully learned the existing grammatical norms of the language;
2. Although 3rd and 4th-grade students are aware of

some rules, they often struggle to apply them correctly in written speech;

- 3. Not all students recognize the importance of adhering to grammatical norms as a standard practice;
- 4. Students may not understand the exact meanings of words used in oral speech [121].

Thus, the process of correcting students’ vocabulary choices and speech errors in primary grades is complex. This is mainly because the theoretical content in textbooks is presented in a simplified manner suitable for the age group. However, this sometimes results in insufficient formation of grammatical understanding related to synonyms, antonyms, and polysemous words.

In reality, acquiring grammatical knowledge is a difficult and long-term process for young children. Therefore, teachers must organize their lessons by considering the linguistic essence of the concepts being taught, the psychological-didactic factors influencing knowledge acquisition, and the students’ cognitive and speech development [42, p. 109].

Knowledge of grammatical rules related to polysemous words should be developed gradually. Researcher F. Saidova notes that although the external forms of lexical polysemous words differ, older views that considered their meanings to be similar are now considered outdated. Today, assessing semantically similar units as polysemous words is considered an accurate approach [77, p. 200].

The content of mother tongue education encompasses the phonetics, lexicology, morphology, and syntax of the Uzbek language. Although topics related to these sections are not always thoroughly covered in the theoretical part of primary school textbooks, polysemous words are frequently found in reading

materials—such as fairy tales, poems, and literary passages.

However, not all young students are able to fully grasp the semantic nuances of these words.

According to the researcher, teaching language phenomena—including lexical relations—consistently and effectively to primary school students requires sound scientific, theoretical, and normative foundations. In addition, the teaching of the mother tongue should consider students’ psychophysiological characteristics and follow a systematic approach to language instruction [79].

Such an approach facilitates successful knowledge acquisition and promotes the consistent development of students’ understanding of language phenomena. As a result, students gain the ability to comprehend complex linguistic structures, hierarchical relationships, and classifications of language units and phenomena.

In this respect, when teaching polysemous words to primary school students, it is necessary to connect them with antonyms and other polysemantic units using a systematic approach. This helps students understand the nature of language more deeply.

In this process, teachers should explain the meanings of polysemous words, demonstrate how they are used in different contexts through practical exercises, and clarify cases where one meaning cannot be substituted for another. Such an approach fosters students’ ability to think independently and to select and use words accurately.

According to the basic curriculum for general secondary education, the number of instructional hours allocated for the mother tongue subject in primary grades is as follows:

Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total Hours
Mother tongue	68 hrs (4/week)	136 hrs (4/week)	136 hrs (4/week)	136 hrs (4/week)	476 hrs
Reading literacy	68 hrs (4/week)	102 hrs (3/week)	102 hrs (3/week)	102 hrs (3/week)	374 hrs

As emphasized earlier, vocabulary development begins in the first grade. However, during this period, knowledge about polysemous words is not introduced through formal terms or rules but rather absorbed indirectly through the content of texts.

The topic of polysemy is formally introduced as an independent subject in the second quarter of the second-grade mother tongue curriculum.

The theoretical foundations of polysemous words are not sufficiently covered in the textbooks designed for primary education. Only in the 3rd and 4th-grade

textbooks are exercises related to literal and figurative meanings of adjectives included under the topic “Types of adjective meanings” [77]. At this stage, students are able to expand their vocabulary and understand such word types through practical exercises.

Within this research, primary school mother tongue textbooks were analyzed, and polysemous words found in the subjects of Mother Tongue and Reading Literacy were systematically compiled. This enabled a deeper analysis of the lexical materials in the curriculum and the methodological approaches based on them.

As students' speech activity develops, their thinking also gradually takes shape. When expressing their thoughts and emotions, students begin to consciously choose the most appropriate polysemous word for the context. During the process of acquiring language units, they start to understand the world through linguistic concepts in their native language.

Through polysemous words, students' worldview representations are gradually formed in their thinking.

As V. Dahl stated:

"Neither talent, nor religious beliefs, nor ancestral blood determines a person's national identity. Rather, one belongs to the nation whose language they think in" [56, p. 28].

From this perspective, teachers face numerous methodological difficulties when teaching students about word meanings. This requires them to thoroughly analyze each linguistic phenomenon and consult relevant resources.

Given that textbook exercises should not pose difficulties for students and that their content must be understandable, we recommend, based on our research findings, the development of modern electronic dictionaries and their integration into students' practical activities.

Globally, there are specialized learning dictionaries of polysemous words that serve as effective tools for primary school students to understand the correct meanings of polysemantic units found in textbooks.

This issue will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections of the study.

In the textbooks designed for primary education, the following types of exercises are found for reinforcing students' understanding of polysemous words:

1. Identify polysemous words and distinguish between their meanings.
2. Explain the meanings of the highlighted polysemous words.
3. Create a text using polysemous words.
4. Look at the picture, name the objects, and write polysemous words related to them.

The analysis of textbooks shows that in the 2nd-grade Mother Tongue textbook, a section titled "Learning the Meanings of Words" is allocated 5 instructional hours, 3 of which are specifically dedicated to polysemous words.

At first, exercises related to word meanings are presented, such as:

Read the text. Explain the meaning of the highlighted words.

"Everything in nature serves to help people live better. The sun warms our planet. We breathe fresh air deeply. We drink clean water. We eat various plants and animals. We use underground resources for different purposes. So, everything we need exists in nature. That is why we call these blessings 'natural resources.'" [75]

Questions following the text include:

1. Which natural resources do you use every day?
2. Do you think natural resources can run out?

Read the sentences and write the meanings of the highlighted words:

"Two-thirds of the human body is water. The sun is the source of life on our planet. Oil is extracted from underground. Without green plants, there would be no clean air on Earth." [76]

From these exercises, the following definition is provided:

"When we hear a word, the related information stored in our minds comes to the surface. For example, the word 'notebook' reminds us that it is a school supply, made of paper, and contains many pages. All this information is the word's meaning. So, the facts about an object, event, or phenomenon are called the word's meaning." [76]

[Mother Tongue, Grade 2, Part II, General Education Schools Textbook, "Novda Edutainment," Tashkent – 2023]

A definition of polysemy is then introduced:

"Some words have several meanings. These are called polysemous words. For example, the word 'iron' refers to a metal. It also has meanings such as strong, durable, and resistant. That's why strong people are sometimes called 'iron men.'" [79]

Another textbook example:

"Grandma, why does everyone call Uncle Ma'ruf 'bear wrestler'? He's not a bear!"

"Because Ma'ruf is as strong as a bear."

"So, does 'bear' mean 'strong'?"

"'Bear' refers to a wild animal. That's its main meaning. But it also means strong, huge."

"Got it! So some words can have more than one meaning." [79]

In the 3rd and 4th-grade textbooks, although there is no separate topic explicitly titled "polysemous words," the subject is indirectly addressed under topics such as "Types of adjective meanings" and "Literal and figurative adjectives," which include exercises related to polysemy.

As is known, subjects studied at the primary level serve

as a propedeutic foundation for deeper study in subsequent education stages. In other words, the educational material presented at this stage is aimed at forming fundamental subject-specific concepts and includes carefully selected information based on a clear sequence and didactic purpose [33, p. 41].

In her research, K. Qosimova emphasizes that polysemous words are mostly learned through practical exercises and analyzes the structure of such exercises [42]. Likewise, D. Malikova highlights the opportunities of using interactive methods in teaching word meanings [29], while N. Mahmudov discusses how providing age-appropriate explanations helps students effectively grasp word meanings [26]. These academic resources show the importance of practical approaches in expanding students' vocabulary and strengthening their lexical knowledge.

Nevertheless, improving the language literacy of primary students remains a relevant challenge. In this study, special attention was paid to how the activation of polysemous words in students' speech can be enhanced through innovative teaching methods and the use of electronic learning dictionaries.

Mastery of the native language's lexical potential also supports success in acquiring other languages. In particular, working with propedeutic content in the primary language curriculum and applying it in practice plays a key role in developing students' speech competence.

Therefore, in the process of language acquisition—focused on clarifying ideas, forming coherent speech, and expressing thoughts in a logical order—the mother tongue and language sensitivity (linguistic intuition) are considered key factors.

CONCLUSION

Polysemous words, as an essential lexical-semantic category of language, play a critical role in primary education. They help students develop semantic thinking, differentiate meanings based on context, and apply vocabulary consciously.

Exercises and tasks included in textbooks aim to gradually develop these competencies, contributing to students' speech activity, analytical thinking, and functional literacy.

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