

# The Formation of Mental Skills in Younger Schoolchildren during Russian Language Lessons

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**Abstract:** A qualitative change in the content and forms of training in the modern education system requires a transition from private skills to holistic approaches to activating mental skills and optimizing methods of cognition. The aim of the study is to identify the pedagogical conditions for the formation of mental skills in younger students during the lessons of the Russian language in the process of using exercises with phraseological units. The educational work aimed at mental skills development relates to the field of subject and meta-subject results of the educational development. In the study, we used the following methods: (a) methods of theoretical analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature on the problems of development of mental skills in elementary school students; (b) empirical methods (conversation, observation) to identify the current level of development of mental skills in elementary school students; (c) a pedagogical experiment; (d) methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis of research results. This paper presents a cycle of exercises compiled by the author with phraseological units, phraseological dictionary, resulting in qualitative and quantitative change in the level of development of mental skills of younger students. The study describes a new approach to the use of exercises with phraseological units in the process of teaching the Russian language to younger students, which provides for the purposeful organization of work on the formation of specific mental skills through a special arrangement of phraseological units, the bulk of which are formulated by children. The systematic use of exercises had a positive impact on the formation of mental skills in younger students, a positive impact on the quality of education in different sections of the Russian language.

## 1. Introduction

The formation and development of thinking and thinking skills in students are carried out using the didactic capabilities of various subjects. N. A. Menchinskaya revealed the importance of the content of knowledge in a particular subject and teaching methods in the formation of mental skills. One of the points important for our study, proved by N. A. Menchinskaya, is the dependence of the qualitative development of children's mental skills on their own activity in the learning process [12]. S. V. Zaitsev formulated the conditions conducive to the development of students' educational independence and presented a general scheme for their implementation in elementary school lessons [6]. A. A. Lyublinskaya, characterizing the phased development of thinking of a primary school student, comes to the conclusion that children should be purposefully trained in various mental operations and forms of verbal thinking in the process of learning concepts [11].

T. O. Gordeeva, O. A. Sychev, and M. V. Lunkina note the dependence of the child's school well-being on his positive attitude towards learning. And they recommend giving them the opportunity to "feel like a subject of educational activity, making decisions about the course of the educational process and strategies for its implementation, having a choice and not a passive object of external influences" [5]. G. A. Bakulina also emphasizes the importance of involving students in active educational activity through the formation of subject-subject relations and discloses the methodology for conducting Russian language lessons by means of subjectivity [3]. M. R. Lvov focuses on the maximum cognitive activity and independence of schoolchildren in the Russian language lessons, contributing to the best development of their thinking and speech [9; 10]. T. V. Napolnova developed exercises to enhance the mental activity of younger students in

the Russian language lessons through the creation of problem tasks [13]. V. V. Perevozchikova developed a set of logical-linguistic exercises for the development of logical thinking of younger students in the process of studying the topic “Sentence” [14].

However, it should be noted that in the exercises on the Russian language offered for younger schoolchildren, assignments indicating the mental action that must be carried out are often formulated in a ready-made form (namely, *divided into two groups, emphasize, compare, correlate, draw a conclusion, pick up a common word, etc.*). In our opinion, this does not fully contribute to the holistic formation of mental skills in children. Following G. A. Bakulina, we are convinced that the opportunities for the integral formation of the mental skills of younger schoolchildren in the Russian language lessons increase if one gives them the opportunity to formulate tasks for exercises [1] independently.

The above studies, being an essential contribution to the methodology of primary language education, however, do not take into account the emotional component of the proposed exercises and are based, as a rule, on lexical material. In this regard, in modern textbooks on the Russian language for primary school, exercises with phraseological units are undeservedly rarely used [7]. A review of scientific, pedagogical, and methodological literature showed that, on the one hand, scientists and methodologists see the importance of using phraseological units in the process of teaching the Russian language, including in primary school (E. N. Laguzova [8], E. I. Rogalyova [15]). E. I. Rogalyova, T. G. Nikitina [16], G. M. Stavskaya [18], T. V. Rose [17], V. V. Volina [4] are actively working on the creation of various kinds of phraseological dictionaries and workshops for children.

However, the exercises with phraseological units presented in Russian language textbooks for elementary schools are usually aimed at searching for phraseological units in texts, revealing their lexical meaning, history of occurrence. In our opinion, there are broader possibilities for using exercises with phraseological units in the integral intellectual and speech development of children. Thus, in this article, the author proposes a solution to the problem of the formation of the mental skills of younger students in the process of using exercises with phraseological units. Research objectives include the following: (1) to analyze the psychological and pedagogical literature on the research problem; (2) to make a cycle of exercises with phraseological units for the formation of mental skills of younger students; (3) to test the exercises in the lessons of the Russian language in elementary school.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Grammar exercises available in the Russian language methodology, phraseological units from works of children's literature (D. N. Mamin-Sibiriyak, K. I. Chukovsky, V. P. Kataev, H. Ch. Andersen, E. Uspensky, etc.), children phraseological dictionaries, and schoolchildren of 1-4 grades (100 people) compiled our research materials.

At the first stage of the study, we used a number of methods aimed at identifying the current level of development of children's mental skills. Among them, we would like to note the following: (1) “Simple analogies” (the establishment of logical connections and relations between concepts, the implementation of logical transfer by analogy from one concept to another); (2) “Exclude the word” (building a generalization of concepts); (3) “Comparison of concepts” (identifying significant signs of similarity and differences in concepts); (4) “Story by a series of plot pictures” (establishing causal relationships and a sequence of events; building a logically coherent and evidence-based statement); (5) “Interpretation of phraseological units” (revealing an understanding of the abstract meaning of phraseological units) for an individual conversation with children.

The following skills caused particular difficulty for most students: the ability to establish causal relationships, to generalize concepts, and to carry out the transfer from one concept to another by analogy. Explaining the abstract meaning of phraseological units has proved difficult for children. In the second stage, we developed a cycle of exercises with phraseological units for the formation of mental skills in children. The exercises we compiled have the following three-part structure: main task, language material, additional tasks. In this case, the difference from traditional exercises is the independent formulation of the main task by students and the content of the original language material represented by phraseological units, which themselves, having an internal figuratively generalized meaning, have an additional effect on the activation of mental activity. The independent formulation of the assignment by children is carried out on the basis of

the analysis of language material and reference points in the exercise (tables, ciphers, models of the sound-alphabetic, morphemic composition of words, omission of letters, etc.). An essential result of this approach is the awareness of students of their importance in the planning and organization of the educational process, which allows them to increase awareness and interest in the exercises.

The selection of phraseological units for exercises was carried out proceeding from the following: from the availability of understanding of their meanings by students of the 1-4 grades, the correspondence of the lexical, phonetic, syntactic features of phraseological units to grammatical material, which is studied in specific topics in the Russian language, their communicative significance, educational orientation. Further, phraseological units were arranged in accordance with the studied topic in the Russian language and the mental skill formed in the course of the main task.

Additional tasks for the exercise are aimed at consolidating and improving knowledge of spelling, phonetics, morphemic, morphology, syntax, development of speech, and have a search character.

In the structure of exercises with phraseological units, the organic repetition of the phases of the thought process is observed (namely, awareness of the problem situation; solution; verification of the assumption; formulation of the answer). At the stage of reading the main task, students have a problematic situation, the resolution of which is to formulate the main task. At the subsequent steps, students complete the task, performing a language analysis of the submitted phraseological units, formulate an answer, check the correctness of the presented way to solve the problem. At this stage, the mental skills of analysis, synthesis of comparison, generalization are actively involved. Besides, the work is carried out to identify the meanings of phraseological units, to include them in speech, thereby ensuring the integration of the mental and speech development of students.

At the third stage of the study, we introduced exercises with phraseological units into the Russian language lessons (from grades 1 to 4). Below, an example of a task with phraseological units is presented, aimed at developing the ability to establish causal relationships and a sequence of events.

#### **Topic “Simple and complex sentences” (Grade No. 4)**

Read the pairs of sentences. Check out the help. Formulate the task and complete it.

*Vanya did not learn the rule in the Russian language. - In the lesson, Vanya considered a raven.*

*The crane left sloppy. - The fox did not feed the crane.*

*Styopa smashed the mother's vase. - The sister said that he would have to disentangle.*

Reference: cause → consequence.

- Which of the suggestions presented in the exercise can be distinguished, and why?
- Do words of which part prevail in phraseological units?
- Give a morphological characterization of a word that is cognate to the word beat.
- Make your couple of sentences with a causal relationship using phraseology.

### **3. Research Results**

A cycle of 93 exercises with phraseological units that we compiled and performed by children, a phraseological dictionary (350 phraseological units), a qualitative and quantitative change in the level of development of mental skills were the result of the study. Students advanced in the development of mental skills from 6.9% at the beginning of the experiment to 54.4% at the end. The indicators of the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 1. Students in the experimental group could do the following: easily establish correspondences and transfer data to other concepts; exclude unnecessary by correctly explaining the reason; identify significant signs of similarities and differences of concepts; establish causal relationships; compose a coherent, complete, reflecting the content of the plot pictures of the story with the inclusion of phraseological units; understand the abstract interpretation of phraseological units.

TABLE 1. INDICATORS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUP ON THE DIAGNOSTIC RESULTS AT THE STAGE OF THE CONTROL EXPERIMENT

| Thinking skill                                                                                               | Experimental group<br>(50 people, level in%) |         |      |               | Control group<br>(50 people, level in%) |         |      |               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------|------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|---------|------|---------------|
|                                                                                                              | High                                         | Average | Low  | Does not know | High                                    | Average | Low  | Does not know |
| Identification of significant signs of similarity and difference of concepts                                 | 36                                           | 64      | 0    | 0             | 20                                      | 60      | 20   | 0             |
| The selection of the concept and the construction of generalization based on the selected essential features | 4                                            | 68      | 28   | 0             | 8                                       | 52      | 40   | 0             |
| Establishment of causal relationships and sequence of events                                                 | 92                                           | 0       | 0    | 8             | 72                                      | 16      | 12   | 0             |
| Implementation of a logical transfer from one concept to another                                             | 76                                           | 12      | 8    | 4             | 60                                      | 24      | 8    | 8             |
| Interpretation of phraseological units                                                                       | 64                                           | 4       | 36   | 0             | 33.2                                    | 20.4    | 44.8 | 0             |
| Average for all parameters                                                                                   | 54.4                                         | 29.6    | 14.4 | 2.4           | 38.6                                    | 34.5    | 25   | 1.6           |

#### 4. Discussion

The obtained results confirm the effectiveness of exercises with phraseological units in the formation of mental skills of younger schoolchildren, supplement and expand the research of G. A. Bakulina, aimed at the integrated intellectual development of younger schoolchildren in Russian language lessons [1; 2]. The mental skills formed at a qualitative level contributed to the improvement and high-quality implementation of the functions of thinking, such as understanding, goal-setting, problem-solving functions, and reflection.

These mental skills influenced the overall intellectual development of children, improved the quality of educational activities, created the conditions for the full development of the subject. The students' interest in phraseological units, and their function in speech, the desire to include them in their speech were a critical result. Based on the obtained data, studies are planned related to the use of exercises with phraseological units at such structural stages of the Russian language lesson in elementary school as the minute of calligraphy, updating of knowledge, vocabulary work. The theoretical and practical data of this study can be used in creating an exercise cycle for the middle level of a comprehensive school.

#### 5. Conclusion

In the course of the study, we identified the pedagogical conditions for the effective formation of the mental skills of younger students. These pedagogical conditions include the following: (1) the use of phraseological units selected from children's works and arranged in accordance with the formed mental skill as the source language material; (2) the formulation of the main and additional tasks, which are of a search character and suggesting a gradually more complicated (from topic to topic, from section to section, from one year of study to another) students' thinking; (3) ensuring systematic performance of exercises (on average, one time per week) for four years of training.

The theoretical significance of the study is to expand the well-known ideas about the possibility of developing the mental skills of elementary school children on the basis of a new version of the use of phraseological units in the process of teaching the Russian language, namely: the possibility of performing with them a predetermined mental operation with the parallel development of the studied material in the Russian language.

The practical significance of the study lies in the grouping of phraseological units according to the topics of the Russian language studied in 1-4 grades of the elementary school, as well as in the development of

search tasks (primary and secondary), which are aimed at the interconnected, interdependent development of mental and speech skills of younger students, the compilation of an exercise cycle with phraseological units.

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