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**Developing Lexical Skills in Students of Grades 3-4 in the Process of Primary Foreign Language Education**

Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to foreign language proficiency, particularly in the early stages of education. This paper explores effective methods for developing lexical skills in students of grades 3 - 4 within the context of primary foreign language education. Taking into account the cognitive and psychological characteristics of children aged 8 - 10, the paper examines a range of teaching strategies including visual-contextual learning, game-based activities, songs and rhymes, digital tools, and project-based tasks. The theoretical foundations are supported by current pedagogical research and practical implementation strategies. The paper concludes with recommendations for educators to effectively foster lexical competence in young learners through a balanced, engaging, and communicative approach.

In an increasingly interconnected world, early foreign language learning plays a pivotal role in the development of communicative competence. Vocabulary knowledge, or lexical competence, is a cornerstone of this competence and directly influences the four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For students in grades 3 - 4, the development of vocabulary must be aligned with their cognitive and emotional development. This paper explores effective, research-based methods for fostering lexical skills in young learners, emphasizing the role of motivation, contextual learning, and interaction in the language acquisition process. In the modern globalized world, early foreign language education plays a crucial role in shaping students’ linguistic competence and communication skills. The development of lexical competence - the ability to understand, acquire, and use vocabulary effectively - is a foundational element in the acquisition of any foreign language. For students in grades 3 - 4, who are in a critical period of cognitive and linguistic development, introducing appropriate methods to build vocabulary is especially important. This thesis explores effective methods for developing lexical skills in young learners during the initial stages of foreign language instruction, considering psychological, pedagogical, and linguistic principles.

Lexical skills refer to the learner's ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately use vocabulary in context. Vocabulary acquisition is a key indicator of language proficiency and contributes significantly to reading comprehension, speaking, writing, and listening abilities. Students in grades 3 - 4 are typically aged 8 -10. At this developmental stage, they exhibit growing cognitive abilities, enhanced memory capacity, and a developing sense of abstract thinking. These characteristics influence the strategies and methods educators can use to teach vocabulary effectively.

Effective vocabulary teaching must be age-appropriate, engaging, contextually rich, and repetitive without becoming monotonous. Methods should aim to build both receptive (recognition) and productive (usage) lexical skills.

The use of visual aids (flashcards, pictures, realia) helps learners associate new words with tangible objects or ideas. Contextual learning, such as presenting vocabulary in stories, dialogues, or thematic units, supports better retention and understanding. Games such as word bingo, memory matching, and vocabulary charades stimulate motivation and engagement. They provide a low-anxiety environment where students can practice vocabulary in meaningful, enjoyable ways.

Musical and rhythmic activities support phonetic awareness and reinforce vocabulary through repetition and melody. These methods are particularly effective with young learners due to their natural inclination toward rhythm and movement.

Educational apps, interactive whiteboards, and multimedia resources make vocabulary practice dynamic and personalized. Digital platforms can offer immediate feedback and track individual progress.

Projects (e.g., creating picture dictionaries, mini-books, or posters) and communicative tasks (e.g., role-plays, interviews, or pair work) provide opportunities for authentic use of new vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

While the main goal is to develop foreign language proficiency, strategic use of the students’ native language (L1) can clarify meaning, especially for abstract terms, and aid comprehension and retention.

A well-structured vocabulary lesson includes clear objectives, pre-teaching of words, contextualized practice, and consolidation activities. Planning should reflect a balance between receptive and productive tasks.

Sample activities and lesson structures for classroom use are outlined, focusing on specific themes such as animals, weather, school, and family.

Regular assessment, both formative (observations, in-class tasks) and summative (quizzes, presentations), helps monitor progress and adjust instruction. Feedback should be encouraging and guide learners toward improvement.

Lexical competence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and appropriately use words in context. It encompasses both receptive (passive recognition of vocabulary) and productive (active use) abilities.

Children aged 8 - 10 exhibit increased capacity for memory retention, logical reasoning, and imaginative thinking. These features should guide the selection of teaching methods, emphasizing activity-based and experiential learning.

According to Nation, effective vocabulary teaching should incorporate:

- Frequency and repetition

- Meaningful context

- Active engagement

- Multi-sensory presentation

- Opportunities for use in communication.

Visual aids such as flashcards, realia, and illustrations enhance retention by linking words to concrete images. Contextualized learning through stories, thematic units, and dialogues supports deeper understanding.

Games provide a dynamic and stress-free environment for vocabulary practice. Activities like word bingo, memory cards, and vocabulary races promote engagement while reinforcing retention. Musical elements aid pronunciation, rhythm, and memory. Songs and chants introduce repetition naturally and are especially suitable for auditory learners. Technology enhances vocabulary learning through interactivity and individualization. Tools such as language apps, interactive whiteboards, and multimedia platforms can provide multisensory learning experiences.

Creating posters, picture dictionaries, and role-play scenarios engages students in authentic language use. Such methods develop both lexical and communicative skills.

While the main focus is the target language (L2), judicious use of L1 can clarify abstract or difficult concepts, support scaffolding, and reduce cognitive overload

Vocabulary lessons should include:

- Pre-teaching of words

- Meaningful contextualization

- Varied practice (individual, pair, group)

- Reinforcement activities

Sample Activities

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| Theme  | Activity | Skills Targeted |
| Animals  | Flashcard guessing game  |  Listening, speaking  |
| Weather | Weather Song" and drawing  | Listening, vocabulary  |
| School Items | Labeling a classroom diagram | Reading, writing |
| Family | Creating a family tree poster | Speaking, vocabulary  |

Lexical development is a fundamental aspect of early foreign language education. In grades 3–4, methods must be developmentally appropriate, interactive, and engaging to foster vocabulary acquisition effectively. By integrating visual support, games, music, digital tools, and communicative tasks, educators can create a rich and stimulating environment for language learning. Future research may further explore longitudinal outcomes of these methods and their adaptability across different linguistic and cultural contexts. The development of lexical skills in grades 3 - 4 is a critical component of successful primary foreign language education. By using age-appropriate, engaging, and varied methods - including visual support, games, music, digital tools, and communicative activities - educators can foster a rich vocabulary base in young learners. A thoughtful and creative approach, grounded in pedagogical principles and responsive to students' needs, ensures that vocabulary instruction becomes both effective and enjoyable.