

## Peculiarities of Primary School Children Figurative Speech Comprehension

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**Abstract:** Provided by the present article analysis of modern psychological and pedagogical researches of comprehension issues allow to state that comprehension of figurative speech (metaphors and proverbs) by primary school children is a complex process requiring overall investigation, consideration of school children mental actions, their orientations towards significant connections and relations between objects and phenomena of the surrounding world. School children mental actions development necessary for metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning comprehension is possible only within the context of their learning activity. It has been singled out in the experimental research that within the context of traditional teaching, school children oral speech comprehension is focused on the features of the objects without their connections consideration; thus the comprehension is restricted to an image and direct contents of proverbs and metaphors. School children learning according to D.B. Elkonin-V.V. Davydov' programs, obtain the orientation towards the system-forming features of the objects that allows to generalize correctly the significant connections and understand the meaning of proverbs and metaphors. The school children orientation towards the significant connections and relations is determined by the components of learning activity: learning actions, control actions. The most sensitive indicator of school children oral speech comprehension is the evaluation of their own learning activity.

**Key words:** Comprehension • Metaphors and proverbs • Primary school children • Mental action

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of school children comprehension of fictional and educational texts is considered in many research works of Russian and foreign scientists (L.P. Doblavev, V.V. Znakov, M.Ya. Mikulinskaya, A.P. Semenova, O.V. Soboleva, O.K. Tikhomirova, R.W.Gibbs, etc.) [1-3].

There has been proved in Russian and foreign researches that individual strategies of metaphors and proverbs comprehension are defined by learners' psychic abilities, operations and actions (K.I. Alekseyev, L.P. Doblavev, V.V. Znakov, G.S. Kostyuk, A.A. Smirnov) [4]; there have been singled out the levels of school children's comprehension of metaphors and proverbs (M.Ya. Mikulinskaya, A.P. Semenova, O.V. Soboleva, D.V. Shalimova); the role of the context in the metaphors and proverbs comprehension by school children is investigated, the difficulties and traits of school children figurative speech comprehension are grounded (M.Mc.Glone, K.H. Onishi, S.A.Siltanen, J.E.Waggoner) [5-8].

The analysis of the Russian and foreign works on the issues of comprehension makes it possible to connect comprehension with the passing of the obtained knowledge through the primary school children's subjective sphere of meanings, along with the awareness of connections and relations between objects and phenomena, the disclosure of the significant in them and constructing the concept adequate to the objective meaning of this information. The main difficulty of metaphors and proverbs comprehension is that their content has specific and generalized meaning. As a specific composition, the proverb is the summary of one specific case, interesting and clear in itself. At the same time, this specific composition is a peculiar means of the generalized meaning expression. The comprehension of a proverb or a metaphor comes if a school child, having gained the specific content and determined significant connections and relations that are the transmitters of a figurative meaning, generalizes these connections and relations [9].

Researches, which investigate the issues of primary school children mental activity orientation development, are presented in D.B. Elkonin-V.V. Davydov' works on developmental teaching, the significant peculiarity of which is the idea that from the very beginning the subject of learning is given as the system of concepts reproducing the studied subject as an integral system in its essential properties and relations. Goal-setting, forecasting of activity results, planning, control and assessment of learners' mental actions performing promote the formation of children's ability to follow the interrelations of the common and specific; the subject comprehension takes place not through its visual similarity with others, but through latent specific interconnections. In close collaboration with teachers, pupils study to take or set an educational task, transform its conditions to detect some common relations of the object that should be present in the corresponding theoretical concept. The impact of communication on the thinking development is presented in A.T. Kurbanova's works [10].

We have supposed in our research that the comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning by primary school children has its peculiarities which are connected with the level of mental actions formation and are revealed in the pupils' ability to generalize. If a pupil is able to single out the system-forming signs of the object, he is able to reveal the generalized sense of metaphors and proverbs and comprehend their figurative meaning. As the content of the developmental teaching is built on the basis of theoretical knowledge, the foundation of which makes the content generalizations, then teaching according to this technology should promote the comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

At the first stage of the research, there were applied "Metaphors" and "Proverbs" procedures (the author is B.V. Zeigarnik) [11] to study the peculiarities of school children's comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning; there was also considered the dynamics of these data correlation in the context of traditional and developmental teaching programs.

At the second stage there were defined individual indicators that characterize the pupils' levels of mental actions development: actions of goal-setting, control, assessment and interest in learning activity that impact

pupils' comprehension. The research of these correlations was carried out with the help of G.V. Repkina and E.V. Zaika's modified basic test.

At the third stage of the research, there were applied such procedures as "The set of rings" and "The construction of new sets" worked out by A.V. Vorontzov [12] to investigate pupils' abilities to analyze the object as a system of connected elements.

#### **RESULTS**

124 primary school children took part in the experimental research, 63 of them study according to D.B. Elkonin-V.V. Davydov' developmental teaching programs, 61 according to traditional programs of a primary school. Thus, there were two groups: the experimental one (comprised of those learning according to the developmental programs) and the control group (learning according to the traditional programs).

The comprehension of the proverb is determined by pupils' orientation to the system-forming signs of the object. Learners, who are able to reveal the interconnection of system-forming signs of the object, who generalize correctly the essential connections and relations in the proverb, adequately perceive the meaning of the proverbs, they comprehend their figurative meaning.

The pupils of the experimental group showed better developed mental actions aimed at the generalization of the essential connections and relations to perceive the inner generalized sense. In the control groups this indicator increases from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>d</sup> forms from 15% to 48% ( $p < 0,05$ ), in experimental groups it grows from 45% to 80% ( $p < 0,05$ ).

The intermediate stage of metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning comprehension is the pupils' actions orientation towards the image. The difficulty of metaphors and proverbs comprehension is connected with the retardation of direct images and associations which they create and the transition to their figurative meaning. In the control groups pupils' orientation towards the image from the 1 to the 3 forms is decreasing from 35% to 21%. In the experimental groups there is observed an opposite tendency-the indicator is increasing from 5% to 15%.

Incomprehension of the figurative speech, inability to implement the generalization of inner connections and to get into the meaning of proverbs was displayed by 26% of pupils of the third control form and 10% of the third form of the experimental form.

Table 1: Peculiarities of interest, goal-setting actions, actions of control and assessment of pupils from control and experimental groups

Components of learning activity	Control groups	Experimental groups
Interest	The situational interest is formed only in the third form.	The situational interest is available since the first form due to the collaboration with the teacher.
Goal	There is no orientation in theoretical tasks, pupils accept only practical tasks.	In compliance with the requirements of cognitive, theoretical tasks they can define the goal of the upcoming actions.
Actions	Cannot decide independently what action to use to solve new tasks.	Detect the inconsistency between the conditions and the ways of actions, though unable to transform it.
Control	Cannot find and correct the mistake independently when solving a new task.	Independently detect and correct mistakes. Actions are performed faultlessly. Performing actions they orient towards the scheme of actions and correlate the process of task solving with it.
Assessment	Cannot assess their actions, need in the teacher's evaluation. They independently evaluate actions if they correlate them with the scheme (2-3 forms).	Before solving the task they try to evaluate their actions (1-3forms).

Thus, it is possible to note that within the context of traditional teaching, the comprehension of figurative meaning of metaphors and proverbs by pupils reveals their orientation towards the signs of the object without their interconnection consideration, the comprehension is limited by the image and the content of proverbs and metaphors. Pupils, who study according to D.B. Elkonin, V.V. Davydov' developmental teaching programs, show that orientation towards the system-forming signs of the object has the significant impact, this allows them to generalize in the right way the essential connections and understand the meaning of metaphors and proverbs.

Pupils' orientation to the essential connections and relations is determined by the formation of learning activity components: learning actions, actions of control, assessment which are presented in Table 1.

The singled out distinctive features of educational actions allow to come to the conclusion that primary school children of experimental groups already form reflection on their way of actions, it makes possible to determine the goal of actions, to detect mistakes, to evaluate actions before the task solution.

The obtained experimental data testify to the fact that the comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meaning affects not only activity components, but the whole cognitive sphere of school children. The comprehension is successfully formed in the context of learning activity along with goal-setting, actions of control and assessment.

The comparison of the experimental results obtained according to the procedures "The set of rings" and "Metaphors" revealed the interconnection between the means of orientation towards the essential signs of the system and the average values of correctly solved groups of metaphors. In case the ability to single out the essential

signs out of the system is absent, then the ability to reveal the figurative meaning of metaphors and get their sense is absolutely excluded.

## CONCLUSION

The experimental research aimed at the study of primary school children comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings allowed to point out the following key points.

Actions of education activity are formed in the interconnection with each other, being an integral system. School children comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings suggests pupils' reflection on their way of action, that allows to define the goal of the action, to detect mistakes, to assess actions before task solution. The most sensitive indicator of learners' comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings is their assessment.

The psychological mechanism of generalized mental action development which allows to reveal metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings is the following: at first the pupil gains the ability to perform mental actions establishing connections and relations between particular words in a proverb, to generalize and get the figurative meaning of it, then with the help of evaluative actions and goal-setting to follow the interconnections of the universal and the individual perceiving the meaning of proverbs and metaphors, revealing hidden relationship. Pupils' mental actions formation is possible only within the context of their education activity. Though, in the context of traditional teaching, primary school children are not exposed to the formation of the scientific knowledge system, but the combination of unrelated concepts of different levels takes place, inner relations between studied concepts are not revealed.

In the conclusion it should be noted that beyond the frames of the analysis there have been left significant issues of school children comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings. First of all, it is the role of the emotive and volitional components of the comprehension, the teacher's role in the formation of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings comprehension. The issue of different personal factors impact on the primary school children comprehension development requires thorough consideration.

**Summary:** The comprehension of metaphors and proverbs figurative meanings by primary school children is a complex process that requires the overall research and consideration of such components as:

- Mental actions of learners, their orientations towards the essential connections and relations of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world;
- Education activity formation: goal-setting, control, assessment.

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