The issue of developing reading comprehension skills in primary school native language lessons

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Abstract. This thesis addresses the development of students' reading comprehension skills during native language lessons in primary grades. It analyzes the nature of reading comprehension, its significance in the educational process, the stages of working with a text, and effective methods and tasks. Furthermore, recommendations are provided for fostering students' abilities to identify the main idea of a text, locate key information, draw conclusions, and articulate their own opinions based on the text.

Keywords: primary grades, native language, reading comprehension skills, text, expressing the main idea, question-and-answer method, development of reading literacy.

Introduction. In today's educational process, it is essential that primary school students not only read texts fluently but also comprehend their content, analyze information, and substantiate their own opinions. Reading comprehension is a core competency that must be cultivated from the primary grades. This is because, to understand textbook assignments, correctly interpret problem statements, follow instructions, and utilize information across various subjects, a primary school student must be able to read with comprehension.

Native language lessons offer a significant opportunity to develop this skill. Through stories, fairy tales, poems, dialogues, and informational texts, primary school students enhance their vocabulary, speech, cognitive abilities, and capacity for independent thinking. Therefore, instruction should not be limited to mere reading; rather, it is necessary to engage in purposeful work focused on the content of the text.

Reading comprehension is the process of understanding information in a written text, connecting ideas, identifying the main point, and drawing conclusions based on the material read. This skill encompasses several components. Specifically, a reader must be able to grasp the meaning of words through context, locate explicitly stated information, determine the sequence of events, distinguish between cause and effect, interpret the actions of characters, and identify the central idea of the text.

Sometimes, a reader may read a text accurately and quickly, yet struggle to explain its content. In such cases, it is helpful to reread the text, clarify unfamiliar vocabulary, ask questions about the content, and guide the reader to support their answers with evidence from the text. Reading comprehension skills develop gradually through regular practice, discussion, and independent assignments.

Working with a text can be organized into three stages: before reading, during reading, and after reading. In the pre-reading stage, students are shown the text's title and illustrations; they are asked to make predictions about the topic, and their prior knowledge is activated. For example, the teacher might ask questions such as, "Looking at the title, what do you think the text might be about?" or "What do you see in the picture?" This approach prepares students to read the text with a specific purpose.

During the reading process, the teacher pauses at key points and asks students to predict what will happen next, explain a confusing sentence, or identify important information. Reading in pairs, reading by assigning roles, and discussing in small groups are also effective methods. Through these activities, students listen to one another's ideas, express their own perspectives, and develop the habit of locating specific information within the text.

After reading, tasks such as retelling the text, sequencing events, creating an outline, describing characters, and identifying the main idea are carried out. It is particularly important to teach students to support their answers with evidence from the text. For example, the child first answers a question, then finds a sentence in the text that supports that answer, and explains why they chose that particular sentence. This method develops the student's independent and logical thinking.

Questions based on a text should vary in complexity. The first type of question focuses on identifying information explicitly stated in the text—for example, "Where did the event take place?" or "Who is the protagonist?" The second type encourages the reader to draw conclusions, such as "Why did the character act this way?" or "Which sentence

reveals their mood?" The third type facilitates evaluation and the justification of personal opinions—for instance, "Was the character's action right? Why?"

Structuring questions to progress from simple to complex helps students better grasp the content of a text. Rather than focusing solely on the correct answer, teachers should also pay attention to the student's thought process. When students support their answers with information from the text, they develop the habit of reading carefully and identifying evidence.

The teacher acts as a guide and source of support in developing reading comprehension skills. Through modeling, the teacher can demonstrate how to identify the main idea of a text, determine the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context, or substantiate a conclusion. Initially, it is appropriate to use visual aids such as picture cards, key words, outlines, and diagrams. As students become more independent, these supporting tools are gradually phased out.

When assessing outcomes, the teacher observes the student’s ability to retell the text, identify the main idea, answer questions, and locate evidence within the text. Errors help identify the specific areas where a student is struggling—whether it is understanding the meaning of words, recognizing the connections between events, or justifying conclusions with evidence—which then informs the selection of subsequent tasks.

Students in a classroom may have varying levels of preparation. Consequently, some students might be given shorter texts, encouraged to reread, or provided with additional explanations, while others may be assigned more complex tasks, such as comparing two texts or determining the author’s perspective. Engaging texts, interactive discussion, and encouraging feedback increase children's interest in reading.

In conclusion, developing reading comprehension skills in primary-grade native language lessons requires systematic and purposeful effort. Effective strategies include making predictions before reading, asking questions during the reading process, identifying the main idea after reading, retelling the content, and substantiating answers with evidence from the text. These methods foster not only the students' reading literacy but also their speech, cognitive abilities, and independent thinking. Most importantly, a student should evolve into a reader who does not merely read a text, but one who grasps its content, analyzes it, and is capable of justifying their own opinions.

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