

Theoretical Foundations of Developing Ethnocultural Competence in Students

Isomiddinov Asliddin

PhD at Department of Social and Humanitarian Sciences, Pedagogy and Psychology at Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan

Received: 10 February 2026; **Accepted:** 07 March 2026; **Published:** 28 March 2026

Abstract: The enhancement of lexical competence in primary school students is one of the key tasks of modern language education, since vocabulary development forms the basis for reading comprehension, oral expression, written communication, and the overall intellectual growth of children. In primary education, lexical acquisition becomes more effective when abstract linguistic material is connected with sensory perception, visual representation, and meaningful context. For this reason, illustrative tools occupy a special place in the methodology of language teaching. The present article examines the methodology for improving the use of illustrative tools in enhancing the lexical competence of primary school students. The study analyzes the pedagogical, psychological, and methodological foundations of visual support in vocabulary instruction and determines how illustrative tools influence lexical comprehension, retention, active use of words, semantic differentiation, and speech development. The article is based on the analysis of theoretical literature on primary language teaching, child psychology, visual pedagogy, lexical competence, and communicative methodology. Special attention is given to the classification of illustrative tools, the methodological principles of their classroom use, and the pedagogical conditions under which they become most effective in developing students' vocabulary. The study shows that illustrative tools are not simply auxiliary materials but an important didactic mechanism for transforming passive lexical recognition into active lexical application. They increase learner motivation, facilitate semantic understanding, improve memory processes, and create favorable conditions for contextual word acquisition. The findings demonstrate that the effective use of illustrative tools requires scientifically grounded methodological organization, age-appropriate design, communicative integration, and teacher competence in selecting and adapting visual materials. The article concludes that improving the methodology of illustrative support in primary language education contributes significantly to the formation of lexical competence and to the broader development of students' language personality.

Keywords: Lexical competence, primary school students, illustrative tools, vocabulary development, visual pedagogy, language teaching methodology, mother tongue education, communicative competence, primary education, speech development.

Introduction: The development of lexical competence is one of the most important objectives of primary school language education. At the initial stage of schooling, children not only learn to read and write but also acquire the language means necessary for understanding the surrounding world, expressing ideas, participating in communication, and mastering other school subjects. Vocabulary serves as the core element of this process because words function as the carriers of meaning, concepts, relations, and

experiences. The richer and more structured the learner's vocabulary, the more confidently he or she can understand texts, formulate thoughts, and engage in educational interaction. For this reason, the problem of enhancing lexical competence in primary school students remains a central issue in pedagogy and language methodology.

Lexical competence is commonly understood as the ability to recognize, understand, use, and appropriately select lexical units in oral and written communication.

In the case of primary school students, this competence includes not only the memorization of individual words but also the formation of semantic associations, the distinction between word meanings, the understanding of contextual usage, and the gradual transition of words from passive recognition to active speech. Since young learners think concretely and rely heavily on sensory experience, vocabulary teaching at this stage requires methods that can connect words with visible, meaningful, and emotionally engaging representations. This is where illustrative tools become pedagogically significant.

Illustrative tools include a broad range of visual aids such as pictures, drawings, thematic cards, diagrams, story illustrations, object images, graphic organizers, symbols, and visual schemes that help learners perceive and understand linguistic material. In primary education, such tools are especially effective because children's thinking at this age is closely linked with visual imagery. They perceive meaning more easily when words are connected to objects, actions, qualities, and situations presented in visual form. As a result, illustrative tools help transform abstract vocabulary instruction into a more accessible and developmentally appropriate process.

Despite their recognized value, illustrative tools are not always used methodically or purposefully in classroom practice. In some cases, they serve only as decorative elements rather than meaningful pedagogical instruments. In others, their use is limited to simple naming exercises without deeper semantic or communicative development. Therefore, the issue is not merely whether illustrative tools are used, but how they are used, for what purpose, in which sequence, and under what methodological conditions. Improving the use of illustrative tools means moving from occasional and intuitive visual support to a scientifically grounded methodology that integrates illustrations into all stages of lexical work, including presentation, comprehension, practice, contextualization, and productive use.

The relevance of this topic is determined by several interrelated factors. First, modern primary education increasingly emphasizes competency-based learning, which requires that vocabulary knowledge be functional rather than mechanical. Second, contemporary classrooms include learners with different levels of language readiness, perceptual styles, and cognitive pace, making visual support more necessary than ever. Third, the growing availability of printed and digital visual resources creates new opportunities for improving vocabulary teaching, but these opportunities need to be methodologically structured. Finally, lexical competence is foundational

for the development of communicative competence, reading literacy, and academic success in general. Consequently, enhancing it through effective illustrative methodology becomes a pedagogical priority.

The purpose of this article is to examine the methodology for improving the use of illustrative tools in enhancing the lexical competence of primary school students and to identify the pedagogical and methodological principles that ensure the effectiveness of visual support in vocabulary instruction. The article argues that illustrative tools become truly effective only when they are integrated into a communicative, developmental, and learner-centered teaching system.

The study is based on theoretical methods of pedagogical and methodological research. A comprehensive analysis of scientific literature in pedagogy, developmental psychology, language teaching methodology, visual learning, and lexical development was conducted. The conceptual analysis method was applied to clarify the meaning of key categories such as lexical competence, illustrative tools, vocabulary acquisition, visual support, and primary language education. Comparative analysis was used to examine different scholarly approaches to vocabulary teaching and to determine the place of visual aids within these approaches.

Systematic analysis made it possible to identify the interrelationship between the psychological characteristics of primary school learners, the pedagogical use of illustrative tools, and the expected outcomes in lexical competence development. The methods of synthesis and pedagogical interpretation were employed to formulate a coherent methodological model of illustrative support in vocabulary teaching. The study also drew upon principles of learner-centered, competency-based, and communicative education, which enabled the author to interpret visual pedagogy not as an isolated technique but as an integral part of the educational process.

The research does not present experimental statistical data; rather, it offers a theoretically grounded analysis of methodological improvement based on the integration of pedagogical theory and classroom logic. The main focus of the methods section is therefore on conceptual generalization and methodological interpretation of the role of illustrative tools in the lexical development of younger learners.

The analysis of scientific and methodological literature demonstrates that illustrative tools occupy a crucial place in the process of enhancing lexical competence among primary school students. Their importance is

rooted in the age-related cognitive characteristics of younger learners, whose perception, memory, and thinking are largely dependent on visual and concrete forms of representation. At the primary school stage, children understand and retain new lexical material more effectively when it is associated with visible images, familiar situations, and emotionally expressive contexts. Therefore, the first significant result of the study is the confirmation that illustrative tools are not secondary additions to vocabulary teaching but one of its foundational methodological resources.

A major finding of the analysis is that illustrative tools facilitate the initial semanticization of words. One of the central methodological problems in lexical instruction is the introduction of new words in a way that ensures accurate comprehension. Verbal explanation alone is often insufficient for younger learners, particularly when the meaning of a word refers to an unfamiliar object, quality, action, or relation. Illustrative tools help overcome this difficulty by creating an immediate visual-semantic connection between the lexical unit and its referent. When students see an image while hearing or reading a new word, the process of comprehension becomes more direct, more concrete, and more stable. Such visual-semantic linkage is especially valuable in the acquisition of nouns, adjectives, and verbs that can be clearly represented through objects, colors, actions, emotions, and situations.

The analysis also shows that illustrative tools improve memory retention and support the transfer of vocabulary from passive recognition to active use. Vocabulary learning in primary school often suffers when new words are introduced but not sufficiently practiced in meaningful contexts. In such cases, learners may temporarily recognize the word but fail to use it independently in speech. Visual support helps prevent this problem because images act as retrieval cues. When students are later asked to name, describe, compare, classify, or narrate based on illustrations, they reactivate previously introduced lexical material. This repeated association strengthens long-term memory and increases the likelihood that words will become part of the learner's active vocabulary. The methodological implication is that illustrations should not be limited to the moment of presentation but should recur throughout the stages of practice, revision, and productive language use.

Another important result concerns the role of illustrative tools in developing semantic differentiation. Lexical competence includes not only knowing isolated word meanings but also distinguishing between close meanings, recognizing oppositions, understanding category relations, and using words appropriately in

context. Illustrations help learners perceive such semantic differences more clearly. For example, visual comparison of related objects or actions can support the understanding of synonyms, antonyms, generic and specific terms, and semantic fields. A picture showing various types of clothing, animals, fruits, or emotional expressions allows children to notice lexical distinctions and relations that might remain abstract in purely verbal explanation. Thus, illustrative tools support not only lexical accumulation but also lexical systematization.

The study further reveals that illustrative tools are especially effective when they are used in combination with communicative tasks. Their pedagogical value increases significantly when learners do more than simply identify or repeat words. When illustrations are incorporated into description, dialogue, storytelling, guessing, classification, matching, comparison, and role-based speech activities, vocabulary learning becomes communicatively meaningful. In such cases, the image does not function merely as a support for naming but as a stimulus for thought and expression. Students begin to use words not because they have memorized them, but because the communicative task creates a natural need for lexical choice. This finding confirms that the methodology of using illustrative tools should be integrated with communicative teaching principles.

The analysis also shows that different types of illustrative tools have different methodological functions. Simple subject pictures are effective for introducing concrete vocabulary and checking basic word recognition. сюжетные illustrations and sequential picture series are more suitable for contextual vocabulary development, sentence building, and coherent speech. Visual schemes and semantic maps support categorization and conceptual relations. Graphic organizers can help learners group words according to topic, function, quality, or association. Symbols and icons may facilitate the understanding of abstract relations or procedural language. Therefore, improving methodology requires not only using illustrations more often but also selecting the appropriate type of illustration according to the lexical objective and developmental level of the learners.

A further result of the study is the recognition that the effectiveness of illustrative tools depends on their age appropriateness and pedagogical design. Primary school students respond best to visuals that are clear, concrete, emotionally expressive, and not overloaded with irrelevant details. If an image is too complex, too abstract, or poorly connected with the teaching goal, it may distract learners instead of supporting

comprehension. Effective illustrative materials should guide attention to the target lexical item, correspond to the children's experience, and create opportunities for meaningful verbalization. This means that methodological improvement includes not only the choice of what to show, but also how to show it, when to introduce it, and how to structure the accompanying speech task.

The results also indicate that illustrative tools contribute to the development of speech alongside lexical competence. Vocabulary does not exist in isolation from communicative activity. Once learners understand and remember words, they must learn to combine them into phrases, sentences, and coherent statements. Illustrations support this process by providing a meaningful basis for utterance construction. A picture can prompt students to name objects, describe qualities, explain actions, compare details, identify relations, or narrate events. In this way, lexical work naturally expands into sentence formation, oral description, retelling, and creative expression. The image becomes a bridge between lexical knowledge and speech production.

Another important finding concerns the motivational effect of illustrative tools. Younger learners are often more engaged when educational material is presented visually. Illustrations attract attention, reduce monotony, arouse curiosity, and create a more dynamic classroom atmosphere. This motivational dimension is particularly important in vocabulary learning, which can otherwise become mechanical and repetitive. When students interact with colorful, meaningful, and well-selected visual material, they are more likely to participate actively and remember words with greater ease. From a pedagogical perspective, this suggests that illustrations support not only cognitive but also emotional conditions of learning.

The study also demonstrates that the teacher's methodological competence is a decisive factor in improving the use of illustrative tools. The same illustration can function either as a superficial visual aid or as a powerful lexical and communicative resource depending on how the teacher organizes interaction around it. Effective use requires the ability to formulate purposeful questions, guide observation, encourage verbal responses, anticipate lexical difficulties, and gradually increase the level of independence in students' speech. The teacher must also know how to combine illustration with other methods such as repetition, contextualization, comparison, dramatization, and text work. Thus, the improvement of methodology depends not only on the availability of visual materials but on pedagogical mastery in their integration.

Finally, the analysis confirms that illustrative tools are particularly valuable in differentiated instruction. Primary school students differ in their vocabulary range, perceptual style, speed of comprehension, and speech readiness. Illustrations help bridge these differences by making lexical material more accessible to weaker learners while still allowing stronger learners to perform more complex speech tasks. For some students, an image may serve as support for naming and recognition; for others, it may become the basis for independent description, comparison, or story creation. This flexibility makes illustrative tools especially relevant in learner-centered classroom practice.

The findings of the study make it possible to interpret the methodology of illustrative support in vocabulary instruction as a complex pedagogical system rather than a separate set of visual techniques. The central role of illustrative tools in lexical development is explained not simply by children's attraction to images, but by the deep cognitive relationship between perception, meaning, and language acquisition. Primary school learners develop concepts through contact with concrete representations, and words become meaningful when they are connected with perceptual and experiential content. In this sense, illustrations perform a mediating function between reality, thought, and language. They help children transform what is seen into what is named, understood, and expressed.

This understanding has important methodological consequences. First, it means that illustrative tools should be treated as instruments of semantic and communicative development, not merely as means of decoration or entertainment. The pedagogical effect of a picture lies not in its presence, but in the educational action it stimulates. If the student only glances at an image and repeats a word after the teacher, the lexical gain may remain limited. However, if the image becomes the basis for observation, questioning, comparison, contextual usage, and speech production, then it functions as a genuine didactic resource. Therefore, improving methodology requires a shift from visual display to visual interaction.

Second, the results of the study show that effective lexical teaching depends on the integration of illustrative tools with communicative and developmental objectives. Vocabulary should not be learned as a static list of words detached from actual language use. Children need opportunities to activate lexical units in meaningful situations. Illustrations create such opportunities because they provide a situational context for language production. A thematic image can invite naming, description, classification,

evaluation, and narration. A sequence of pictures can support temporal coherence and verbal logic. A symbolic scheme can help organize vocabulary by category or function. Through these processes, lexical competence becomes functionally connected with thinking and speech.

The discussion also reveals that methodological improvement in the use of illustrative tools requires attention to progression. Not all visual tasks should remain at the same level of complexity. If learners only perform recognition and naming activities, their lexical development may stagnate. The teacher must therefore organize a gradual movement from perception to verbalization, from support to independence, and from concrete naming to contextual and creative use. This progression reflects the general logic of language acquisition in primary education. At first, children associate words with visible objects or actions. Later, they learn to use these words in phrases and sentences. Finally, they integrate lexical units into coherent speech. Illustrative tools should accompany all these stages, but their methodological function changes over time.

Another important dimension of the discussion concerns the balance between concreteness and abstraction. Illustrations are especially effective for teaching words with clear visual referents, but lexical competence also includes more abstract vocabulary related to emotions, relations, temporal notions, and evaluative meanings. In such cases, the methodology of illustrative support must become more creative. Abstract meanings may be conveyed through situation pictures, symbolic representation, comparative visuals, facial expressions, or contextual scenes. This suggests that the pedagogical potential of illustrative tools extends beyond simple object vocabulary, provided that the teacher uses them interpretively rather than mechanically.

The role of technology also deserves attention. In contemporary education, illustrative tools are no longer limited to textbook images or hand-drawn cards. Digital presentations, interactive whiteboards, animated sequences, and multimedia picture resources have expanded the possibilities of visual pedagogy. These resources can enrich vocabulary work and increase learner engagement. Yet the presence of technology does not automatically improve methodology. Without a clear pedagogical purpose, even rich digital visuals may remain superficial. The fundamental question remains the same: how does the illustration contribute to lexical understanding, retention, and use? Thus, the methodological principles identified in this article remain relevant in both traditional and digital environments.

The teacher's role remains central throughout this discussion. Illustrative tools do not teach by themselves. Their educational value emerges through the teacher's methodological decisions: selection of visual material, formulation of tasks, organization of speech activity, and guidance of learners' attention. A competent teacher knows when an image should support comprehension, when it should stimulate expression, and when it should be gradually removed so that students rely on internalized lexical knowledge. In this sense, the improvement of illustrative methodology is inseparable from teacher professional development.

The discussion further shows that illustrative tools have a broader educational significance beyond vocabulary. When used systematically, they contribute to observation skills, imagination, logical thinking, emotional responsiveness, and aesthetic perception. These qualities enrich the child's language development because speech is deeply connected with cognition and experience. Consequently, the methodology of using illustrations in primary language education should be viewed as part of the humanistic and developmental mission of schooling.

The study has confirmed that illustrative tools play a major role in enhancing the lexical competence of primary school students and that improving their use requires a methodologically grounded pedagogical approach. The findings demonstrate that visual support facilitates semanticization of new words, strengthens memory retention, supports lexical differentiation, stimulates active speech, and increases learner motivation. Illustrations help bridge the gap between abstract lexical material and the concrete cognitive style of younger learners, thereby making vocabulary instruction more accessible and effective.

The analysis has shown that the methodological value of illustrative tools depends on purposeful integration into the stages of vocabulary teaching. Their effectiveness increases when they are used not only for word presentation but also for contextual practice, revision, semantic comparison, and communicative speech tasks. Different types of illustrations perform different functions, and their selection should correspond to the lexical objective, age characteristics, and communicative readiness of learners.

The study also established that improving the methodology of illustrative support requires several conditions. These include age-appropriate and clearly designed visual materials, communicative orientation of tasks, progression from guided perception to independent speech, and strong teacher competence in organizing lexical interaction around images.

Illustrative tools are especially effective in differentiated instruction because they make vocabulary work accessible to learners with different levels of readiness and linguistic experience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the methodology for improving the use of illustrative tools in enhancing lexical competence should be regarded as an important direction in primary language education. It contributes not only to vocabulary growth but also to the broader development of speech, thinking, and communicative confidence. Further research may focus on designing specific classroom models for visual lexical instruction, developing criteria for evaluating the quality of illustrative materials, and exploring the effectiveness of digital visual resources in the formation of lexical competence.

REFERENCES

1. Асмолов А. Г. Психология личности: культурно-историческое понимание развития человека. – Москва: Смысл, 2007. – 528 с.
2. Беспалько В. П. Слагаемые педагогической технологии. – Москва: Педагогика, 1989. – 192 с.
3. Божович Л. И. Личность и ее формирование в детском возрасте. – Санкт-Петербург: Питер, 2008. – 400 с.
4. Выготский Л. С. Мышление и речь. – Москва: Лабиринт, 1999. – 352 с.
5. Давыдов В. В. Теория развивающего обучения. – Москва: ИНТОР, 1996. – 544 с.
6. Жинкин Н. И. Речь как проводник информации. – Москва: Наука, 1982. – 160 с.
7. Зимняя И. А. Педагогическая психология. – Москва: Логос, 2004. – 384 с.
8. Леонтьев А. А. Основы психолингвистики. – Москва: Смысл, 2003. – 287 с.
9. Львов М. Р. Методика развития речи младших школьников. – Москва: Академия, 2000. – 240 с.
10. Подласый И. П. Педагогика. Новый курс: в 2 кн. Кн. 1: Общие основы. Процесс обучения. – Москва: ВЛАДОС, 2006. – 576 с.
11. Рубинштейн С. Л. Основы общей психологии. – Санкт-Петербург: Питер, 2002. – 720 с.
12. Селевко Г. К. Современные образовательные технологии. – Москва: Народное образование, 1998. – 256 с.
13. Сохор А. М. Логическая структура учебного материала. – Москва: Педагогика, 1974. – 192 с.
14. Ушинский К. Д. Родное слово. – Москва: Просвещение, 1983. – 320 с.
15. Эльконин Д. Б. Психология обучения младшего школьника. – Москва: Академия, 2007. – 384 с.
16. Bruner J. The Process of Education. – Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977. – 97 p.
17. Halliday M. A. K. Spoken and Written Language. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. – 96 p.
18. Nation I. S. P. Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. – 477 p.
19. Snow C. E., Burns M. S., Griffin P. Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. – Washington: National Academy Press, 1998. – 432 p.
20. Tomlinson C. A. The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners. – Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2014. – 187 p.