

## FORMATION OF LEARNERS' LEXICAL SKILLS THROUGH LEXICAL-THEMATIC MODELING IN A HOMOGENEOUS GROUP

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**Abstract.** This research paper is devoted to the problems of formation of learners' lexical skills in learning foreign vocabulary based on lexical thematic modeling in EFL classes in a homogeneous group. The aim of the present research is to identify the effect of lexical thematic modeling in foreign vocabulary acquisition in the homogeneous group. This research paper employed such methods as modeling, observation, and experiment. The experiment lasted four weeks during elective English course (IELTS) including several thematic modules. This paper compared the effect of two methods: lexical thematic modeling and the translation method. Lexical thematic models take into account semantic, situational, collocation features, which results in better understanding, word memorization and correct use of a word in context.

This research paper highlighted the following advantages of using lexical thematic modeling in teaching foreign vocabulary in EFL classes in a homogeneous group. Firstly, modeling enables to expand and enrich the active vocabulary of students. Secondly, students can better distinguish and differentiate the meanings of words in context, choose and use the right word. Thirdly, new words are stored faster in long-term memory. Fourth, students often and correctly use antonyms, synonyms, collocations and idioms. Fifth, didactic peculiarities of the models aids to form students' lexical skills using new words correctly while speaking, writing, reading and listening.

**Key words:** lexical thematic group, modeling, lexical semantic field, homogeneous group, lexical skill, experiment, elective course, IELTS, vocabulary mastery

### Basic provisions

Due to the fact that at present there is a big demand in strengthening international contacts in all spheres of society, specialists with a high level of developed foreign language communicative competence. Among foreign languages, the role of English is especially important, which has become the language of international communication, Global Science, and development. The expansion of international borders allowed Kazakh graduates to study abroad. Proficiency in foreign languages has paved the way for international education, so for recent years the majority of Kazakhstani school graduates tend to take the International English language test (IELTS). Therefore, there is a big choice of private, individual, and group course programs promising to boost the skills necessary for IELTS. Moreover, some Kazakhstani mainstream schools are also introducing and implementing IELTS courses as an elective part of the school curriculum.

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is a diagnostic exam that is taken in more than 120 countries around the world and is one of the most common and demanded English exams today. IELTS is an international testing system for the

British version of the English language, designed to determine the skills of those wishing to study or train in an English-speaking environment. To get enrolled and study in foreign, as well as in some domestic universities, students are required to receive 7-7.5 points overall in the academic type of the IELTS exam. Test materials often contain common technical and general scientific or special vocabulary. In addition, the test taker's lexical stock and language are checked in each exam section: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Moreover, this test assesses students' spelling, word usage in the context, and the ability to choose the right word with the appropriate meaning to correctly convey an idea in speech. Therefore, one of the main goals of EFL teachers while teaching high school students is to form and develop learner's lexical skills and enrich their vocabulary.

### **Introduction**

One of the tasks of the State Program for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025 is the modernization of education [1]. Today the language policy of Kazakhstan is aimed at developing a multilingual personality [2]. According to the methodological and instructive letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in the 2019-2020 academic year, students' foreign language level is graded according to the CEFR scale and must reach B2 level, which means that high school students must acquire approximately 2750-3750 lexical units [3]. Unfortunately, many EFL teachers struggle in choosing an appropriate method to meet the set criterion and requirements by the ME of RK.

To communicate in a foreign language environment effectively, it is important to pay special attention to students' vocabulary mastery. Forming a potential student's vocabulary based on English word formation increases the receptive efficiency of the language [4]. The enrichment and systematization of students' lexical stock is a complex process. Educational materials may not always contain specially oriented lexical sections. In this regard, presenting lexical material correctly leads to successful language acquisition, and the variety of teaching methods allows EFL teachers to make learning more engaging.

According to D. Rimondi, today there are two popular methods of teaching foreign vocabulary [5]. The first method is to memorize words by giving a list of words traditionally. The second modern implies a systematized method based on semantic fields belonging to the same semantic word group (clothing, food, animals). The effectiveness of these two methods depends on the goals and objectives set by the EFL teacher. In this regard, E. Hatch and K. Brown [6] highlight five main ways of learning: presenting a new word, learning a word form, acquiring the word meaning, drilling the word usage and word form, and using words in the context. Vocabulary is gradually learned through associative links.

M. Usmonova et al. define lexical skill as an automated action for the choice of a lexical unit correct to the plan and its right combination with other lexical units in productive speech and automated perception and association with meaning in receptive speech [7]. Lexical skills include word knowledge and its forms, meanings, and usage. A.A. Leontiev classify two types of lexical skills: productive and perceptive.

Productive lexical skill includes the ability to call a word from long-term memory, quickly combining with a previous or subsequent lexical unit according to language norms and defining the correct operations according to the situation of communication. A receptive lexical skill is defined as a word recognition when perceived by ear or by reading, correlating it with the contextual word form with its familiar image, calling all possible meanings from long-term memory and choosing the adequate meaning in the context [8, 54].

In forming students' lexical skills a lexical-semantic variant (word+meaning) is considered as a minimum unit. Different meanings and derivatives of the same word can be found in different thematic groups and can be found in teaching students of different levels. This paper aims to explore the effect of lexical and thematic modeling on formation of students' lexical skills and enlarging students' vocabulary.

The practical significance of this research can be explained by the fact that the findings of this research may be helpful for EFL teachers to enhance the teaching methods they use to achieve the best results in learning vocabulary and lexical skills. Moreover, the results of this research might be a great contribution to writers of EFL textbooks, to present vocabulary in their lessons. The novelty of the research lies on the fact that a small number of research works in linguadidactics in Kazakhstan relates to the study of teaching foreign vocabulary based on the lexical thematic modeling in homogenous groups. The novelty of the research work is related to the fact that using lexical-thematic modeling in EFL classes may solve several didactic issues that EFL teachers face in everyday reality in foreign language vocabulary mastery and forming lexical skills, such as correct word use and enriching students' vocabulary. In this regard, the effective presentation of lexical unit leads to effective acquisition, and enable to make the learning process engaging and motivating.

### **Methods and materials**

This research paper uses empirical research methods such as a pedagogical experiment, modeling, and observation. This research explores the effect of thematic-based selection on teaching vocabulary in EFL classes in a homogeneous group. According to J. Baer [9], a homogeneous class (group) defines a group of students of the same age, level of knowledge, interests, and learning motives. Homogenous grouping is a way of working in groups of students with similar academic performance, and social and emotional conditions in the process of completing one task. For example, students with special needs are grouped into one group, and gifted students with high abilities are grouped into one group.

This research was conducted during IELTS elective classes and the experiment involved 31 tenth-grade students studying in one of the school-lyceums in Astana city. The test results were used to collect data about students. Both females and males took part in this study. Students of grade 10 "E" took a placement test that determined the students' English language level. Test results have identified that students possess B1 levels according to the CEFR scale, so in this way, this group of students was determined as a homogeneous group.

Before the experiment started all thirty-one participants volunteered to participate in this research and gave their consent. A paper-based pre-tests has been designed and administered to evaluate learners’ knowledge of lexical units prior the experiment in the experimental and control groups. After the experiment the post-tests were administrated to explore if any significant changes occurred in learning vocabulary between the two groups. The present research used a two-group pre-test, post-test design. The experimental teaching was conducted to test and identify the effect of implementing lexical-thematic models in the English language vocabulary acquisition. During one month which included 12 classes teaching has covered several topics according to the school curriculum applying exercises for developing language skills and grammatical, lexical task. Experimental teaching using lexical thematic models was conducted in the experimental group and control group was educated traditionally using wordlist in presenting and practicing foreign vocabulary. When using this strategy a teacher directly demonstrates the target words to the students, then ask them to read and memorize the vocabulary items. The flowchart below demonstrates the process and stages of learners’ lexical skills. (Figure 1)

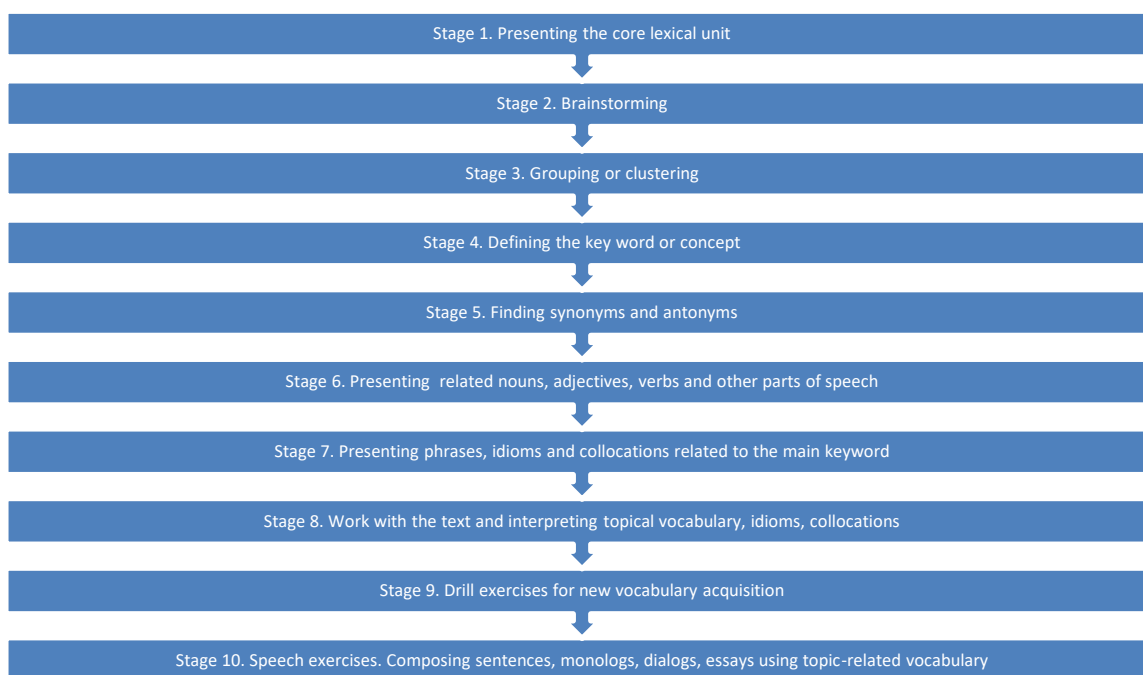


Figure 1 –The process of forming lexical skills through lexical-thematic modeling.

## Results

At the beginning of the experiment the pre-test was held in both groups. The pre-test aimed at identifying the condition of the students’ vocabulary acquisition before starting an experiment. This test consisted of 40 vocabulary items. Each item included one English word which was selected from the learners’ course book. The participants were asked to write the Kazakh equivalent of the words. The average time to take this

test was about 20 minutes. The result of pre-test in experimental and control group could be seen in the following diagram (See Figure 2).

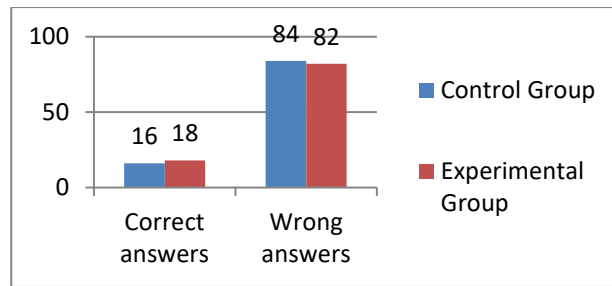


Figure 2 – Analysis of pre-test. Vocabulary knowledge of both groups.

The analysis of the pre-test taken before experimental teaching has started demonstrates that both groups: experimental and control group has approximately the same percentage of correct answers (control group gained 18% of correct answers, whereas experimental group gained 16 % of correct answers). As both groups were homogeneous and their level was intermediate, two groups had equal level vocabulary mastery before starting the experiment. This results indicate that majority of students are not familiar with the words presented in the vocabulary knowledge test which served as a pre-test in our research.

Below (Figure 3) illustrates a lexical-thematic model designed for the topic “Business”. Similar lexical-thematic models have been used in experimental treatment. After completing each unit students took lexical tests to test students' lexical skills. Each test consisted of 20 questions, and students were given 20 minutes to answer the questions.

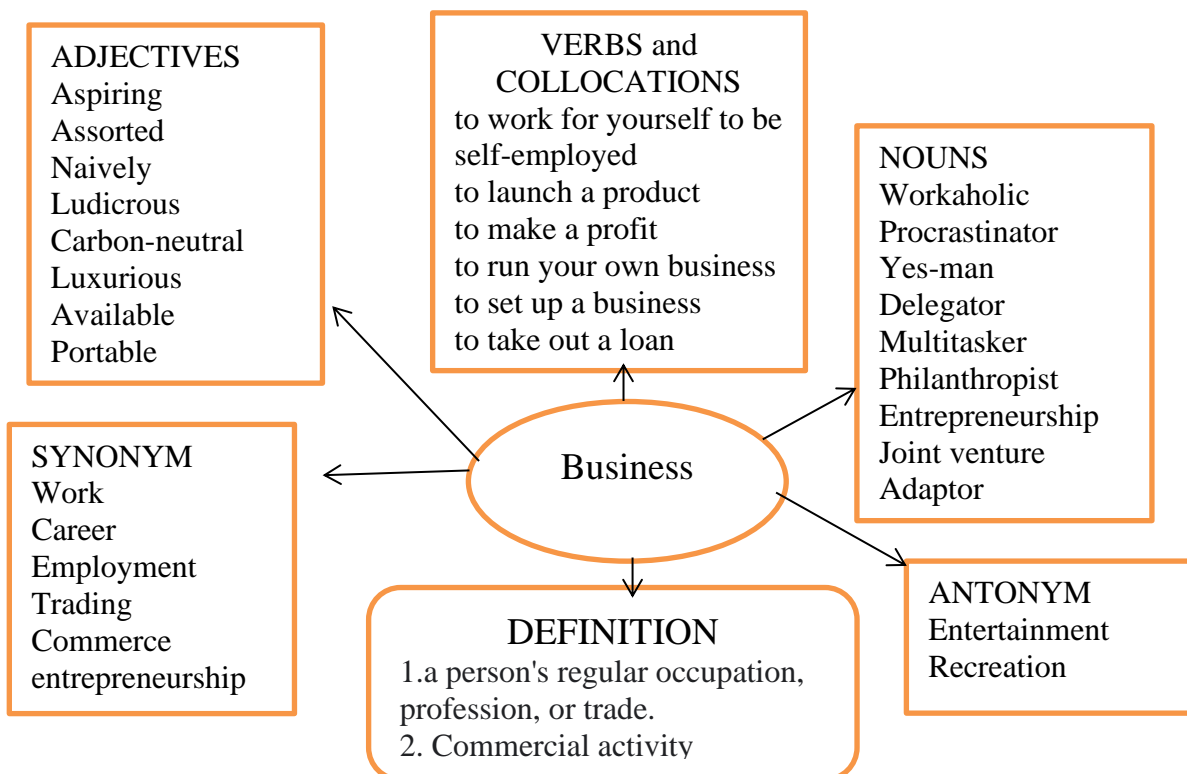


Figure 3 – Lexical-thematic model on the topic “Business”.

The process of creating a lexical-thematic model includes the following aspects:

- Identifying the keyword in topic selection;
- Grouping words within the framework according to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic connections.
- Grouping vocabulary around keywords according to parts of speech and collocation usage. (Figure 3).

In experimental training firstly, new vocabulary was presented by means of models, and then practiced and drilled by means of exercises and tasks such as monologue and dialogue.

Words are not stored separately in human memory, they are connected in a complex system by lexical-semantic relations, one of which is the paradigmatic relationship. Paradigmatic relations include semantic fields that include synonyms, antonyms, and words that are close in context. It helps to form and develop lexical skills by establishing strong paradigmatic connections. Such paradigmatic relationships help students remember new words in long-term memory [8]. These connections ensure good memorization and longer retention of words in long-term memory. Unfortunately, sometimes in teaching foreign languages little attention is paid to paradigmatic and syntagmatic connections, therefore, there are some errors in teaching vocabulary. For example, memorizing words out of context, not systematizing vocabulary in sections in the textbook, not fixing newly presented words, insufficiency in drilling them, etc.

The use of the lexical-thematic model ensures rapid and easy memorization of the connections between a concept and an object in a foreign language and the close interaction of the words representing them in students’ minds. The lexical-thematic model can be used at any stage of English lessons (activation of knowledge or presenting new material, consolidating practice, or assessment of acquired knowledge) to facilitate the process of mastering a foreign language.

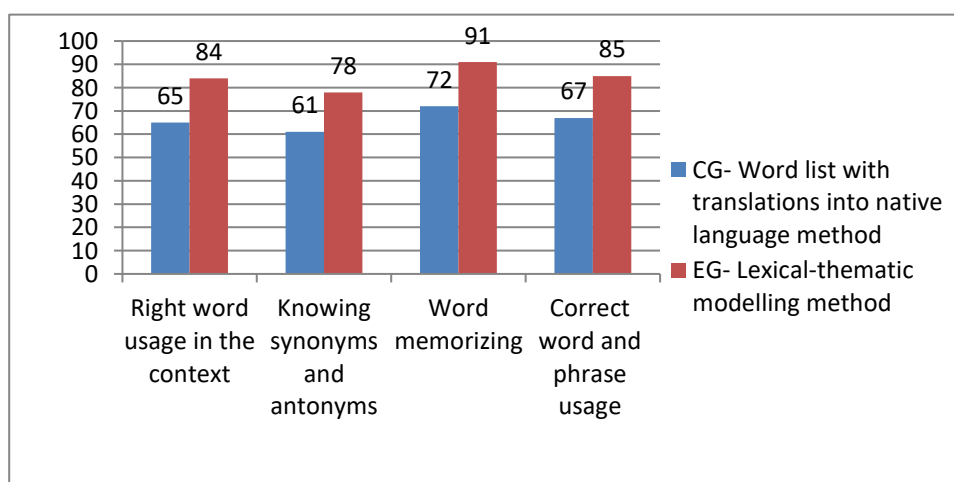


Figure 4 – Post-test results demonstrating development of learners' lexical skills based on two methods

According to the results and learning outcomes in the post-test presented in Fig.4 lexical thematic models had a positive effect on vocabulary mastery and aided to form lexical skills of high school students in the experimental group significantly. To evaluate the effect of lexical thematic models on formation of learner' lexical skills we included multiple choice questions in the post-test aiming to identify mastery of various lexical skills. Overall, post-test (Figure 4) results showed that experimental group acquired new foreign vocabulary more systematically and effectively compared with the control group which gained lower percentage of vocabulary acquisition and word mastery. Students from the experimental group showed better results in all lexical skills being tested. It can be seen from the chart that students in the experimental group managed to identify the right word and use it correctly in context (84%), whereas the control group's students gained 64% of correct answers. The students in the experimental group expanded their vocabulary by using synonyms and antonyms gaining 78%, while the control group reached only 64% of correct answers. The results also show that students in the experimental group memorized larger amount of foreign words (91%), whereas the learners in the control group memorized 72% of words only. Test results also show better performance in the experimental in the usage of phrases, idioms, and collocations (85%), and control group gained 67%.

Acquiring all foreign words is an impossible mission, therefore vocabulary learning needs to be limited according to students' needs and levels. For bilingual students interfering effect of the mother tongue slows down the process of word comprehension and sanitization. It is impossible to select a lexical minimum, and teach foreign words without prior teaching and considering students' background.

The research findings have shown that vocabulary is effectively acquired only by taking into account its systems: semantic, stylistic relationships, the nature of communication, and interaction. Students should be able to use the words in different sentences, phrases, and relations: synonymous, antonym, and associative-derivational.

### **Discussion**

In a similar study T. Hipner-Page [10] studied the effectiveness and impact of semantic grouping and thematic grouping of new words in vocabulary learning. The author has concluded that learning vocabulary by two types of grouping positively affects learning and helps students quickly memorize new words.

In the experimental learning students actively used words on the studied lexical topics in speaking and writing, and could clearly differentiate words in reading and listening. The use of lexical-thematic modeling helps students to learn not only to memorize lexical units separately but also to use them in phrases and collocations correctly. According to J. Scrivener in learning speaking skills, students should not ignore the knowledge of word compatibility and collocations; otherwise, it may lead to misconception or miscomprehension and poor communication skills [11].

According to E. M. Mednikova, a lexical-thematic group is a lexical tool combined with a thematic analogy. The structure of the lexical-thematic group is complex because the lexical composition of the language is complex and multifaceted [12]. The lexical-thematic group can include words belonging to different word classes, and the group can be divided into even smaller lexical sets. The lexical-semantic group contains a narrower meaning, and includes lexical units that include one or two integral semantic components. According to G. Roger the lexical-semantic group contains a nucleus that expresses a lexeme in a common sense and many semes located in the periphery. The LTG (lexical-thematic group) includes all nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. For example, LTG "Sport " includes the names of sports games (football, hockey), tools (ball, barbell, racket), clothing, sportsmen and fans (basketball player, football player, fan), and corresponding phrases and verbs (ball/score, pass) and adjectives (sports, basketball) [12].

LSG (lexical-semantic group) includes words belonging to the same word class and phrases derived from them. Words of different classes may also include LSG (advanced level), but we do not see much variety here. For example, a group of verbs can also include nouns derived from verbs that have the same meaning: read (verb) reading (noun) or motivate (v), and motivation (n). The main difference between these groups is due to the requirements for sorting lexical units in the division into groups. In this way, the LSG refers to the words that relate to one common topic, and the LSG includes the lexical units necessary to express a certain meaning. Thus, we use LSG and LTG in the same way, since the lexical-thematic group also includes a lexical-semantic group due to its wider scope [12].

According to J. Scrivener [11], when students learn new words, they should know exactly what word class that word belongs to, and memorize it clearly. The processes of memorization involve such stages as memorization, renewal, and forgetting, so it is necessary to continue to consolidate the vocabulary. Through lexical-thematic models given in each lesson, the teacher plans to use monologues and dialogs at the final stages of the lesson, motivating students to use new words, and creating an opportunity for students to develop their speaking skills.

Allahverdizadeh M. et al. have explored the effect of thematic and semantic clustering on vocabulary acquisition and found out that learners recalled more words from the thematic sets [13]. Zargosh M. et al. in their research have concluded that teaching vocabulary based on thematic clustering can increase the level of bilingual EFL students' vocabulary better than the monolingual EFL learners [14].

In a similar study, A.K.Meirbekov and B.G. Abzhekenova highlighted the effectiveness of using mental maps in enriching vocabulary in EFL classes. In their study, the authors stated that using mental maps in vocabulary acquisition has a positive effect, as students develop such skills as thinking, memorizing, remembering, solving creative tasks, information processing, and making changes [15].

## **Conclusion**

The experimental part of our study has proved the effectiveness of teaching new vocabulary through lexical-thematic modeling in a homogenous group, for it helps to



form learners' lexical skills. Lexical-thematic models take into account semantic, situational, and collocation features and facilitate students' better word comprehension and word usage in contexts, and aid in better memorizing which word class this word belongs to. This research has revealed the following advantages of mastering a new lexical topic through lexical-thematic modeling. Firstly, it expands and enriches the students' active vocabulary. Secondly, students can better distinguish the meanings of words in context, and choose and use the right word. Thirdly, new words are stored in long-term memory faster. Fourth, students use antonyms, synonyms, collocations, and idioms more and more correctly. Fifth, the models enable students to use units correctly in writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

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## **ГОМОГЕНДІ ТОПТА ЛЕКСИКАЛЫҚ-ТАҚЫРЫПТЫҚ МОДЕЛЬДЕУ АРҚЫЛЫ ОҚУШЫЛАРДЫҢ ЛЕКСИКАЛЫҚ ДАҒДЫЛАРЫН ҚАЛЫПТАСТЫРУ**

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**Аңдатпа.** Аталмыш мақала ағылшын тілі сабақтарында гомогенді топта лексикалық-тақырыптық модельдеудің негізінде шеттілдік лексиканы оқытуда оқушылардың лексикалық дағдыларын қалыптастыру мәселелерін зерттеуге арналған. Зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты гомогенді топта шеттілдік лексиканы оқытуда лексикалық-тақырыптық топтар негізінде оқыту оқушылардың лексикалық дағдыларын қалыптастырудағы әсерін анықтау болып табылады. Аталмыш зерттеуде модельдеу, бақылау, эксперимент сынды зерттеу әдістері қолданылды. Эксперименттік оқыту ағылшын тілінен IELTS факультативі аясында бірнеше тақырыптық модуль төңірегінде төрт аптаға жалғасты. Шеттілдік лексиканы оқытуда лексикалық-тақырыптық модельдеу мен тізіммен берілген сөздердің аудармасы әдісі арқылы оқытылған нәтижелер салыстырылып, сараланды. Лексикалық-тақырыптық модельдер семантикалық, жағдаяттық, коллокациялық белгілерді ескергендіктен оқушы сөзді түсініп, еске сақтап және оны мәнмәтінде дұрыс қолданып, бірден сол сөздің қандай сөз табына жататындығын жаттап алуына зор септігін тигізеді. Лексикалық-тақырыптық модельдеу арқылы жаңа лексикалық тақырыпты меңгерудің төмендегідей артықшылықтары анықталды. Біріншіден, оқушылардың белсенді сөздік қорын кеңейтіп, байытады. Екіншіден, оқушылар мәнмәтінде сөздердің мағыналарын жақсырақ ажыратып, қажетті сөзді таңдап, қолдана алады. Үшіншіден, жаңа сөздер ұзақ мерзімді жадта тезірек сақталады. Төртіншіден, оқушылар антоним, синоним, коллокациялар мен идиомаларды көп, әрі дұрыс қолданады. Бесіншіден, модельдердің дидактикалық мүмкіншіліктерінің арқасында оқушылар жаңа сөздерді айтылым, жазылым, оқылым мен тыңдалым барысында дұрыс қолданып, лексикалық дағдыларын дамытады.

**Тірек сөздер:** лексикалық-тақырыптық топ, модельдеу, лексикалық-семантикалық өріс, гомогенді топ, лексикалық дағды, эксперимент, факультатив, IELTS, сөздік қорын меңгеру

## **ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИХ НАВЫКОВ УЧАЩИХСЯ ЧЕРЕЗ ЛЕКСИКО-ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЕ МОДЕЛИРОВАНИЕ В ГОМОГЕННОЙ ГРУППЕ**

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**Аннотация.** Данная статья посвящена исследованию проблем формирования лексических навыков учащихся при изучении иноязычной лексики на основе лексико-тематического

моделирования на уроках английского языка в гомогенной группе. Целью исследовательской работы является выявление влияния обучения иноязычной лексики в гомогенной группе на формирование лексических навыков учащихся на основе лексико-тематических групп. В данном исследовании использовались такие методы исследования, как моделирование, наблюдение, эксперимент. Экспериментальное обучение продолжалось четыре недели в рамках факультатива IELTS по английскому языку в рамках нескольких тематических модулей. При изучении иноязычной лексики сравнивались результаты, полученные во время применения лексико-тематического моделирования и переводным методом. Лексико-тематические модели учитывают семантические, ситуативные, коллокационные признаки, что способствует пониманию, запоминанию и правильному использованию слова в контексте, а также запоминанию того или иного слова. Выявлены следующие преимущества освоения новой лексической темы посредством лексико-тематического моделирования. Во-первых, моделирование позволяет расширить и обогатить активный словарный запас учащихся. Во-вторых, учащиеся могут лучше различать значения слов в контексте, выбирать и использовать нужное слово. В-третьих, новые слова быстрее сохраняются в долговременной памяти. В-четвертых, учащиеся часто и правильно используют антонимы, синонимы, коллокации и идиомы. В-пятых, благодаря дидактическим возможностям моделей, учащиеся формируют лексические навыки, правильно используя новые слова во время говорения, письма, чтения и аудирования.

**Ключевые слова:** лексико-тематическая группа, моделирование, лексико-семантическое поле, гомогенная группа, лексический навык, эксперимент, факультатив, IELTS, овладение словарным запасом

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