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Semantic Error Diagnosis and Contextual Task Design for Lexical Competence in Multilingual Schools

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Abstract. *This conceptual methodological study develops a diagnostic framework for teaching word meaning in multilingual general secondary classrooms. It addresses a recurrent weakness in lexical instruction: an incorrect response is often treated as a lack of vocabulary although the underlying difficulty may involve denotative knowledge, semantic relations, contextual selection, figurative interpretation, phraseological integrity, or pragmatic appropriateness. The study synthesizes research on vocabulary depth, contextual learning, lexical quality, task involvement, repeated exposure, and Karakalpak language teaching methodology. Its main result is an error to evidence to action framework that separates five diagnostic domains and links each domain to an elicitation task, an interpretation boundary, an instructional response, and a transfer check. A four phase lesson cycle is proposed: elicitation, classification, contrastive reconstruction, and transfer. The model prevents teachers from correcting only the visible word form and instead requires them to test why a learner selected an unsuitable meaning. It also distinguishes productive semantic struggle from stable misconception and recommends that diagnostic claims be based on converging evidence across more than one context. The framework is especially relevant where Karakalpak, Uzbek, Russian, and other languages coexist, because cross linguistic transfer can either support meaning construction or generate misleading equivalence. The article concludes that effective lexical instruction should combine explicit semantic explanation with varied contextual use, learner generated examples, and delayed transfer tasks. Empirical validation is required before the framework is used for high stakes assessment.*

Keywords: *lexical competence, word meaning, semantic error, contextual instruction, multilingual education, Karakalpak language, formative diagnosis*

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Çoxdilli məktəblərdə leksik səriştənin inkişafı üçün semantik səhvlərin diaqnostikası və kontekstual tapşırıqların hazırlanması

Gövhər Qaramatdinova

Xülasə. *Bu konseptual metodoloji tədqiqat çoxdilli ümumtəhsil məktəblərində söz mənasının öyrədilməsi üçün diaqnostik çərçivə hazırlayır. Məqalə leksik təlimdə təkrarlanan bir zəifliyi araşdırır: səhv cavab çox vaxt sadəcə söz ehtiyatının azlığı kimi qiymətləndirilir, halbuki çətinliyin səbəbi denotativ bilik, semantik münasibətlər, kontekstual seçim, məcazi şərh, frazeoloji bütövlük və*

ya praqmatik uyğunluq ola bilər. Tədqiqat söz ehtiyatının dərinliyi, kontekst vasitəsilə öyrənmə, leksik keyfiyyət, tapşırıqda iştirak, təkrar qarşılaşma və qaraqalpaq dilinin tədrisi üzrə araşdırmaları birləşdirir. Əsas nəticə beş diaqnostik sahəni ayıran və hər sahəni yoxlama tapşırığı, şərh sərhədi, tədris müdaxiləsi və transfer yoxlaması ilə əlaqələndirən xəta sübut fəaliyyət modelidir. Dörd mərhələli dərs dövrü təklif olunur: üzə çıxarma, təsnifat, müqayisəli yenidənqurma və transfer. Model müəllimin yalnız görünən səhvi düzəltməsinin qarşısını alır və şagirdin niyə uyğun olmayan mənanı seçdiyini yoxlamağı tələb edir. Məhsuldar semantik çətinlik sabit yanlış təsəvvürdən fərqləndirilir və diaqnostik nəticənin birdən çox kontekstdə uyğun gələn sübutlara əsaslanması tövsiyə olunur. Çərçivə qaraqalpaq, özbək, rus və digər dillərin yanaşı istifadə edildiyi mühitlər üçün xüsusilə əhəmiyyətlidir. Nəticədə səmərəli leksik təlimin açıq semantik izahı müxtəlif kontekstlər, şagird nümunələri və gecikdirilmiş transfer tapşırıqları ilə birləşdirməli olduğu əsaslandırılır.

Açar sözlər: *leksik sərişta, söz mənası, semantik xəta, kontekstual təlim, çoxdilli təhsil, qaraqalpaq dili, formativ diaqnostika*

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Introduction

Knowing a word is not equivalent to recalling a short dictionary definition. A learner may recognize a word but fail to select its relevant sense, distinguish it from a near synonym, interpret a figurative extension, preserve a phraseological unit, or use the word appropriately in a particular communicative situation. Vocabulary knowledge therefore has breadth and depth, receptive and productive dimensions, and form meaning use relations that develop incrementally (Nation, 2013; Webb & Nation, 2017). Teaching that reduces a lexical item to one translated equivalent cannot represent this complexity.

The problem becomes sharper in multilingual schools. A Karakalpak speaking pupil may draw on Uzbek, Russian, or another language while interpreting a word. Such transfer can support comprehension when semantic boundaries overlap, but it can also create false equivalence. A translated item may share a central denotation while differing in collocation, register, emotional coloring, or phraseological behavior. The teacher therefore needs to determine whether an error reflects missing knowledge, an overgeneralized relation, an inappropriate context, cross linguistic interference, or an incomplete transition from recognition to productive use.

Research on lexical instruction shows that robust learning requires more than one exposure and more than definitional information. Methods that combine definitions with contextual information and deeper processing have stronger effects than shallow exposure (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). Context can provide opportunities to infer meaning, but the quality of the context and the learner's prior knowledge strongly affect what is learned. Normal reading produces uneven opportunities because not every context is informative and a single encounter rarely establishes a stable representation (Nagy et al., 1987).

The lexical quality account places precise word knowledge at the center of comprehension. When orthographic, phonological, grammatical, and semantic information is well specified, a word can be integrated rapidly into the developing meaning of a text. Weak or partial representations interrupt this integration and increase reliance on local guessing (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). From an instructional

perspective, a wrong answer is therefore not only an outcome. It is evidence that should guide a more precise question about which part of the representation or integration process is unstable.

Karakalpak language methodology has increasingly addressed word meaning, semantic relations, and innovative instructional technologies. Karamatdinova (2024) describes the development and semantic functions of lexical meanings in Karakalpak, while later methodological analysis emphasizes the need to connect lexicology with competence based and interactive instruction (Karamatdinova, 2026). However, a practical gap remains between identifying a semantic error and selecting the next task. Teachers may explain the correct meaning yet leave the mechanism that produced the error unchanged.

This article asks how teachers can transform observable lexical errors into defensible instructional decisions. Its purpose is to construct a diagnostic framework that links five elements: the semantic domain, an elicitation task, the evidence produced, a bounded interpretation, and a response followed by transfer checking. The framework is conceptual. It does not present new participant data and does not claim validated diagnostic accuracy. Its intended contribution is a transparent design that can later be tested in grades 5 to 8 in Karakalpak medium and other multilingual classrooms.

Methods

The study applies qualitative conceptual synthesis and instructional design analysis. Twelve sources were selected to connect four bodies of knowledge: theories of vocabulary depth and lexical representation, empirical research on contextual and repeated word learning, task based accounts of learner engagement, and Karakalpak language teaching methodology. Selection was purposive rather than systematic. A source was included when it contributed a distinct design principle that could be translated into a diagnostic or instructional decision.

The synthesis followed four stages. First, statements about what it means to know a word were coded under denotation, semantic relations, contextual selection, figurative and phraseological interpretation, and pragmatic use. Second, common classroom responses were examined for inferential weakness, especially the assumption that every wrong lexical choice indicates the same deficit. Third, each semantic domain was paired with a task capable of discriminating among plausible explanations. Fourth, the proposed response was required to include a transfer check in a new context, because successful correction on the original item may reflect imitation rather than learning.

The design also uses the involvement principle. Tasks produce stronger lexical learning when they create a genuine need for the word, require search for relevant information, and demand evaluation among alternatives (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001). However, high involvement does not automatically guarantee accurate learning. A demanding task can reinforce a false relation if feedback and comparison are weak. The framework therefore combines learner effort with explicit semantic reconstruction.

Conceptual adequacy was stress tested with boundary cases: a learner who knows a definition but misuses the word in a sentence; a learner who selects a near synonym with the wrong register; a learner who interprets an idiom literally; a learner who transfers a meaning from another language; and a learner who answers correctly in a familiar passage but fails in a new text. A useful framework had to distinguish these cases and recommend different evidence gathering and teaching actions.

Use of Artificial Intelligence
A generative artificial intelligence tool was used for English language editing, structural organization, and consistency checking. It was not used to create participant data, statistical results, or bibliographic sources. The author remains responsible for the conceptual argument, source verification, translations, and final submitted manuscript.

Results

Five Diagnostic Domains
The first result is a five domain representation of semantic error. The denotative domain concerns the central referential meaning needed to identify what a word names or describes. The relational domain concerns synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, and other connections within the lexical system. The contextual domain concerns selection of the sense that fits the surrounding sentence or text. The figurative and phraseological domain concerns nonliteral extension and meanings that belong to stable multiword units. The pragmatic domain concerns register, stance, politeness, emotional coloring, and appropriateness to speaker, audience, and purpose.

The domains overlap but should not be collapsed. A pupil can know a word's denotation and still fail to distinguish it from a near synonym. Another can identify two senses of a polysemous word but select the wrong one because discourse cues are ignored. A literal interpretation of a phraseological unit is not equivalent to ignorance of each component word. Diagnostic instruction begins by locating the most plausible domain while preserving alternative explanations.

Vocabulary depth research supports this multidimensional view. Schmitt (2008) argues that instruction must address multiple aspects of word knowledge and combine explicit learning with extensive meaningful exposure. Beck et al. (2013) similarly emphasize rich explanation, active processing, and repeated encounters. Graves (2016) places direct teaching within a broader programme that also develops word consciousness, independent strategies, and wide reading. The diagnostic model converts these principles into decisions about the next task.

The Error to Evidence to Action Framework
The second result is a four step reasoning chain. The teacher first records the observable error without explaining it prematurely. Second, a discriminating task is used to elicit evidence that can separate competing causes. Third, the teacher selects a targeted instructional response and asks the pupil to explain the relation in his or her own words. Fourth, learning is checked through delayed transfer to a new sentence, text, genre, or communicative situation. The diagnosis remains provisional until the new performance supports it.

This sequence changes the status of correction. Giving the correct answer is not the endpoint; it is one possible input to semantic reconstruction. A pupil who replaces an incorrect synonym after being told may still reproduce the original error elsewhere. In contrast, comparing the two words across collocations, register, and communicative effect can reveal the selection rule. Transfer then tests whether the rule, rather than the isolated answer, was learned.

Table 1
Diagnostic matrix for semantic errors

Domain	Observable error and discriminating evidence	Targeted instructional response	Transfer check
Denotative meaning	The pupil cannot identify a stable core referent across simple examples. Contrast with failures caused by unknown task language.	Use a concise definition, image or object, positive and negative examples, and learner paraphrase.	Identify or explain the same word in a new but transparent sentence.
Semantic relations	A near synonym, antonym, category member, or sense relation is selected mechanically. Ask the pupil to compare boundaries and collocations.	Build a semantic map and contrast minimal pairs; require a reason for including or excluding each item.	Choose among alternatives in a new sentence and justify why the rejected word is unsuitable.
Contextual selection	The dictionary meaning is known but the wrong sense is chosen in a text. Remove and restore contextual cues to locate the missed evidence.	Mark decisive cues, model word to text integration, and compare two contexts that activate different senses.	Interpret the word in an unfamiliar paragraph without teacher highlighting.
Figurative and phraseological meaning	The pupil interprets an idiom or metaphor component by component. Check whether the literal words are individually known.	Compare literal and conventional meanings, reconstruct the situation, and preserve the fixed unit in production.	Explain or use the expression in a different communicative situation.
Pragmatic appropriateness	The word is semantically possible but mismatched in register, stance, emotion, or audience.	Compare speaker, audience, purpose, and effect; rewrite the utterance for contrasting situations.	Select and defend a word choice for a new audience or genre.

The four phase lesson cycle

The third result is a reusable lesson cycle consisting of elicitation, classification, contrastive reconstruction, and transfer. Elicitation presents a short task in which the target meaning must be selected or produced. The task should not be overloaded with unrelated grammatical or interface demands. Classification groups the response by the most plausible semantic domain and records uncertainty. Contrastive reconstruction makes the relevant distinction visible through examples and counterexamples. Transfer requires the learner to apply the reconstructed distinction under changed conditions.

Elicitation should include production as well as recognition. Multiple choice may reveal which distractor attracts the pupil but can overestimate knowledge because the correct form is visible. A short explanation, sentence completion, paraphrase, or reformulation makes the learner's

representation more observable. Productive knowledge is more demanding and often develops later than receptive recognition, so the two should not be treated as interchangeable (Nation, 2013).

Classification is not labeling the learner. It is classifying the current error under current task conditions. A teacher may initially mark two hypotheses, for example contextual selection or cross linguistic transfer. A follow up task should alter one condition while holding others stable. If the pupil succeeds when a misleading translation is removed but fails when it is present, transfer is plausible. If difficulty continues in a monolingual context, the representation itself may be incomplete.

Contrastive reconstruction should combine explicit information with active evaluation. Schmitt (2008) and Webb and Nation (2017) show why word knowledge develops cumulatively through encounters that reveal different aspects. The teacher therefore should not produce a long list of synonyms and definitions. A smaller contrast set with meaningful variation is more useful: which word fits, which does not, what cue decides, and how the choice changes the message.

Transfer is delayed when possible. Immediate success can reflect short term memory of the teacher's wording. A later task changes the sentence, genre, speaker, or topic while preserving the semantic demand. Repetition supports learning when encounters are meaningful and distributed, not when the same sentence is copied several times. Webb (2007) found that increasing encounters can develop several aspects of word knowledge, although different aspects require different amounts of exposure.

Task Design Principles

The fourth result is a set of task design constraints. First, each task must declare its semantic target. A sentence with unfamiliar syntax cannot cleanly diagnose word meaning. Second, distractors should represent interpretable misconceptions rather than random wrong answers. Third, contexts must be sufficiently informative. Fourth, pupils should explain at least some choices, because justification reveals which cue or relation controlled the response. Fifth, tasks should move from supported comparison to independent use without reducing the target demand.

Context should be varied deliberately. Nagy et al. (1987) demonstrated that incidental learning from context is real but limited and affected by context quality. A strong task sequence therefore includes an identifying context, a contrasting context, and a transfer context. The first helps establish the core relation, the second prevents overgeneralization, and the third tests whether the learner can apply the distinction independently.

Tasks should also respect the difference between meaning knowledge and metalinguistic terminology. A pupil may distinguish two senses accurately without naming polysemy, while another may recite the definition of polysemy but fail to interpret a text. Terminology can organize knowledge, but assessment should prioritize the intended competence. In grades 5 to 8, the balance can gradually shift from concrete contextual explanation to explicit semantic analysis and controlled production.

Table 2
Common weak practices and stronger diagnostic alternatives

Weak practice	Why it fails	Stronger alternative	Evidence of learning
Copying a dictionary definition	It measures reproduction and may preserve an opaque explanation.	Require a paraphrase, example, nonexample, and contextual choice.	The learner identifies the stable core and excludes an unsuitable case.
Listing synonyms without comparison	Near synonyms are treated as interchangeable.	Compare collocation, register, intensity, and communicative effect.	The learner selects and justifies a word for a specific context.
Correcting an idiom word by word	Phraseological integrity and conventional meaning are lost.	Contrast literal scene with conventional function and practice the whole unit.	The learner interprets and uses the unit in another situation.
Using translation as final proof	Cross language equivalents may differ in range and use.	Treat translation as a hypothesis and verify it through parallel contexts.	The learner explains both overlap and a boundary between equivalents.
Repeating the same exercise immediately	Success may reflect imitation or short term recall.	Change context and delay the transfer task.	The distinction is retained and applied without the original cues.
Assigning a permanent low vocabulary label	One error is converted into a personal trait.	State a provisional domain specific hypothesis and collect converging evidence.	The profile changes when new evidence or intervention warrants revision.

Multilingual and Karakalpak medium application

The fifth result concerns multilingual implementation. Cross linguistic comparison should be used as a controlled analytical resource, not prohibited automatically and not accepted uncritically. Pupils can compare how a Karakalpak word and a familiar equivalent in Uzbek or Russian overlap, where their collocations diverge, and which cultural or stylistic associations are not transferred. Such comparison makes hidden boundaries discussable and can reduce false equivalence.

Local texts should represent varied genres and authentic lexical functions. Literary passages are valuable for imagery, connotation, and authorial choice; informational texts reveal technical and classificatory meanings; dialogue exposes register and pragmatic effect; proverbs and phraseological units make cultural conventionality visible. Karamatdinova's local studies show the importance of integrating semantic content with contemporary methodology rather than isolating lexicology from use (Karamatdinova, 2024, 2026).

Digital tools can support the framework through concordance examples, collaborative semantic maps, audio contexts, and short adaptive task sequences. Yet technology should not determine the construct. A platform that records only right and wrong answers may conceal the exact distinction the learner

missed. Even a sophisticated dashboard is weak if the distractors are uninterpretable or the next task does not test the proposed cause. The teacher needs access to the evidence and a way to revise the diagnosis.

Discussion

The framework addresses a narrow but consequential problem: the distance between a lexical mistake and an instructional response. Existing vocabulary research establishes that word knowledge is multidimensional, incremental, context sensitive, and strengthened by active engagement and repeated meaningful exposure (Beck et al., 2013; Graves, 2016; Schmitt, 2008). The present contribution organizes those principles around diagnostic decisions. Its central claim is that correction becomes instruction only when it reconstructs the relation that failed and tests that relation in transfer.

The five domains are not a new taxonomy of the lexicon. They are a classroom decision structure. Their value depends on whether teachers can use them reliably and whether the associated tasks discriminate among plausible causes. A pupil may show errors in more than one domain, and the same response can arise through different mechanisms. The framework therefore rejects one item one diagnosis reasoning. It requires convergence across task types and contexts.

The model also clarifies the role of explicit teaching. Explicit explanation is not opposed to contextual learning. It can focus attention on a distinction that context alone leaves uncertain. Conversely, a definition without contextual variation produces brittle knowledge. The strongest sequence alternates explanation, comparison, meaningful production, and renewed exposure. This is consistent with evidence that definitional and contextual information, deeper processing, and multiple encounters produce stronger outcomes than any isolated technique (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Webb, 2007). Task induced involvement provides a useful design lens but should be applied carefully. Search and evaluation make a task cognitively active, yet poorly selected alternatives can direct effort toward irrelevant distinctions. The framework therefore adds an evidence requirement: the alternative choices must correspond to recognizable semantic hypotheses, and feedback must explain the deciding cue. Engagement is educationally valuable when it is aligned with the construct.

The approach has practical implications for teacher education. Training should not consist only of naming interactive methods. Teachers need practice in writing diagnostic distractors, interpreting explanations, generating minimal contrasts, identifying language transfer, and designing delayed transfer checks. A lesson can appear interactive while still producing little semantic evidence. Methodological quality depends on what learners must notice, compare, explain, and apply.

For curriculum design, the framework suggests a spiral progression. Early work emphasizes core denotation and transparent relations; later work adds polysemy, collocation, connotation, phraseology, and register. Previously learned words should reappear in new genres and communicative roles. This prevents each lexical topic from becoming an isolated unit and supports the cumulative enrichment described in vocabulary research (Nation, 2013; Webb & Nation, 2017).

Limitations

The article is conceptual and does not validate the five domain classification, the reliability of teacher judgments, or the learning effects of the proposed cycle. The review is selective rather than systematic. The domains simplify relations that may overlap in actual language use, and examples suitable for one language may not transfer directly to another. The framework also does not replace broader assessment of reading comprehension, writing quality, oral fluency, or motivation. It should not be used for high stakes decisions until tasks, scoring rules, and fairness have been tested in the intended grades and languages.

Future Research

Future research should first develop a bilingual or multilingual bank of diagnostic tasks reviewed by Karakalpak language teachers, semanticists, and assessment specialists. Think aloud interviews can reveal whether pupils use the cues intended by task designers. Interrater studies should test whether teachers classify the same response consistently. A classroom experiment can then compare ordinary correction with the diagnostic cycle, using delayed transfer rather than only immediate posttest scores.

Further work should examine which error domains are most frequent by grade and text genre, how cross linguistic transfer changes with proficiency, and whether digital logging adds useful evidence beyond the pupil's explanation. Reporting should include sampling, task construction, reliability, missing data, effect sizes, and ethical procedures. Qualitative cases are also needed because aggregate gains can hide distinct learning paths.

Conclusion

Effective teaching of word meaning requires a defensible bridge between error and action. The same incorrect word can reflect a weak core meaning, a confused semantic relation, failure to use contextual cues, literal interpretation of a phraseological unit, pragmatic mismatch, or cross linguistic transfer. Treating all such responses as insufficient vocabulary produces generic correction and weak evidence of learning.

The proposed framework separates five diagnostic domains and connects each one to elicitation, bounded interpretation, targeted reconstruction, and transfer. Its practical principle is simple: do not ask only whether the answer is wrong; ask which semantic relation failed, what evidence would distinguish the cause, and whether the reconstructed distinction survives in a new context. This approach can support more precise lexical instruction in Karakalpak medium and other multilingual schools, but its diagnostic accuracy and instructional impact must be established empirically.

Declarations

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