

Developing A System of Vocabulary Exercises for Grade 5 Students within A Competency based Approach

Nguyen Manh Tien¹, Nguyen Thi Thu Hang²

¹Thái Nguyên University of Education, Viet Nam

²Trung Vuong Primary School, Thai Nguyen Province

ABSTRACT: This paper presents the theoretical foundation, practical evidence, and research results concerning the construction of a system of vocabulary exercises for fifth-grade students in line with a competency-based approach. Drawing on the Vietnamese Language Curriculum for primary schools, we have developed a logically structured, diverse and differentiated set of exercises that is pedagogically feasible in vocabulary instruction at primary level. The system comprises five groups: vocabulary expansion; parts of speech, synonyms; polysemy; idioms; and correcting word usage errors. This system contributes to developing linguistic competency in primary students and enhancing the quality of Vietnamese language teaching in Grade 5.

KEYWORDS: system of exercise; parts of speech; synonyms; polysemy; idioms

I. INTRODUCTION

The General Education Curriculum of 2018 aims to foster both qualities and competencies in learners. At the primary level, the Vietnamese language subject plays a crucial role in developing linguistic competence, while also serving as a fundamental tool and foundation for learning other subjects. In Grade 5, the expected language outcomes require students not only to acquire knowledge of Vietnamese but also to apply it effectively in communication (both in comprehension and text production). However, classroom practice reveals that many fifth-grade students possess a limited vocabulary, often confuse word classification, and use words inaccurately; meanwhile, teachers encounter difficulties in implementing instruction under the new textbook series.

From this reality, the present study seeks to: (1) systematize the theoretical and practical foundations of vocabulary teaching within a competency-based orientation; and (2) develop a system of vocabulary exercises aligned with the expected learning outcomes of the Vietnamese Language Curriculum in Grade 5 that is feasible and pedagogically appropriate.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a combination of theoretical analysis and practical investigation. Specifically, it systematizes the theoretical foundations of vocabulary instruction within a competency-based orientation and surveys the current practice of Vietnamese language teaching at the primary level. On this basis, a system of vocabulary exercises has been developed that is logically structured, diverse, differentiated according to learners' profiles, and pedagogically feasible and appropriate for classroom application.

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Enhancing the Quality of Vocabulary Instruction through the Development of a System of Exercises

1. The Concept of a System of Exercises

A system of Vietnamese vocabulary exercises is understood as a structured set of tasks designed to help students practice and develop their knowledge of vocabulary, semantics, and the grammatical categories of words in Vietnamese.

2. The Role of a System of Exercises in Vocabulary Instruction at the Primary Level

Exercises constitute a vital component of the teaching and learning process. In contemporary pedagogy, which emphasizes learner-centered approaches and practical application, exercises become even more indispensable.

For teachers, exercises serve as essential tools for organizing the teaching process; through them, teachers impart knowledge, cultivate skills, and foster students' qualities and competencies.

For students, solving exercises requires the activation of cognitive operations such as observation, analysis, comparison, synthesis, and the application of knowledge and experience to arrive at solutions. This, in turn, contributes to intellectual

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development. Exercises also function as a valuable means of education: completing them demands persistence, honesty, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility in fulfilling assigned tasks.

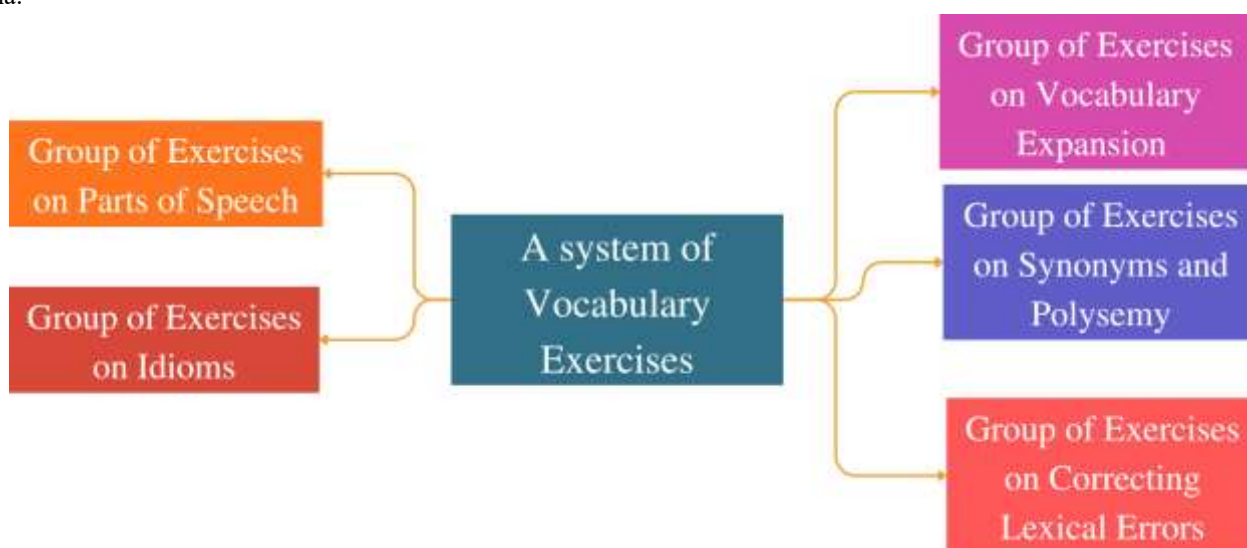
B. Developing a System of Vocabulary Exercises for Fifth-Grade Students

1. Principles for Developing the System of Exercises

- Ensuring alignment with the objectives of primary education
- Ensuring scientific validity and systematic organization
- Ensuring feasibility
- Ensuring effectiveness
- Ensuring appropriateness to learners' characteristics

2. An Overview of the System of Exercises

The system of exercises refers to the entire set of tasks arranged in a specific, logically coherent sequence. The content of the exercise system is understood as the body of Vietnamese language knowledge (with a focus on vocabulary) prescribed in the 2018 curriculum for Grade 5, as well as the varying levels of knowledge and skills that students are required to attain. Based on this body of knowledge, we have identified a system of exercises comprising groups, types, and forms of tasks as outlined in the following schema:



3. A System of Vocabulary Exercises for Fifth-Grade Students

(1) Group of Exercises on Vocabulary Expansion with the Theme On the Path of Learning

Exercise 1. Find words related to “the path of learning” according to the following prompts:

- Words denoting participants in learning:
- Words denoting learning activities:
- Words denoting learning tools:
- Words denoting qualities required in learning:

Exercise 2. Find at least three synonyms for the following words:

- (to study/learning):
- (diligent):
- (talented):

Exercise 3. Match the proverbs in Column A with the corresponding meanings in Column B.

A. Proverbs

B. Meanings

- 1) With effort, an iron bar can be ground down into a needle. a) Advises people to be skillful in their work and in everyday conduct.
- 2) Learn to eat, learn to speak, learn to wrap, learn to open. b) Emphasizes that perseverance and patience are essential to success.
- 3) Without a teacher, you can't make it. c) Affirms the role and importance of the teacher in each individual's life.

Exercise 4. Fill in the thematic word groups corresponding to the given vocabulary:

Thematic group	Words
.....	textbook, pencil, notebook, ruler, compass, eraser
.....	classroom, computer room, library, laboratory, schoolyard
.....	taking notes, listening to lectures, discussion, practice, experiment, observation

Exercise 5. Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) about a learning role model you know (this could be a friend, sibling, or a character in a book).

Suggestion: Mention the context, difficulties faced, efforts made, outcomes achieved, and the lesson learned.

(2) Group of Exercises on Parts of Speech

a) Exercises on Pronouns

Exercise 1. Match the sentences in the left column with the appropriate types in the right column.

→ What famous scenic spots does Thái Nguyên have?	Sentence using personal pronouns
Thái Nguyên is a province in the Northeast region, and its people are very gentle and hospitable.	Sentence using interrogative pronouns
If you have the chance, please come and visit our hometown, Thái Nguyên!	Sentence using substitute pronouns

Exercise 2. Consider the following sentences:

- We wandered aimlessly in the vast peach garden.)
- Who is knocking at the door?
- Early in the morning, the sunlight was already dazzling—who knows when summer will end?
- Those squirrels diligently gather pine cones to bring back to their nest every day.

a) Identify the pronouns that appear in the sentences above.

b) Classify the identified pronouns into the following groups:

- personal pronouns:
- interrogative pronouns:
- substitute pronouns:

Exercise 3. For each pronoun in bold in the sentences below, indicate which word or phrase in the preceding sentence it replaces.

a. The children already know how to help adults. **That** is good.

b. Lan is excited about the forest trip. **So** are we.

c. We carried baskets and hoes to the riverbank. **There**, we found many bamboo and mai shoots.

Exercise 4. Identify the pronouns in the following lines:

"When I return, will you remember me?"

When you return, I remember both the flowers and the people."

(To Huu)

Pronouns: _____

Exercise 5. Identify the interrogative pronouns and provide the answer to each of the following riddles:

a. What tree has a tall trunk,

Leaves sparse like comb,

Whose fruit is filled

With sweet water?

b. Who, from the village of Nà Mạ,

Was innocent yet courageous,

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*Sacrificed at a young age,
And left a name in the nation's history?*

Exercise 5. Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) using at least three different pronouns.

Section B – Exercises on Connectives

Exercise 1. Find the connectives and pairs of connectives in the following passage, and state their function:

"The Stork and the Heron were brothers, yet their temperaments were very different. The Stork was obedient and diligent in his studies, while the Heron was lazy, lying idle all day. The Stork kept urging him, but the Heron would not listen. Thanks to his diligence, the Stork became the best student in the class."

— From a Vietnamese folktale

- Connectives used: _____
- Function: _____

Exercise 2. Choose the appropriate pair of connectives to fill in the blanks so that the sentences are complete.

- because... therefore / because... so

- not only... but also

- although / even though... but

a) Spring brings to the world a fresh green color breathes into the air a sense of warmth and comfort.

b) spring has brought warm sunshine to the forest the bare branches have not yet sprouted new buds.

c) spring has brought rays of warm sunshine the scenery on earth appears more radiant and full of vitality.

Exercise 3. Construct a sentence with each of the following connectives: of, in order to, due to, by/with, with, or.

- of:
- in order to:
- due to:
- by/with:
- with:
- or:

Exercise 4. Transform the following simple sentences into compound sentences by using connectives.

a) The sky grew dark. The wind blew violently.

.....

b) It rained heavily. I still went to school.

.....

c) I was sick. I had to stay home from school.

.....

d) Many people were already waiting at the pier. The boat had not yet arrived.

.....

Exercise 5. Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) about a national hero in which you use connectives. State the function of the connectives employed.

3) Group of Exercises on Synonyms and Polysemy

a) Exercises on Synonyms

Exercise 1. Which word can replace the word in bold in the following sentence?

Bảo An was sick and had to stay home for a week; she is making great efforts to catch up with her classmates.

A. perseverance

B. effort

C. excellence

D. agility

Exercises on Synonyms

Exercise 2.

a) Find a synonym for each of the following words:

caring	
diligent / hardworking	
perseverant / persistent	
brave / courageous	

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b) Compose a sentence using one of the synonyms you have identified.

.....
Exercise 3. Find synonyms for the word **black** to describe the following:

a) a cat:

b) a dog:

c) a pair of eyes:

Exercise 4. Distinguish the nuances of meaning in the synonyms (in bold) in the following sets of expressions:

a) "... **pale** faces, footsteps heavy as if weighed down by stone."

b) A lily with **pure white** blossoms.

c) A flock of storks **dazzlingly white**.

d) The ban flower blooming, covering the mountains in a **blinding white**.

Exercise 5. Identify the synonyms in the following sentences. Underline those words.

a) The Hùng King sought a son-in-law for Princess Mị Nương.

b) They were selecting wooden pillars of equal height.

c) We were choosing the strongest crickets for a fight.

d) The company has just recruited new workers.

Exercise 6.

Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) describing either a sunrise or a sunset at a place you love, using at least two words that denote the color yellow.

b) Exercises on Polysemy

Exercise 1. In each of the following sentences, indicate whether the boldfaced word is used in its **literal meaning** or in a **figurative meaning**.

Sentence	Meaning
a) When everyone lends a hand , the work is quickly completed.	
b) After the success of the August Revolution, political power came into the hands of the people.	
c) Huy opened his schoolbag, took out the new pen given by his teacher, and placed it in his hand to admire..	

Exercise 2. Construct sentences to distinguish between the literal and figurative meanings of each of the following words:

• run

○ Literal meaning:

○ Figurative meaning:

• sweet

○ Literal meaning:

○ Figurative meaning:

Exercise

3.

In the following sentence, is the boldfaced word used in its **literal** or **figurative** sense? Then compose a sentence in which the boldfaced word conveys a figurative meaning.

"Bon has jet-black eyes that look truly beautiful."

• The boldfaced word is used in the sense of:

• Compose a sentence:

Exercise

4.

a) Match the appropriate meaning in Column B with the word "stand" in each sentence from Column A:

A	B
I stood waiting for you at the school gate.	o operate or work in a standing position
The worker operated the machine ("stood at the machine") for eight hours a day.	To be in an upright posture, with the body straight and the feet placed on the ground
The mountain stood towering in front of us.	To be positioned vertically, perpendicular to the surface of the earth

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(b) In which sentence from Exercise 4 does the word “stand” convey its **literal meaning**?

(c) Compose sentences using the word “stand” with the following meanings:

- To occupy a certain position in a list or ranking:
- To be in a state of immobility or no movement:

Exercise

5.

Write a short paragraph (5–7 sentences) about your school, in which you employ one polysemous word used in its figurative sense.

4) Group of Exercises on Idioms

Exercise 1.

Underline the synonymous words in each of the following idioms:

- to brandish big knives and hammers
- to be overly picky, like choosing fish or broth
- a black dog guarding ink
- calm waves and quiet seas
- young in age and immature in mind

Exercise 2.

In which of the following idioms does the word “thành” (“to become/achievement/fortress”) bear a different meaning from the others?

- so beautiful as to topple cities and kingdoms
- success comes with the arrival of the horse
- small things accumulate into something great
- to succeed in both achievements and reputation

Exercise 3.

Identify natural objects or phenomena embedded in the following idioms:

- going up waterfalls, going down rapids
- winds gather to become a storm
- flowing water wears away stone

- golden forests, silver seas

Exercise 4. The bolded parts in the sentences in Column A can be replaced by which idioms in Column B?

A	B
1) Life is becoming increasingly modern and developed, yet the Vietnamese people still preserve the fine traditional customs of the nation.	a) Shoulder to shoulder
2) Every year, my ward usually organizes activities to honor and repay those who have contributed to the revolution.	b) Fine customs and traditions
3) In times of hardship and adversity, we have always stood by each other, offering help and overcoming every challenge together.	c) Gratitude and reciprocity

Exercise 5. Match the idioms in Column A with their corresponding meanings in Column B.

A	B
Plough deep and hoe thoroughly	a) A place favorable for livelihood will attract many people to settle.
Firm feet can soften stones	b) To work diligently and industriously (in farming).
Where the land is good, birds will settle	c) To be strong and resilient, overcoming difficulties and challenges.

Exercise 6. Construct sentences using the following idiomatic expressions:

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- *Dare to think, dare to act*
- *Choose friends with care*
- *Fallen leaves return to their roots*
- *"Descendants of the Dragon and Fairy"*

5) Exercises on Correcting Lexical Errors

Exercise 1. Identify the incorrectly used words in the following sentences and correct them.

- "How wonderful! Today is Saturday, I woke up early to run along the seashore and breathe the crystal-clear air."*
- "The bus carried our schoolmates on a seaside trip. Everyone was cheerful and excited. On the bus, they sang, chatted, and giggled."*
- "After a busy day of work, in the evening, under the golden moonlight, the villagers gathered peacefully to rest and share stories."*

Exercise 2. Choose the appropriate words in parentheses to replace the italicized ones so that the sentence conveys the intended meaning.

(peaceful, tranquil, serene, arduous, difficult, rustling, whispering)

- "Looking at the ripened golden rice fields, I felt that my village was truly at peace."*
- "Tà Xù is one of the most beautiful 'cloud-hunting paradises' in the northern mountains, but the road leading there is indeed arduous."*
- "Whenever the wind blows, the leaves rustle as they brush against one another."*

Exercise 3. Do the connectives "but", "so that", and "and/while" in the following sentences correctly express the semantic relations intended? If not, which connectives should be substituted?

- "My grandfather is old, but his eyes are no longer bright."*
- "The almond tree in the schoolyard is very useful for our play so that it provides shade."*
- "Summer has arrived! The flamboyant flowers bloom crimson across the schoolyard, while cicadas buzz throughout the noon."*

Exercise 4. Remove redundant synonymous words in the following sentences.

- "The fields of my village stretch wide and vast, rippling with waves of rice."*
- "Suddenly rain poured down; the flock of chickens scurried chaotically in every direction."*
- "The school is the place where we grow and mature."*

Exercise 5. Replace the wrongly used words in the following sentences with more appropriate choices. In your view, what is the main reason for these misuses?

- "At the Monday morning flag-raising ceremony, we listened to the highly valuable teachings of our principal."*
- "The days I returned to the countryside to pick tea leaves were the most joyful days."*
- "Having left the school, I miss dearly every patch of grass, every tree, the stairways, the classrooms, and my beloved seat beside my girl friends."*

IV. CONCLUSION

The construction of a lexical exercise system for Grade 5 students, oriented toward competency development, proves to be necessary and feasible in the practical teaching of the Vietnamese Language. The exercise system not only provides teachers with a rich resource for organizing learning activities but also creates conditions for students to practice, experience, and develop their linguistic competency actively and creatively.

Particularly, the exercises are designed with differentiation and real-life relevance, helping to address limitations in vocabulary, foster accurate and effective use of Vietnamese, and nurture students' learning motivation. The research results affirm the crucial role of such an exercise system as a tool that simultaneously supports teaching, fosters educational development, and provides assessment opportunities—thereby contributing to the overall improvement of Vietnamese language instruction in primary schools.

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