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## FORMATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S SPEECH COMPETENCE: WAR VOCABULARY

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**Abstract.** The article highlights the peculiarities of the formation of primary school children's speech competence during the war. The war vocabulary is analyzed. It is noted that speech competence is an important component of the formation of a primary school children language identity. The attention is focused on the fact that children use military and war lexis actively, and this is not surprising, as Ukrainian children are children of war. It is proved that the formation of children's speech competence in the conditions of war is possible with careful work on the oral and written speech of schoolchildren. The peculiarities of the use of war words by primary schoolchildren in their oral and written speech was analyzed as well as war vocabulary in drawings and letters to the Ukrainian soldiers. The questionnaire revealed what words such children use in everyday communication, whether they know the meaning of these words, including new ones, and identified the most commonly used items and phrases. Most of them refer to Ukrainian soldiers, weapons, and equipment. The letters express appreciation and admiration for Ukrainian heroes and produce prayers for their safe lives. The children's written speech is more controlled and restrained than their oral speech, but at the same time keeps childish emotions and spontaneity. In their oral speech, they use phrases familiar to all Ukrainians that have arisen since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, they know many songs, mostly "adult", written during the years of 2022-23. These lexis and phraseology are a part of the vocabulary of a modern primary schoolchild and define the peculiarities of the speech of the children of war.

**Keywords:** speech competence, language identity, language picture of the world, war vocabulary, war neologisms, children of war.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of children's speech competence is based on the ability to listen, perceive, and reproduce information. It includes reading and understanding the text, the ability to engage in dialogue, express own thoughts in oral and written forms. A language identity should be proficient in the expressive means of the native language, be able to defend own beliefs, etc. Vocabulary is played an important role in the formation of such identity, the ability to respond to the changes that occur in the world language picture.

The language is a sensitive alive organism reacting to all social changes, first of all at the vocabulary level, which is the most sensitive to shocks in society. Therefore, the development of the vocabulary system is the adaptation of the language to the needs of society in order to ensure, first of all, its communicative function.

In April 2014, russian troops invaded the territory of Ukrainian Donbas. This was preceded by the seizure of the Crimea and the proclamation of the DPR and LPR later. Officially, russia denied its presence in Ukraine. The complex of actions of the Ukrainian military in response to the russian invasion was called the ATO (anti-terrorist operation). This operation lasted until 2018. And since 2018,

the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) has been launched. The year 2014 changed not only the lives of Ukrainians, but also began to make adjustments to the linguistic picture: the activation of military vocabulary, the emergence of new words related to military operations. 24 February 2022 marked the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Destroyed cities, people uprooted from their homes, loss and death. These terrible events could not but be reflected in the language picture of the world.

The events after February 24 affected the language picture of the world, and it is logically beginning to change, as the world of Ukrainian people is irrevocably changing. First of all, this concerns the changes of the meaning of the old-known words that exist in the language. Light, which has always brought joy, awakening, and was associated with safety and comfort, is suddenly became a symbol of danger and death, and every night Ukrainians had to observe a light-masking regime for their own safety, i.e. sit without light because it could be dangerous with light. A corridor is not just a part of a building, but the safest place during an air alarm or bombing. In addition, a green corridor is what Ukrainian dreams about on the occupied territory. Zero is not a number, but the first line of demarcation. Rockets doesn't associate with space, but with destruction, death, and the extermination of Ukrainians. And the words "war", "victory", "peace" sound different to Ukrainian after February, 24. Ordinary Ukrainians now know military slang as well as the warriors, knowing that a pill (tabletk) is a medical machine, a dryer (suschka) is a Su-27, Su-30, Su-57 fighter jet, a turtle is a T-34 tank (Markevych, 2019).

A language picture of the world is the result of reflecting reality through the prism of language, including mental, national, historical, and cultural peculiarities of a person. It is fixed in the consciousness of the language community and represents its idea of the world transmitted through language. Thus, the main characteristic of the linguistic picture of the world is the evolutionary development of the world and dependence on the social conditions of the ethnic group. The linguistic picture of the world is also defined as a complex of different linguistic markers of reality. It's a system of knowledge about the world, which is reflected at the lexical (vocabulary), phraseological and grammatical levels (Chernyshenko, 2007), and a system of linguistic concepts by which we interpret the world (Dashko, 2020). *"The national linguistic world picture is a specific vision (i.e. logical comprehension, feeling and evaluation) of the real world and everything that is brought into it by human consciousness, fixed in the lexicon of the corresponding language"* (Chernyshenko, 2007, p. 159). The linguistic picture of the world includes the general cultural heritage of the nation, the perception of reality by the language (Tereshchuk, Yurii, 2016).

After February 2022, the Ukrainian language *"has become a generator and the highest form of patriotism, as well as a key to the study of culture, history, traditions, and has become a creator of culture, a representative of the Ukrainian people in the world, a halo of the nation and its ethnic border"* (Hrytsenko, 2022) just remind the word Ukrained from Urban Dictionary:

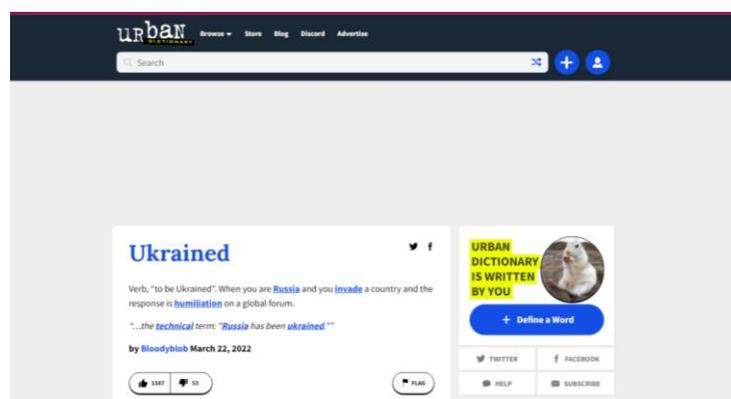


Fig. 1. Screenshot of a dictionary entry

Source: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/>

Children also react to changes in the linguistic picture of the world: new words and phrases (not

always literary and correct) enter into their speech, become part of their conversations and written works. The purpose of our study is to determine the peculiarities of the formation of primary schoolchildren's speech competence in the conditions of war. The task of our study is to analyse the accuracy of expressions, the correct use of war words, their correct spelling and the main trends in the use of new words.

## 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1. Research Methods

The method of media monitoring is used to identify information from publications on the research problem: new words of war, their meaning and use, the development of new Ukrainian language. The descriptive method assisted to describe linguistic units. The questionnaire method was intended to recognize the experience of the use the war words by children in primary school. Methods of mathematical statistics have been used to present the quantitative and qualitative results of the research.

### 2.2. Instruments and Procedures

To assess the speech competence of primary school children, their knowledge of war vocabulary and its use, we developed a questionnaire. The survey was conducted offline in January 2024 at Sophia Rusova Primary School (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine). Children's drawings and letters on the topic of the study were also analyzed.

### 2.3. Results and Discussion

The concept of "speech competence" defines speech competence as the ability to use correct the language in different situation, to use linguistic, extra lingual, and intonational means in conversation (Bogush, 2007); the practical use of the Ukrainian language (vocabulary, grammatical order expressions of linguistic norms (Horoshkina, 2007); a human activity aimed at understanding or creating a text (oral or written) that is carried out during speech activity (Pentyluk, 2003). The speech competence is also a part of communicative competence: *"In turn, speech competence, speech skills are the key to the formation of a specialist's communicative competence. It covers both knowledge of the language and fluency in speech, communication techniques, rules of politeness, norms of communicative behavior"* (Kachak, & Blyznyuk, 2023, p. 89) So, *"speech competence is an integral quality of a person, manifested in the ability and willingness to use linguistic means, laws of their functioning for construction and understanding of speech utterances in accordance with the communicative purpose"* (Hreb, Hrona, Chumak, Vyshnyk, & Hreb, 2020, p. 167).

Learning of new words and the ability to use them correctly plays an important role in the development of speech competence. Innovative processes in the language have been studied by: V. Hak, V. Hladka, Zh. Koloiz, E. Karpilovska, A. Komarova, K. Ladoni, D. Mazuryk, N. Stratulat, O. Styshov, O. Taranenko, & H. Vokalchuk. The process of neologisation in the modern Ukrainian language concerns mostly the vocabulary of war, which is studied by O. Derkachova, O. Gladchenko, S. Hrytsenko, N. Liashenko, & O. Petriv. A lot of review materials can also be found in the modern Ukrainian media, from where we get new words, as well. *"The rapid pace of technology advancements and online social networking is having an impact on language. Through the use of new words in which also known as neologisms, the evolution of the language being adapted in social media platforms has transformed the way individuals communicate"* (Shahlee, & Ahmad, 2022, p. 20).

The term "neologism" was documented at first in the late 18th century in English, French, and Italian. Then appeared the first classifications, studies on the principles of creating new words, on the peculiarities of their use in speech. There are still discussions about the definition of the term "neologism", the criteria for determining innovative lexis, and the transitivity of a word from the category of neologisms to the common vocabulary. It should be noted that along with the extralinguistic factors that lead to the emergence of new words, it is also necessary to take into account the

intralinguistic processes (expansion and contraction of meaning, metaphorisation and metonymisation of meaning, layering of various connotative and stylistic shades on the basic usable meaning of a word) that result in the creation of nelexemes (Hladka, 2009). It is also worth mentioning the close connection of new words with society, their absence in dictionary at the initial stage, their dynamic nature, and the fact that they are a marker of language progress.

Among the factors of neologism appearance are the following: extra-linguistic, caused by the need to name new objects and events, and linguistic, used to change the previous names with new ones. They follow the next principles: temporal (a rather limited time period, "here and now"), certain unusualness against the background of existing linguistic norms, lexicalisation (used by many speakers, but there is an understanding that this word is still new), lexicographic (the word is not fixed in the dictionary or is fixed in the dictionary of new words) (Dziubina, 2016). According to their type, neologisms are divided into neolexemes (borrowed words); neosemes (new meanings of old words); neophrasemes (new stable combinations of words). According to the degree of novelty there are absolute neologisms (strong) - words that were previously absent in the language; relative neologisms (weak) - not fundamentally new words, i.e. words that existed, but now they have other sense. By the way of forming: borrowed, word-forming, semantic.

Consider the most common new words in the Ukrainian language. One of the most famous neologisms is the neoseme "cyborgs". In science fiction, this is the name given to a biological organism containing electronic and mechanical components that replace individual organs or body parts. The word first appeared in 1960 in the article "Cyborgs and Space" in the *Astronautics* magazine by Manfred E. Clines and Nathan S. Kline. Since 2014, this word has been used in the Ukrainian public space as the defenders of the Donetsk airport, and even became the word of 2014. The battle for Donetsk airport was one of the most intense and difficult in the war with Russia in the east, lasting from May 2014 to 20 January 2015 (over 242 days). Another name for our warriors is "our kitties". On 30 January 2020, the film *Our Kitties, or How We Loved Shovels in a Limited Anti-Terrorist Operation with Elements of Temporary Martial Law*, set in 2014, was released. Since that year, volunteers have been calling Ukrainian soldiers "kitties", and they haven't objected.

One of the most popular greetings is "Good evening, we are from Ukraine". This phrase is the title of a music track made by PROBASS Δ HARDI, which was released in October 2021. This phrase is used as a greeting, depicted on T-shirts and sweatshirts, and used in poems and songs.

In 2014, the neosemes "orcs" and "Mordor" were used for the first time to refer to Russians and Russia. Mordor (the Black Country) is a country invented by J. R. R. Tolkien, where Sauron, the Black Lord, lived. Orcs are humanoid creatures with animalistic features, known for their cruelty and serving to the forces of evil. Very quickly, the name "orcs" became a pejorative description of the Russian occupiers in Ukraine. Before the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, it was widely used by the military, volunteers, some media and Donbas inhabitants. However, the use of the words "orcs" and "Mordor" on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 on the official Facebook page of the Ukrainian Land Forces made the Russians orcs for everyone. Another popular term for Russians is the semantic neologism "vanky".

We also have the following neologisms to name the enemy: ironic - the liberators (asvabaditeli) (Russian occupation forces), banderol - a dead enemy in a bag sent to Russia, there are no losses (poternet - similar to ichtamnet) - a false statement by Russians about the absence of their losses. We also use the following words to name the enemy: rusnya, katsapnya, rashists, ruzki, pigdogs. We also see them in the headlines of various media: "Predictable ruzkiy character and breadth of soul", "Ruzki don't go here", "The pigdogs took a wrong turn again". The words "rashists" and "rashism" are becoming more and more commonly used to refer to a criminal ideology and its supporters. New phrases have also appeared: to send to a kobzon concert, to follow a Russian ship, etc.

All of these neologisms contain negative and disparaging connotations. They reflect the attitude to the occupier. This vocabulary is mainly present in journalistic, conversations, in the language of social networks. It is also present in children's speech sometimes.

While this vocabulary is present in the Ukrainian information space and is frequently used, it is worth analysing how the new words of the war have affected on children's speech and the speech competence of primary schoolchildren. For this purpose, we developed a questionnaire with the following questions:

1. What new words have you started using since the beginning of the full-scale invasion?
2. What do they mean?
3. What "military" words do you know?
4. What "military" phrases have you heard?
5. What quotes from military songs do you remember?

25 students from the Sophia Rusova Primary School in Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine participated in the survey. This school is known for its national and patriotic values. Children often take part in various competitions and events devoted to the struggle of Ukrainian heroes against the war: Drawing competition "Independence through the eyes of children", events for the International Day of Peace, cards of appreciation and rosaries of peace for defenders, video letter "Thank you for being", competition "Warm cards for the Ukrainian Armed Forces", and the lesson "We are free to create the future" for the Day of Dignity and Freedom (2023). Students' answers were as follows (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1

*The results of the survey*

Question	Answer	Number
What new words have you started using since the beginning of the full-scale invasion?	Bayraktar (байрактар)	8
	Armed Forces of Ukraine (ЗСУ)	23
	air defense (ППО)	18
	war (війна), rusnya (русня), himars (хаймарс)	3
	Glory to Ukraine! (Слава Україні)	14
	Hand-held anti-tank grenade launcher (РПГ), tank (танк), mine (міна), air alarm (повітряна тривога)	6
	Howitzer (гаубиця), military humanitarian aid (військова гуманітарна допомога), rocket (ракета)	4
	missile (ядерка), dagger (кинжал), stinger (стіпгер), mortar (міномет), NLAW, javelin (джавелін) bomb shelter (бомбосховище)	2
	generator (генератор), Security Service of Ukraine (СБУ)	4
	Occupier (окупант), Mariupol (Маріуполь), MiG (Міг), full-scale invasion (повномасштабне вторгнення), brigade (бригада)	5
	thermal imager (тепловізор)	1
	I started speaking Ukrainian (я почала розмовляти українською)	1
What do they mean?	destroying the enemy (знищують ворога), about the war	11
	equipment (техніка)	7
	support (підтримка), weapons (зброя), defence (захист)	3
	faith in victory (віра в перемогу), victory (перемога), defence (оборона)	4
	Armed Forces of Ukraine (Збройні Сили України)	6
	love for Ukraine (любов до України), our shield (наш щит), defenders (захисники)	25
What "military" words do you know?	tank (танк)	7
	RPG (РПГ)	11
	desert eagle (дігл), plane (літак), weapon (зброя), military	3

	equipment (військова техніка), M4A1	
	military ship (воєнний корабель), MP5K, trenches (окопи), pistol (пістолет), bomb (бомба), explosives (вибухівка), drone (дрон), mavic (мавік), leopard (леопард), MK44, MP5,	2
	grenade (граната), AK-47,	5
	47 <sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade (47 ОМБр)	1
	fighter jet (винищувач)	1
What "military" phrases have you heard?	Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes! (Слава Україні! Героям Слава!)	25
	Glory to the nation! Death to the enemies! (Слава нації! Смерть ворогам!)	4
	Good evening, we are from Ukraine!; For the victory!; Shoulder to shoulder!; Glory to the Armed Forces!; Ukraine above all! (Доброго вечора, ми з України!; За перемогу!; Плече за плече!; Слава ЗСУ!; Україна понад усе!)	15
	Ukraine will win! (Україна переможе!)	3
What quotes from military songs do you remember?	"Dog Patron, dog Patron, we need a battalion of them" ("Пес Патрон, пес Патрон, таких нам треба батальйон")	12
	"Who holds this district? Dog Patron!"; "Enemy equipment is burning"; "Bauraktar" ("Хто тримає цей район? Пес Патрон!"; "Горить палає техніка ворожа"; "Байрактар")	10
	"He left on a tractor and returned with tanks" ("Виїхав на тракторі, повернувся з танками")	2
	"Ork's body will lie in the ground, help the Armed Forces!" ("Орка тіло ляже в ґрунт, допоможе ЗСУ!")	3
	"Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow" ("Ой у лузі червона калина")	7
	"The air alarm" ("Повітряна тривога")	13
	"Glory to our Armed Forces!"; "The occupier is losted"; "There is a viburnum growing near the poplar tree"; "Hello, everybody"; "The Armed Forces will win"; "Our blood has boiled"; "Ukraine has taken back the border"; "Bakhmut Fortress"; "And the blue and yellow flag is in my backpack" ("Слава нашим ЗСУ!"; "Заблукав окупант"; "Там біля тополі калина росте"; "Добрий день everybody"; "Переможе ЗСУ"; "Закипіла наша кров"; "Україна вернула кордон"; "Фортеця Бахмут"; "І прапор синьо-жовтий там в рюкзаку лежить")	25

As can be seen, there is not a child who is not affected by the war, however, children never really use words for aggression and negativity. They may know such words, though, as we can judge from the songs heard and learnt. Most of the lexis and phrases are related to our army, warriors, and their courage and bravery. Among the new vocabulary that has entered their use are mostly words relating to military equipment and weapons. Among the new phrases are those that encode the meaning of our victory. Children use many phrases from modern songs about the war.

Working with children of war, teachers should pay considerable attention to the cleanliness and culture of the child's speech, because not everything present in the Internet space should be replicated in their conversation, and teach children to use words correctly in context. For example, the phrase about ship is incorrect, because the correct Ukrainian word is "warship". Obviously, this is due to the negative impact of the frequent use of the phrase about russian ship in the first days of the full scale invasion. In

general, children are aware of the meanings of new words, but when it comes to, for instance, weapons, they are not very detailed. And this is natural in these conditions, because weapons is not about children.

The development of primary school children's written speech is to develop their ability to write down their thoughts, impressions and observations of events. This process can be carried out in the following ways: writing different paraphrases of texts read or listened to; building their own written statements (narratives, descriptions, opinions) on topics that are close and understandable; creating statements with a direct communicative purpose (letter, announcement, greeting, invitation, instruction, etc.) (Ponomaryova, 2019). Children write essays, letters to warriors at war, and caption drawings using war vocabulary. Here are some pictures that children draw for the soldiers or for thematic exhibitions:





Fig. 2. The drawings

Source: Drawings by students of Sophia Rusova Primary School (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

Children often use in their drawings and greeting cards the following words: Ukraine, Ukrainian language, nightingale language, Armed Forces of Ukraine, victory, to win, a warrior, a soldier, defender, names of military equipment (“bayraktar”, “tank”). In contrast to spoken language, they do not use pejoratives to refer to the enemy or processes related to military operations. Among the most commonly used expressions, we came across the following: “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!”, “Ukraine will win!”, “Ukraine is one!”. At the beginning of the invasion, children used to draw the notorious Russian ship with a piece of a well-known quote, but now such drawings are seldom. Children also rarely draw the dog Patron or the Ghost of Kyiv. And it's understandable, because they have already almost completely disappeared from the information space. Thus, the popularity of new words used by children in their speech often depends on the social linguistic background and the information space in which they are, as well as on the communication practices of adults and peers. They do not use a lot of new words, just those dealing with military equipment.

In their letters to the frontline, children use the following war words: warrior, defender, fellow soldier, victory, peace, Glory to Ukraine, javelin, HIMARS, F-16, Abrams, drone, alarm, enemy. There are also words of appreciation for Ukrainian soldiers and prayers for them. They also avoid the words and expressions that cause aggression, negativity, and there is no pejorative vocabulary.

Дорогий воїне!  
 Я не знаю твою імени та  
 зосередився, щоб ти повернувся  
 додому. Навідаюся з 64-го  
 класу. І ми всі маємося за  
 тебе. За Тобого є всі  
 сім'ї, рідні та друзі. Ми  
 особливий тачу, що за тебе  
 моїться кожен кудиш  
 України. Бог завжди в  
 допомогу та допомагає.  
 Ми не просто воїни, а Ангели-  
 охоронці. Рахуйте вас успіху  
 в перемозі і швидкого поверне-  
 ння додому.  
 10.04.2023р.

Дорогий воїне!  
 Лише тобі власта. Я завжди  
 маюся зранку з усім класом  
 за воїнів. Я дуже дякую, що ви  
 воюєте за те, щоб ми спокійно  
 спали, щоб ми могли збувати  
 життями і щоб ми могли ви-  
 жити. Ви ризикуєте своїм жи-  
 ттями за свободу та мир.  
 Повертайтеся живими та здоро-  
 вими і принісіть нам Перемогу!  
 Слава Україні!

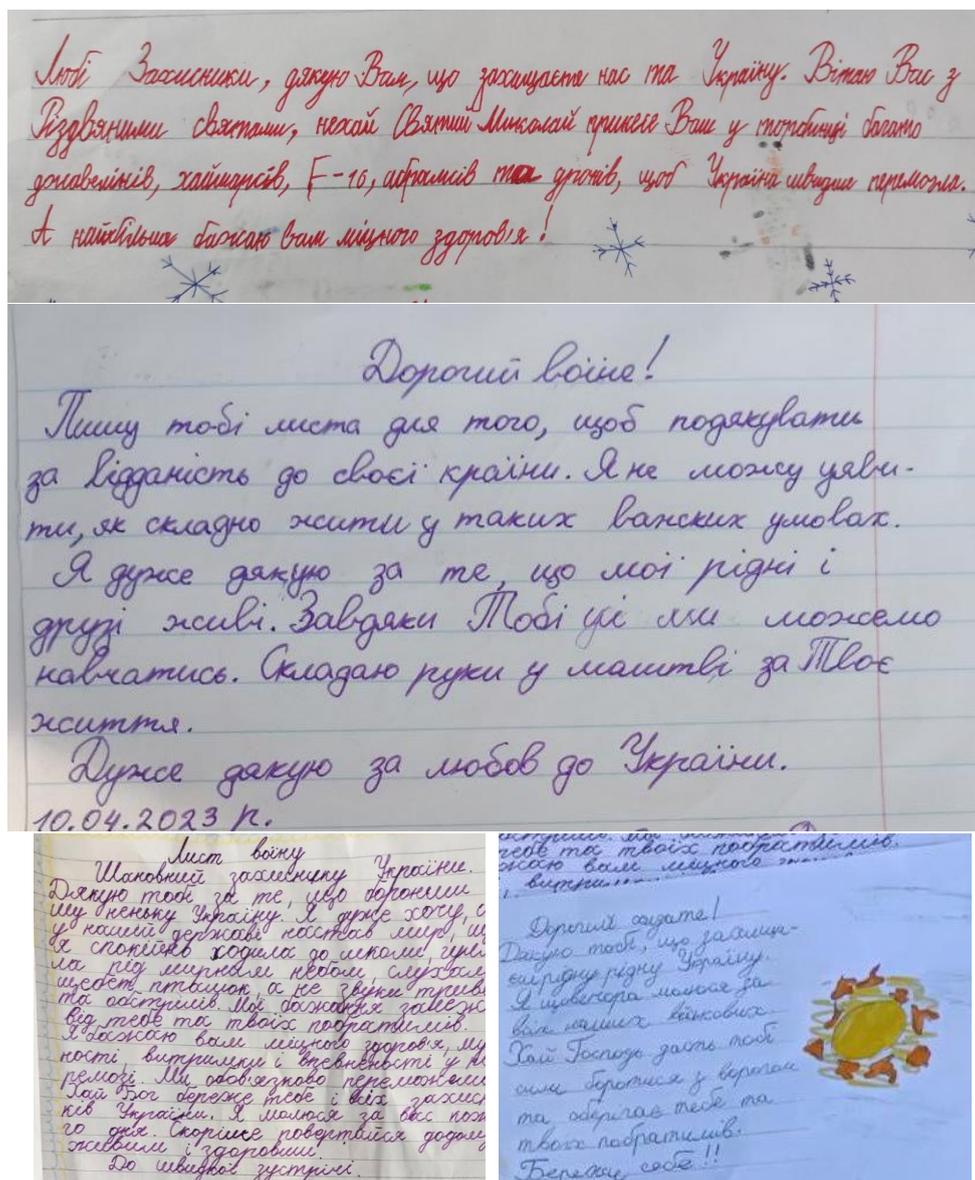


Fig. 3. The letters for warriors

Source: Letters by pupils of Sophia Rusova Primary School (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)

The sincerity and honesty of children's letters to Ukrainian defenders, compliance with the norms of correspondence, literacy, and stylistic unity are particularly noteworthy.

The teacher's task is to monitor children's speech, fix the new words they use in their oral and written speech, pay attention to their suitability or unsuitability, and introduce the history of war neologisms, spelling and word usage norms. Interactive learning, after-school and out-of-class activities, the organisation of which involves constructing and negotiating through some life situations, creating an atmosphere of interaction, writing letters to the military, and participating in patriotic events, are effective.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The vocabulary of war is characterised by a large number of neologisms related to naming of heroes and enemies, events taking place at the war front or in the occupied territories, and military equipment. The addition of new words to the Ukrainian language affects children's speech and becomes part of the formation of their speech competence. Primary school children hear the words of war in the media, in their everyday communication with adults and peers. Therefore, there is a need to pay attention to what kind of war words they use, whether they understand their proper meaning, and whether they do not

pollute their speech with pejorative vocabulary and rude expressions. For this purpose, we analysed drawings and letters that primary school students draw and write to defenders, and also conducted a survey. These types of activities showed that children's speech is full of military vocabulary. For children of war, and these are all our Ukrainian children, it has become an active part of their vocabulary. They use the following words very often in their speech: Armed Forces, warrior, soldier, defender, victory, enemy, names of military equipment and weapons. The teacher's task is to teach students how to use this vocabulary correctly (this applies to both word usage and spelling), to tell them about the history of some neologisms, and to make a distinction between what exists in the language for use and what exists by suppression. The implementation of such words in use changes the language learning process in primary school, forms a new patriotic personality, develops the linguistic and conceptual picture of the world.

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У статті висвітлено особливості розвитку мовленнєвої компетентності молодших школярів під час війни. Зазначено, що мовленнєва компетентність є важливою складовою формування мовної особистості учня. Звернено увагу на те, що усне і писемне мовлення дітей активно поповнюються військовою та військовою лексикою, що і не дивно, адже українські діти є дітьми війни. Доведено, що формування мовленнєвої компетентності дітей в умовах війни можливе за умови ретельної праці над усним і писемним мовленням школярів. Проаналізовано особливості використання слів війни учнями початкової школи в усному та писемному мовленні. Здійснено аналіз лексики війни у підписах до малюнків, листах на фронт. В результаті проведеного анкетування з'ясовано якими словами війни учні послуговуються у повсякденному спілкуванні чи знають вони значення цих слів, зокрема новотворів, визначено найбільш вживані слова та фрази. Більшість із них стосуються українських воїнів, озброєння, техніки. У листах звучить подяка та захоплення українськими воїнами, молитва за їхнє збережене життя. Писемне мовлення учнів більш контролювано та стримано, ніж усне, але водночас зберігає емоцію та живу безпосередність. В усному мовленні діти використовують відомі всім українцям фрази, що виникли з початком повномасштабного вторгнення, а також знають чимало пісень, здебільшого "дорослих", написаних упродовж 2022-23 років. Ця лексика та фразеологія є складовою словника сучасного молодшого школяра і визначає особливості мовлення дітей війни.

**Ключові слова:** мовленнєва компетентність, мовна особистість, мовна картина світу, лексика війни, неологізми війни, діти війни.