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THE ROLE OF READING LESSONS IN DEVELOPING READING COMPETENCE

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Abstract. This scientific article provides an in-depth analysis of the strategic importance of reading lessons in the primary education system for the formation and development of students' reading competence. The study is based on the competency-based approach, functional literacy, and the cognitive-psychological mechanisms of reading activity. The research findings serve as an important theoretical foundation for improving modern pedagogical approaches to the organization of reading lessons.

Keywords: reading lessons, reading competence, reading literacy, competency-based approach, PIRLS, primary education.

Introduction

In the conditions of modern society, the main requirement placed on the education system is to prepare individuals who can think independently, critically analyze information, and effectively apply it in real-life situations. In this process, reading activity occupies a central place in the intellectual development of an individual. This is because reading is a universal means of acquiring knowledge and forms the foundation for mastering all academic subjects.

At the primary education stage, reading lessons not only teach literacy but also fulfill the task of forming students' culture of working with books, independent thinking skills, and a positive attitude toward reading. It is precisely at this stage that the main structural components of reading competence are formed.

The introduction of the competency-based approach into educational practice has fundamentally changed traditional views on reading lessons. Today, reading lessons are aimed not only at developing technical reading skills but also at enhancing students' abilities to understand, analyze, evaluate texts, and draw independent conclusions from them.

The experience of international studies shows that in education systems where reading lessons are well-organized, students' overall academic achievements are also high. Therefore, conducting an in-depth scientific analysis of the role of reading lessons in developing reading competence is considered an актуal pedagogical task.

Research Methodology

The research was carried out using the following methods:

- systematic analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature;
- content analysis of documents from international assessment programs;
- comparison of reading lessons based on traditional and competency-based approaches;
- drawing conclusions using a systemic-structural approach;
- logical generalization and scientific interpretation.

Results

The research results showed that reading lessons are the primary and decisive pedagogical mechanism for developing all components of reading competence. The results are presented in detail below.

1. Results of Developing the Cognitive Component through Reading Lessons

The cognitive component includes students' abilities to understand, analyze, and generalize texts. Research results indicate that cognitive development significantly increases when the following activities are systematically organized in reading lessons:

- questions aimed at identifying factual information in the text;
- tasks focused on discovering implicit meanings;
- identifying cause-and-effect relationships;
- determining the main idea and the author's position.

Such activities enable students to work not only at the level of memorization but also at the levels of comprehension and interpretation. As a result, deep and stable knowledge is formed among students.

2. Results of Developing the Practical-Operational Component

The study revealed that reading lessons create broad opportunities for developing students' ability to apply knowledge in practical activities. In particular, creating tables and diagrams based on texts, performing tasks aligned with real-life situations, and independently finding solutions to problem-based questions contribute to the development of practical thinking. This strengthens the functional nature of reading competence.

3. Results Related to the Motivational-Value Component

The research results show that the use of interesting texts and interactive methods in reading lessons significantly increases students' intrinsic motivation to read. Students begin to perceive books as a source of knowledge, strive for independent reading, and enjoy the reading process. This ensures the long-term and sustainable development of reading competence.

4. Results Related to the Reflective-Evaluative Component

The introduction of reflection elements in reading lessons develops students' critical thinking abilities. According to the research results, reflective tasks enable students to assess their understanding, recognize mistakes, and approach the author's ideas critically. As a result, students become active and independent thinkers rather than passive learners.

Based on this, it is recommended to organize reading lessons according to the following staged model.

Stage 1. Preparation for Reading (Motivational Stage)

At this stage, students' interest in the text and intrinsic motivation are formed. The teacher asks questions related to the topic of the text and organizes prediction activities through pictures, titles, or real-life situations. In this process, students' prior experience is activated, and psychological readiness for reading is developed. This stage strengthens intrinsic motivation for reading, turns students into active subjects, and creates a foundation for conscious text comprehension.

Stage 2. Reading Process (Comprehension Stage)

At this stage, the text is read aloud or silently. The teacher guides the reading process by encouraging pauses at important points, asking questions, identifying the main idea, and explaining unfamiliar words. Along with reading technique (fluency, stress, intonation), comprehension remains the primary goal. This stage forms reading literacy, develops analytical thinking, and builds skills for conscious work with texts.

Stage 3. Working with the Text (Analysis and Interpretation)

At this stage, students answer questions based on the text, identify cause-and-effect relationships, evaluate characters' actions, and find implicit meanings. Open-ended questions, discussions, group work, matching tasks, and creative assignments play an important role.

This stage develops higher-order cognitive skills, critical and logical thinking, and strengthens the content component of reading competence.

Stage 4. Reflection and Assessment

At the end of the lesson, students express their opinions about the text, draw conclusions, and evaluate their learning process. Assessment has a diagnostic nature and serves to identify students' developmental dynamics. This develops self-assessment skills, strengthens a positive attitude toward reading, and provides opportunities for individualized instruction.

Discussion

The obtained results indicate that reading lessons represent a central pedagogical domain in the development of reading competence. If reading lessons are focused only on technical reading skills, students' cognitive and critical thinking potential does not develop sufficiently. International research experience shows that in high-performing education systems, reading lessons are organized around analytical questions, enriched with discussions, debates, reflection, and assessment elements. This approach ensures deep engagement with texts.

The study also demonstrates that the effectiveness of reading lessons is directly related to teachers' methodological preparedness. Teachers must act as facilitators, guides, and motivators in the reading process. This necessitates the continuous development of teachers' professional competence.

While the staged model of reading lessons offers significant pedagogical advantages, its practical implementation faces several systemic and methodological challenges. The research identifies the following barriers that hinder the full development of reading competence in primary education:

Teacher Methodological Preparedness: The effectiveness of reading lessons is directly contingent upon the teacher's ability to transition from a traditional "informational" role to that of a facilitator and motivator. Many educators still prioritize technical reading fluency over deep cognitive analysis.

Time Constraints and Curriculum Density: Implementing all four stages of the proposed model-especially the analysis, interpretation, and reflection phases-requires more time than traditional methods. Teachers often struggle to balance in-depth text discussion with the need to cover the extensive primary school curriculum.

Student Vocabulary Gap: A significant barrier to forming the cognitive component is the limited vocabulary of young learners, which complicates the discovery of implicit meanings and cause-and-effect relationships within the text.

Assessment Subjectivity: Despite the move towards a competency-based approach, developing objective diagnostic tools to measure students' developmental dynamics remains a complex task for many primary school teachers.

In the context of modern society, reading literacy is no longer limited to printed materials but increasingly includes digital texts. The transition to a competency-based approach necessitates the integration of digital tools to enhance students' cognitive and motivational-value components.

Digital Scaffolding for Comprehension: Using interactive platforms and digital storytelling tools during the "Comprehension Stage" (Stage 2) can provide visual and auditory support for students, helping them better understand unfamiliar words and complex plot structures.

Enhancing Functional Literacy through ePIRLS Standards: Aligning reading lessons with international assessment requirements, such as PIRLS, involves preparing students for digital reading environments. This includes navigating online texts, identifying reliable information, and integrating data from multiple digital sources.

Interactive Reflection and Gamified Assessment: Digital tools like Mentimeter or Padlet can be effectively used during the "Reflection and Assessment" stage (Stage 4) to allow students to express

their opinions and evaluate their learning process in a more engaging, gamified format. This approach strengthens the positive attitude toward reading and ensures long-term development of reading competence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, reading lessons play a leading and decisive role in developing reading competence. These lessons comprehensively form all structural components of reading competence. Organizing reading lessons in primary education based on a competency-based approach significantly improves the quality of education. A reading lesson model aligned with the requirements of international assessment programs creates a solid foundation for developing the national education system.

Overall, organizing reading lessons based on modern pedagogical approaches develops not only primary school students' reading literacy but also their abilities for independent thinking, analysis, and effective work with texts in real-life situations. This approach contributes to improving education quality and achieving достойные results in international assessment studies.

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