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Developing 4C Skills through Text-Based Activities in Primary School Reading Literacy Lessons

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Abstract: In the 21st century, education systems are expected to prepare students not merely to remember facts, but to solve complex problems, think critically, act creatively, communicate effectively, and collaborate productively. This study examines the role of text-based activities in developing 4C skills — creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration — in primary school reading literacy lessons. Drawing on international assessment frameworks such as PISA and PIRLS, the paper explores methodological strategies for integrating 4C competencies into reading instruction.

Keywords: reading literacy, 4C skills, creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, PISA, PIRLS.

Introduction. In the context of the 21st-century knowledge and labor market, the fundamental mission of the education system is not merely to ensure that students memorize facts, but to nurture individuals capable of solving complex problems, approaching tasks creatively, thinking critically, and communicating effectively. These requirements are embodied in the 4C competencies — Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration — which must be systematically developed from the earliest stages of primary education.

Reading literacy lessons play a central role in achieving this goal: the processes of reading, comprehension, analysis, and expressing ideas based on a text provide learners with opportunities to develop high-level cognitive and social skills. Active engagement with texts — through questioning, discussion, creative tasks, group projects, and assessment — creates an effective pedagogical environment for the integrative development of 4C competencies. From this perspective, methodical, systematic, and goal-oriented work with texts in primary reading literacy classes represents an important theoretical and practical issue.

In recent years, international assessment systems such as **PISA** and **PIRLS** have evaluated reading literacy not only as the ability to understand a text but also as the capacity to analyze, evaluate, and apply information in real-life contexts. This has intensified the need to foster higher-order thinking and social skills at every stage of education. When the foundation of the 4C competencies is laid in primary school, students' success in reading, learning, and social adaptation in later stages significantly increases. Therefore, the development of the 4Cs through text-based learning activities is of both theoretical and practical significance.

In practice, many primary school teachers tend to focus their lessons primarily on phonics and reading fluency—improving letter-sound correspondence and reading speed—while giving insufficient attention to the stages of deep comprehension, analysis, and creative interpretation of texts. Consequently,





students' higher-order critical and creative thinking abilities, as well as their communication and collaboration skills, remain underdeveloped. Therefore, identifying which pedagogical approaches and practical teaching methods can most effectively foster the 4C competencies has become a crucial issue in educational methodology[1, p-120].

Today, reading literacy extends far beyond fluent or rapid reading. It is defined by a learner's ability to extract information from a text, identify the main idea, analyze and evaluate the content, and apply it to real-life situations. For this reason, reading literacy is internationally recognized as one of the key competencies of 21st-century education.

Literature Review. Recent international studies (OECD, 2018; Mullis et al., 2021) have expanded the concept of reading literacy. Both **PISA** (Programme for International Student Assessment) and **PIRLS** (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) define reading as an active process of constructing meaning, involving analysis, evaluation, and application of information in real-life contexts. The 4C framework — widely adopted in modern pedagogy — emphasizes the integration of cognitive and social skills as interdependent competencies. Within this framework:

- Creativity refers to generating innovative ideas and alternative solutions;
- Critical thinking involves evaluating information and making logical judgments;
- Communication denotes clear expression and effective exchange of ideas;
- Collaboration represents teamwork, shared responsibility, and mutual support.

Embedding these skills into early literacy instruction ensures a strong foundation for lifelong learning and social adaptability[2, p-85].

Opportunities for Developing 4C Skills through Text-Based Learning Activities. The process of working with texts provides broad opportunities for developing the 4C skills — creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration — among students.

Developing Creativity	Developing Creativity
Writing an alternative ending to the text;	Writing an alternative ending to the text;
Describing how the characters might act in a different situation;	Describing how the characters might act in a different situation;
Drawing illustrations or dramatizing the story based on the text.	Drawing illustrations or dramatizing the story based on the text.
Developing Critical Thinking	Developing Critical Thinking
Distinguishing between main and secondary ideas in the text;	Distinguishing between main and secondary ideas in the text;
Evaluating the author's position and intentions;	Evaluating the author's position and intentions;
Analyzing the characters' actions and expressing personal attitudes toward them.	Analyzing the characters' actions and expressing personal attitudes toward them.

3. Methodology. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of instructional approaches used in primary reading literacy classes. The study





identifies effective methods and technologies that promote 4C development, including:

Cluster Method: Helps visualize relationships between ideas, fostering both creativity and analytical thinking.
INSERT Strategy: Encourages deep reading comprehension through reflection symbols such as “I know this,” “New information,” and “This changed my opinion.”
Role-Playing: Develops creativity and communication as students re-enact story events.
Debates and Discussions: Strengthen reasoning, argumentation, and open-mindedness.
Project-Based Learning: Promotes collaboration, responsibility, and problem-solving through group projects.

Sample **PISA** and **PIRLS**-based tasks were analyzed to demonstrate how text interpretation can activate 4C competencies in learners. The following methods and technologies are considered effective for fostering 4C skills — creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration — in primary school reading literacy lessons [5, p-95].

4. Findings and Discussion. The results of classroom analysis and task modeling indicate that text-based instruction provides rich opportunities for integrative 4C development:

- **Creativity:** When students write alternative endings, illustrate stories, or dramatize characters, they practice creative expression.
- **Critical Thinking:** Activities requiring identification of main ideas, comparison of perspectives, or reasoning from cause to effect nurture analytical thought.
- **Communication:** Oral and written responses to texts foster clarity of expression and discourse competence.
- **Collaboration:** Group projects, discussions, and role-plays encourage cooperation, negotiation, and shared problem-solving.

Integrating PISA and PIRLS-aligned reading tasks helps students apply textual knowledge to real-life situations, reinforcing both literacy and transversal skills. Such methods bridge the gap between reading comprehension and competency-based learning outcomes.

Experience of International Assessment Programs

The international assessment programs **PISA** (Programme for International Student Assessment) and **PIRLS** (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) evaluate students’ reading comprehension levels not only based on their ability to retell a text, but also on their capacity to **analyze, evaluate, and apply information** in real-life contexts. Integrating tasks based on the PISA and PIRLS assessment criteria into **primary education curricula** contributes significantly to the development of students’ **4C skills** — creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. For instance: **PIRLS tasks**, which require identifying the main idea of a text, strengthen students’ **critical thinking skills**; **PISA tasks** enhance learners’ ability to **apply textual information** to real-life situations.





Application of PISA and PIRLS Tasks for Developing 4C Skills in Primary Reading Literacy Lessons

PISA Task and Its Analysis Based on the 4C Framework. Text (adapted):

A gardener is planting a tree. He knows that for the tree to grow healthily, it needs enough water, light, and space. If the trees are planted too close together, they may interfere with each other. If they are planted too far apart, space will be wasted.

Questions:

1. What factors should the gardener consider when planting the tree?
2. What might happen if the trees are planted too close together?
3. In your opinion, what is the best way to plant the tree?
4. What ideas can you suggest for protecting the environment while planting trees?

4C Analysis:

- **Creativity:** Students propose various creative methods for planting trees.
- **Critical Thinking:** They answer questions based on cause-and-effect reasoning.
- **Communication:** Learners express their thoughts both in written and oral forms.
- **Collaboration:** Students work in groups to develop a collective plan for tree planting[3, p-150].

PIRLS Task and Its Analysis Based on the 4C Framework. Text (adapted for Grade4):

One morning, Ali was on his way to school when he saw a small kitten by the roadside. The kitten was shivering from the cold. Ali picked it up and took it home. However, his mother said, “We already have a cat at home, and there is no room for another one.” Ali did not know what to do with the kitten.

Questions:

1. Why did Ali take the kitten home?
2. Explain the mother’s point of view.
3. What do you think Ali should do? Justify your answer.
4. In your group, find the best way to help the kitten.

4C Analysis:

- **Creativity:** Students come up with various ideas and alternative solutions for helping the kitten.
- **Critical Thinking:** Learners compare and analyze the viewpoints of Ali and his mother.
- **Communication:** Students explain their own opinions clearly and listen to others’ perspectives.
- **Collaboration:** Working in groups, students decide on the most appropriate and effective way to help the kitten[4, p-200].

Furthermore, the integration of **PISA** and **PIRLS** tasks serves as an effective tool for improving students’ literacy in accordance with **international educational standards**.





5. Conclusion. Working with texts in primary school reading literacy lessons contributes to the holistic development of learners. Beyond improving reading fluency, it enhances creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration — the key skills for success in the 21st century. Teachers are therefore encouraged to adopt innovative, interactive, and research-informed approaches that align with international educational standards such as PISA and PIRLS. Integrating these frameworks not only increases the effectiveness of literacy instruction but also prepares students to participate actively in the **global learning environment**. Therefore, modern educators should apply **innovative methods** and **internationally informed approaches** in their teaching practices.

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