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## The essence and structural components of reading competence

Mahmudova Shoirra Shavkat qizi

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

Master's student, specialty Theory and Methodology of  
Education and Upbringing (Primary Education)

**Abstract.** This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of reading competence in modern pedagogy, its theoretical and methodological foundations, and its structural components. The study is grounded in the competency-based approach, functional literacy, and the cognitive-psychological mechanisms of reading activity. Based on international assessment programs—particularly PIRLS—conceptual approaches developed by the OECD, and UNESCO documents, the cognitive, operational, motivational-value, and reflective-evaluative components of reading competence are identified. The research findings contribute to improving the theoretical model for the development of reading literacy in primary education.

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

**Introduction.** In the 21st century, marked by globalization and the intensification of digital information flows, the primary task of the education system is not merely to equip learners with ready-made knowledge, but to teach them how to independently search for, analyze, interpret, and effectively apply information in real-life situations. Therefore, the competency-based approach has emerged as a leading methodological direction in modern pedagogy. Within this framework, reading competence serves as the foundation for the development of all key competencies, since reading activity underpins success in mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and even digital literacy. Scholarly sources emphasize that a learner's success in the educational process largely depends on their ability to work with texts.

In the PIRLS study, reading literacy is defined as “the ability to understand, use, and respond to written texts in order to participate effectively in society.” This approach elevates reading competence beyond narrow technical reading skills to the level of socio-intellectual activity. In the education system of Uzbekistan, the development of reading literacy from the primary grades has become one of the priority directions of state educational policy. From this perspective, an in-depth scientific analysis of the essence and structural components of reading competence constitutes a relevant scientific and pedagogical issue.

**Research Methodology.** The study employed the following research methods:

Systematic analysis of scientific literature – content analysis of international and national sources related to reading competence and reading literacy;

Content analysis – identification of key concepts and criteria presented in PIRLS, PISA, and UNESCO documents;





Comparative method – comparison of different scholars' views on reading competence;

Systemic-structural approach – examination of the components of competence as an integrated system;

Deductive and inductive analysis – deriving specific conclusions from general theoretical principles and vice versa.

**Results.** The findings of the study indicate that reading competence is a multifaceted pedagogical phenomenon consisting of four interrelated core components.

#### 1. Cognitive Component: Mechanisms of Text Comprehension

The cognitive component constitutes the central core of reading competence. It encompasses learners' abilities to identify explicit information in texts, understand implicit meanings, determine cause-and-effect relationships, distinguish between main and secondary ideas, and comprehend text structure. Research shows that text comprehension in primary school students develops progressively: first, understanding explicit information; then interpreting implicit meaning; and finally, achieving the level of critical evaluation.

These stages are explicitly defined as key assessment criteria in the PIRLS framework.

#### 2. Practical-Operational Component: Application of Knowledge

This component reflects the learner's ability to act based on the content of the read text. It includes:

- providing text-based answers to questions;
- working with tables, diagrams, and schemes;
- applying information from texts to real-life situations;
- finding solutions to problem-based situations.

In the PISA reading literacy framework developed by the OECD, reading literacy is assessed through the functional application of knowledge, highlighting the practical and real-life significance of reading competence beyond purely academic contexts.

#### 3. Motivational-Value Component: Internal Motivation for Reading

The motivational component is one of the key factors ensuring the sustainability of reading competence. According to research, without learners' interest in reading, positive attitudes toward learning, and intrinsic motivation for independent reading, achieving high cognitive outcomes becomes difficult. UNESCO reports emphasize that reading culture is directly linked to an individual's overall cultural and social development.

#### 4. Reflective-Evaluative Component: Critical Thinking

The reflective component serves as an indicator of advanced reading competence. It includes the learner's ability to express a personal response to the text, evaluate the author's ideas, analyze their own comprehension process, recognize errors, and make corrections. This component transforms the learner





from a passive consumer of information into an active, critically thinking individual.

**Discussion.** The analysis demonstrates that reading competence is not limited to mastering reading techniques alone. Rather, it ensures the integration of intellectual, social, and personal development processes. International research experience shows that education systems achieving high results organize reading lessons around analytical questioning, discussion, and reflection. When instruction focuses solely on speed and accuracy of reading, learners' critical and creative thinking potential remains underdeveloped. Therefore, the development of reading competence in primary education requires a comprehensive pedagogical approach.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, developing reading competence in primary education is a crucial condition for improving the quality of education. The results of this study hold significant scientific and practical value for enhancing theoretical and applied practices aimed at improving reading literacy. These conclusions can be effectively applied in teacher education, curriculum development, and the modernization of assessment systems:

Reading competence occupies a central position in an individual's intellectual and social development.

Reading competence is a complex system consisting of cognitive, practical-operational, motivational-value, and reflective-evaluative components.

The formation of this competence at the primary education stage creates a solid foundation for future academic success.

An approach aligned with international assessment program requirements contributes to improving the quality of national education.

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