

READING LITERACY AS A FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCE OF MODERN EDUCATION: THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive analysis of reading literacy as a key educational competence of the 21st century. Based on international and national studies, it examines the structure and functions of reading literacy, its role in the development of functional literacy, and its contribution to students' metacognitive and metadisciplinary skills. The article offers a detailed overview of methodological approaches to assessing reading literacy within the frameworks of PISA and PIRLS and identifies the main difficulties students encounter. A special section is devoted to teaching technologies and instructional methods for developing reading literacy in school settings, including strategies for meaning-oriented reading, working with continuous and non-continuous texts, and enhancing critical thinking. The article provides a set of practical exercises, sample tasks, and pedagogical cases.

Keywords: reading literacy, functional literacy, PISA, PIRLS, metadisciplinary learning outcomes, critical thinking, reading strategies, meaning-oriented reading, pedagogical technologies.

ЧИТАТЕЛЬСКАЯ ГРАМОТНОСТЬ КАК КЛЮЧЕВАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ XXI ВЕКА: ТЕОРИЯ, ПРАКТИКА, МЕТОДЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается феномен читательской грамотности как важнейшей универсальной компетенции современного человека и стратегического направления образовательной политики. Анализируются теоретические основания понятия, выделяются его компоненты, описываются методологические подходы к исследованию читательской грамотности в международных оценочных процедурах (PISA, PIRLS). Особое внимание уделено практическим методам формирования читательской грамотности в основной школе, включая работу с текстами разных типов, развитие критического мышления, моделирование читательских стратегий. Приводятся примеры учебных упражнений и заданий, направленных на развитие умений анализа, интерпретации и оценивания информации. В конце статьи представлен список научной литературы.

Ключевые слова: читательская грамотность, функциональная грамотность, PISA, PIRLS, текст, образовательные технологии, критическое мышление, читательские стратегии.

Introduction

In the context of rapidly growing information flows and increasingly complex socio-political and technological processes, the ability to work with texts has become a central competence of the modern individual. Reading is no longer understood merely as the decoding of written symbols; rather, it is a complex cognitive process that involves analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and transformation of information. The international professional community therefore views reading literacy as a foundational component of functional literacy[1].

According to PISA data, a high level of reading literacy correlates strongly with academic achievement, professional mobility, and socio-economic adaptation[2]. Conversely, insufficient reading skills lead to difficulties across all school subjects, decreased motivation, academic anxiety, and lower achievement.

Both national and international educational systems recognize reading literacy as a metadisciplinary educational outcome that enables learners to acquire and apply knowledge

independently. Within the Russian and Uzbek educational standards, as well as in international frameworks, reading literacy is seen as an instrumental competence encompassing all areas of the learning process[3].

Thus, the study of reading literacy requires a comprehensive approach—ranging from theoretical and methodological reflection to the development of practical methods and teaching technologies. *Theoretical Foundations and the Evolution of the Concept of Reading Literacy*

From reading as a skill to reading as a cognitive activity

For much of the 20th century, the pedagogical tradition interpreted reading primarily as a skill limited to decoding and reproducing information. However, the development of cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics, and cultural-historical theory (L. S. Vygotsky)[4] revealed that reading is a complex intellectual activity tightly linked to thinking and meaning-making processes.

The contemporary definition of reading literacy is provided by the OECD:

Reading literacy is the ability to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on, and engage with texts in order to achieve one's goals, develop knowledge and potential, and participate in society[5].

This definition includes several components: cognitive processes; self-regulation skills; critical thinking; communicative competence; the ability to apply information in new contexts.

Structural components of reading literacy

Modern scholarship identifies three levels of reading activity:

1. Retrieving information (locating facts, identifying explicit answers).
2. Interpreting and integrating (analyzing, comparing, systematizing).
3. Evaluating and reflecting (critical assessment, identifying authorial intent, reflection).

In addition, reading literacy includes the ability to: understand various types of texts, select appropriate reading strategies, navigate contextual information, assess the reliability of sources.

Reading Literacy in International Assessments: A Comparative Analysis of PISA and PIRLS

PISA's model of reading literacy assessment

PISA evaluates 15-year-old students with a focus on the ability to apply knowledge. Its framework distinguishes three processes: access and retrieve, integrate and interpret, evaluate and reflect[6].

A characteristic feature of PISA is its range of text formats, including: continuous texts (articles, essays); non-continuous texts (tables, charts, diagrams); mixed texts; digital texts.

PIRLS: specificity of the primary school age

PIRLS focuses on fourth-grade students and studies two types of reading:

1. reading for literary experience;
2. reading to acquire information[7].

PIRLS emphasizes developmental characteristics of young readers, particularly motivation, home literacy environment, and cognitive engagement.

Comparative results and common difficulties

International assessments reveal frequent student difficulties: insufficient skills in working with non-continuous texts; difficulty retrieving implicit information; weak understanding of cause-effect relationships; limited ability to evaluate source reliability; literal reading of complex texts without deeper interpretation.

Methodological Approaches to Developing Reading Literacy in School

Activity-based (socio-cultural) approach

Following the ideas of L. S. Vygotsky and A. N. Leontiev, the activity approach views reading as a system of thought operations formed through guided practice[8]. Its core principle is that meaning emerges through the learner's activity rather than being transmitted passively by the teacher.

Strategy-based approach

Contemporary methodology emphasizes the following reading strategies: predicting content; structuring and annotating text; questioning; identifying logical connections; drawing conclusions and interpretations; evaluating information credibility; reflective analysis.

Cognitive-informational approach

This approach treats reading as information processing and focuses on working with incomplete, contradictory, or multimodal data.

Practical Methods for Developing Reading Literacy

Working with continuous texts

Example assignment:

Read the provided fragment of an article.

Tasks:

1. Identify the central issue.
2. List three major arguments presented by the author.
3. Highlight examples of emotionally charged language.
4. Formulate your own position.

Working with non-continuous texts

Example:

A diagram representing a family budget is given.

Tasks:

1. Identify the dominant spending category.
2. Compare expenditures on food and transportation.
3. Draw conclusions about the family's financial strategy.
4. Provide recommendations.

Working with digital texts

Example:

Two online sources discussing the risks of gadget use are provided.

Tasks:

- identify manipulative techniques;
- assess the reliability of sources;
- compare arguments.

Interdisciplinarity as a Foundation for Developing Reading Literacy

Humanities. Literature lessons promote interpretation skills, evaluation of authorial stance, and analysis of narrative structures.

Science subjects. Biology, physics, and geography develop the ability to read diagrams, graphs, and scientific explanations.

Mathematics and informatics. These disciplines enhance skills in interpreting symbolic, quantitative, and algorithmic information.

Pedagogical Cases and Sample Assignments

Case 1: "Reading to solve a problem". Students analyze instructions for operating a household device.

Task:

Identify an error in the sequence of actions.

Case 2: "Critical evaluation of text". A media article about a new medical product is provided.

Questions: Who is the author? What data are presented? Are there references to scientific research?

Conclusion

Reading literacy stands as a strategic competence of the 21st century, enabling individuals to navigate complex information environments. Its development requires a comprehensive approach incorporating modern pedagogical technologies, interdisciplinarity, and work with multimodal texts. International data from PISA and PIRLS consistently demonstrate that reading literacy is strongly associated with academic and social success.

Effective development of reading literacy is possible only through coordinated efforts of schools, families, and society, supported by modern methodological frameworks and innovative teaching practices.

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