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THE IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF READING PROFICIENCY IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY RESEARCHES CONDUCTED IN UZBEKISTAN

Annotation

This article highlights the importance of reading proficiency in teaching foreign languages and emphasizes the significance of researches conducted and ongoing in this field. Recent studies in Uzbekistan on enhancing reading proficiency are outlined.

Key words: reading proficiency, comprehension, strategy, language teaching, innovative technologies, Question Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy.

ВАЖНОСТЬ И АКТУАЛЬНОСТЬ НАВЫКА ЧТЕНИЯ В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ НА ПОМОЩИ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ, ПРОВЕДЕННЫХ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ

Аннотация

В данной статье подчеркивается важность владения чтением при обучении иностранным языкам и подчеркивается значимость исследований, проводимых и продолжающихся в этой области. Описаны недавние исследования в Узбекистане по повышению навыков чтения.

Ключевые слова: навыки чтения, понимание, стратегия, обучение языку, инновационные технологии, стратегия «вопрос-ответ» (QAR).

O'ZBEKISTONDA O'TKAZILGAN TADQIQOTLAR BO'YICHA CHET TILI O'QITISHDA O'QISH MAXORATINI MUHIMLIGI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada chet tillarini o'rgatishda o'qish malakasining muhimligi ta'kidlangan va bu sohada olib borilayotgan va olib borilayotgan tadqiqotlarning ahamiyati ta'kidlangan. O'zbekistonda o'qish malakasini oshirish bo'yicha so'nggi tadqiqotlar keltirilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: o'qish malakasi, tushunish, strategiya, til o'rgatish, innovatsion texnologiyalar, Savol-javob munosabatlari (QAR) strategiyasi.

Introduction. Global socio-economic changes in the world, the process of integration, as a priority in higher education institutions, require the development of a system of teaching foreign languages. The content and quality of teaching English in higher educational institutions on the basis of modern educational technologies on an international level highlights an urgent necessity of improving students' reading competence in English by introducing advanced teaching methods and strategies. The experience of developed countries also proves that it is a priority to have knowledge on teaching a foreign language, skills and qualifications for the development of reading competence, as it is noted in the content of Education.

Significant reforms are being implemented in the field of education worldwide. In this regard, the utilization of the international programs for assessing the reading and comprehension proficiency of students from the early grades onwards holds particular importance. Organizing systematic and purpose-oriented activities to enhance the reading and comprehension levels of primary school students is a pertinent task of today. Therefore, expanding the pedagogical and methodological possibilities for organizing educational processes aimed at improving reading and comprehension skills among primary school students is of paramount importance.

The dissertations on the field contribute significantly to fulfilling the tasks outlined in various legal documents, including Presidential Decree PF-4947 (lex.uz) "On the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of Uzbekistan" dated February 7, 2017, Presidential Decree PF-3271 "On the Development of the System for Publishing and Promoting Books, Enhancing Book Reviewing and Reading Culture, and Stimulating Book Consumption" dated September 13, 2017, and Resolution No. 997 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated December 8, 2018, "On Organizing International Studies in the Field of Evaluating the Quality of Education in the Public Education System," as well as other relevant legal and regulatory documents.

"The development strategy of the new Uzbekistan for 2022-2026", adopted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on January 28, 2022, includes sets 42, 46, and 47 of Priority Area 4 of the current strategy dedicated to 'Conducting a fair social policy and the development of human capital, which is designated as one of the main priority goals. This involves a full revision of curricula and textbooks based on advanced foreign experience, implementation of new methodologies under the national curriculum, utilization of modern and advanced technologies for teaching foreign languages with the aim of purposefully preparing for access to the international rankings of QS and TNE, and the development of an approach based on students' speech competence in foreign languages and reading competence, with the creation of the methodology demonstrating the relevance of the work.

Teaching in Uzbekistan within the framework of foreign language education, utilizing information and communication technologies as well as internet resources for the reading of specialized literature, particularly focusing on

the theory of reading competence development and its associated challenges, is addressed in various sources, including scientific publications by prominent scholars such as O. Yusupov, J. Jalalov, M. Jusupov, L. Akhmedova, F. S. Azizova, I. A. Zaripova, S. S. Saydullayev, O. Khoshimov, and I. Yakubov.

The main part. Reading is an interactive and complex process between the reader and the text, aimed at acquiring information for various purposes. This process requires the student to actively engage in comprehending the reading material. However, to obtain ideas during the process of understanding the text, it is necessary for the student's thoughts and ideas to be elicited. It can be classified as a cognitive process that encompasses various cognitive activities in simple terms. Some people read purely for pleasure during their reading time, while others read for academic purposes. According to Elita et al. (2013), various purposes of reading exist, namely understanding the meaning of the text, learning from the text, acquiring information, or being entertained. The most important aspect is that it depends on the students' needs.

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), the ability to read and understand English is the most crucial skill that a student must possess. Placing this skill at the forefront serves as a distinct advantage in school materials presented in text form. Furthermore, it is a fact that in EFL schools, reading is mainly utilized among the four basic skills in both teaching and learning English language skills. Additionally, during the reading process, students are required to critically rethink the information in the text. They need to be able to summarize, analyze, and synthesize the information present in the text. Moreover, providing concealed or explicit information also requires students to possess critical thinking skills in responding to questions about the text.

As a complex process, the development of reading skills may pose a challenge for students in understanding English language texts. This statement, confirmed by Gagen (2007), emphasizes that one of the most common problems encountered among students in reading lessons is their insufficient understanding of these texts. Indeed, this issue can often be observed among students in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). However, the persistence of this problem in affecting students' achievements at a higher level of education is of serious concern.

The issue of students' inability to understand English language texts arises due to the strategies employed by teachers, which may not be very effective in teaching. Based on observation, the researcher identified that the teaching and learning process is predominantly teacher-directed. In other words, teaching strategies employed by the teacher may not provide opportunities for students to improve their ability to understand texts. For example, the teacher does not conduct questioning exercises to shape students' perceptions of the text during the reading process. Therefore, questioning during the reading process may develop students' thinking styles for understanding the text. Most importantly, in the 21st century, learning English requires students to possess the ability to question for analyzing, summarizing, or synthesizing information from the text.

Comprehending a text goes beyond simply understanding the literal words; it requires readers to engage in critical thinking to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings. This means gradually piecing together meaning by identifying key information, assessing the reliability of sources, connecting new information to prior knowledge, and reflecting on the text's implications. Researchers emphasize these cognitive processes as essential for effective reading comprehension (Moghadam et al., 2023).

As the reading process unfolds, it engages various levels of thought simultaneously. Reading comprehension is recognized as a valuable platform for fostering learners' critical thinking (Heidari, 2020). However, in Iran, there persists a belief that reading is a passive skill, unlike speaking or listening, which require active participation. Consequently, students are often viewed as passive recipients of knowledge, merely accepting the teacher's words and remaining detached from the reading process.

Our objective is to undertake a doctoral dissertation entitled "Advancing the reading proficiency of prospective English language educators through the QAR strategy. It is known that the primary aim of reading lessons in higher education institutions is to enable students to read and comprehend texts at a certain level of language proficiency. In addition, the fundamental strategies employed in these lessons (such as skimming, scanning, highlighting, annotating, recognizing bias, and others) primarily serve for students to understand the given text and find answers to questions. When the QAR strategy is utilized, however, students can not only understand the text and find answers to questions (within the categories "right here" and "think and search"), but they can also analyze their existing knowledge on the subject matter and integrate information from the text (within the categories "author and reader" and "on reader's own"). Furthermore, the adoption of this strategy not only enhances students' reading skills but also fosters their critical thinking.

T.E. Raphael (1986) introduced the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy, which helps students understand the connection between the type of question asked and where to find the answer. According to Raphael (1986), QAR encourages readers to approach text-based questions strategically by establishing a three-way relationship between questions, text content, and reader knowledge. This approach aids students in generating questions, thereby enhancing their reading comprehension. He further explains that QAR assists students in distinguishing between questions whose answers are found directly in the text (literal questions) and those requiring inference based on prior knowledge (inferential questions).

Raphael and Au (2005) suggest that this classification provides a common language for teachers and students to discuss and analyze reading comprehension processes, making them more visible. Additionally, McKnight (2010) outlines QAR as a foundational strategy for teaching comprehension skills such as locating information, understanding text structures, and making inferences. QAR teaches students to categorize different question types (Right There, Think and Search, The Author and You, and On Your Own) and recognize that not all answers are explicitly stated in the text. This approach encourages students to integrate information from the text with their prior knowledge. Moreover, QAR improves students' writing skills by prompting them to formulate their own questions based on the text.

We conducted an analysis of research conducted in Uzbekistan over the preceding period pertaining to this subject matter. Subsequently, the findings of these studies, accompanied by concise synopses, are delineated below.

Recently, Feruza Masharipova Jumanazarovna (2023) successfully defended her doctoral dissertation titled "Enhancing the reading competence of future biology teachers based on CBI and STEM technologies". The current dissertation provides information on the significance of collaboration within the framework of partnerships being implemented with universities in Central Asia regarding the adoption of CBI/STEM technologies in teaching English specialized for the field at higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. Despite the recognition of the significance of tailoring foreign language instruction to specific fields of

study, as highlighted in the research of F. Masharipova, the absence of specialized teaching technologies and strategies tailored for the Uzbek context underscores the relevance of this topic. The theoretical framework for enhancing the reading competence of future biology teachers comprises three chapters. The first chapter delves into the discussion of theories regarding the global utilization of Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) technologies to enhance student reading competence, along with a scientific and theoretical analysis. It also examines the general principles currently employed in teaching foreign languages, particularly English, within the context of higher education institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan. This includes insights into the historical, economic, and content-related aspects of language teaching programs, as well as requirements for educational materials. The findings of this study shed light on the integration of science and language, which has been extensively advocated throughout the history of world science, as argued by researchers in Educational Technology.

The subsequent researcher is Aslanova Nozima Xakimovna, whose doctoral thesis focuses on "Innovative pedagogical technologies in forming the competences of reading and text interpretation in primary school students". In the introductory section of the dissertation, the necessity and relevance of the conducted research are substantiated. The purpose, objectives, as well as the scope of the research, including its subject and object, are described. The alignment of the research with the priorities of the development of science and technology in the Republic is indicated, and the scientific novelty and practical significance of the obtained results are highlighted. Emphasis is placed on the importance of translating research findings into practice, publication of works, and structuring the dissertation. In this work, the essence, objectives, and practical aspects of developing competencies are elucidated. In contemporary society, a comprehensively educated student, developed from primary school, is capable of logical, critical, and creative thinking through understanding texts studied in other subjects. The current task of the education system is to create a conducive environment, conditions for the rational use of information from the growing information flow, and to establish an environment conducive to effective learning.

Moreover, the development of reading and comprehension competencies among primary school students is addressed. Specifically, in the context of mother tongue and literacy classes, the chapter elucidates techniques for consistently incorporating the art of speech, expanding vocabulary, understanding the essence of words, identifying word placement in texts, and fostering creative thinking through relevant technologies. The role of developing reading and comprehension competencies among primary school students through integrative creative tasks is crucial as a societal necessity, characterizing the motivational and intellectual potentials of students' interest in literacy. Factors such as reading and writing texts, listening and comprehending audio materials, and expressing them verbally serve as motivational stimuli for engaging students in the study of artistic and informative texts. Teachers, possessing creative and high pedagogical skills, embark on the path of non-standard innovation in organizing the educational process, initiating their work differently from conventional methods. They utilize various methods of teaching in pedagogical activity, creating modern effective lessons, as innovative pedagogical technologies contribute to the improvement of lesson quality, which in turn reflects in students' performance. Working on dictionaries, dividing artistic and informative texts into sections, selecting new titles for each section, conducting test tasks, and shaping conclusions about the text guide the process of working on the text, delineating the results of text processing in students.

The subsequent researcher is Asqarova Manzura Avazbekovna, whose doctoral thesis focuses on "Developing reading and comprehension skills among primary school students". In this research, fundamental issues are investigated, such as "To what extent do primary school graduates in Uzbekistan outperform their counterparts in other countries in terms of literacy?", "To what extent is the literacy proficiency of Uzbekistan students?", "Are extracurricular activities enjoyable for 4th-grade students?", "What role does family play in enhancing literacy?", "How is the process of teaching organized in our country today?", "Does Uzbekistan have its own unique approach to the teaching process, and if so, what are its notable aspects?", and "Do primary school teachers in Uzbekistan use different methods compared to teachers in other countries?". Additionally, questionnaire surveys are conducted to study factors influencing educational quality and to analyze them. For instance, through the questionnaire, information is collected about the participants, educational resources available at home, attitudes towards school, teachers, and subjects, peer relationships, self-assessment in subjects, and extracurricular activities. The object of the research falls within the category of primary school students aimed at developing reading and comprehension skills, and a detailed analysis is conducted in line with the concept of "reading and comprehension competence". The distinction between the terms "competence" and "skill" is clarified from a pedagogical perspective.

Conclusion. In today's classrooms, the state of reading ability among students is noticeably lagging behind the required level, which significantly impacts academic performance indicators. The primary reason for some students' inability to achieve positive outcomes in education lies in their inadequate reading skills and low reading proficiency. Due to difficulties in reading, students tend to develop a persistent passivity towards learning, which in turn affects their overall development. In such situations, special attention and monitoring are necessary for effective reading. While every student develops their reading proficiency, not all of them achieve comprehension at the same level. Providing students with effective teaching strategies for reading is of great importance. Therefore, addressing it starting from the elementary level is necessary. As a conclusion, it is worth mentioning that while there have been numerous studies conducted in Uzbekistan regarding the improvement of teaching foreign languages, specifically, the advancements in reading skills have been relatively limited. Therefore, we are hopeful that our forthcoming dissertation titled "Enhancing the reading skills of future English language teachers through the QAR Strategy" will contribute to the advancement of this field.

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