

PIRLS READING LITERACY ASSESSMENT: UNDERSTANDING REAL CLASSROOM CHALLENGES

Andijon davlat chet tillari instituti tarjima

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Abstract: The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a well-known international assessment that measures the reading literacy of fourth-grade students around the world. It focuses not only on basic reading skills, but also on how effectively students understand, interpret, and think critically about written texts. Despite continuous reforms in education, PIRLS results show that many students experience difficulties with deeper comprehension tasks, especially those requiring inference and evaluation. This article discusses PIRLS in a clear and human-centered academic style, identifies a key problem related to weak higher-order reading comprehension skills, examines its main causes, and suggests practical solutions that can realistically be applied in primary classrooms. The purpose of this paper is to highlight how improving everyday teaching practices can lead to better reading outcomes and stronger PIRLS performance.

Keywords: PIRLS, reading literacy, comprehension skills, primary school, education quality

Introduction

Reading is more than the ability to recognize words on a page. For children, reading is a gateway to learning, imagination, and independent thinking. In primary education, especially at the fourth-grade level, reading literacy becomes a decisive factor for future academic success. International assessments such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) help educators understand how well students are prepared to meet these demands.

PIRLS is conducted every five years by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). It measures how effectively students read for literary experience and for gaining information. In addition, PIRLS evaluates students' ability to retrieve information, make inferences, interpret ideas, and evaluate texts. While many students demonstrate acceptable basic reading skills, PIRLS results often reveal a noticeable weakness in deeper comprehension.

This article focuses on one common and realistic problem reflected in PIRLS outcomes: students' limited ability to think critically about texts. The paper aims to explain why this problem exists and how it can be addressed through thoughtful and studentcentered teaching practices.

Main Body 1: PIRLS and the Reality of Reading Difficulties

According to the PIRLS framework, reading literacy means understanding and using written language in meaningful ways. A successful reader is expected not only to read fluently, but also to understand the author's message, connect ideas, and reflect on what has been read. However, in real classroom settings, many students struggle to move beyond surface-level understanding.

PIRLS findings show that students generally perform better on questions with direct answers clearly stated in the text. In contrast, they often have difficulty with tasks that require them to explain reasons, draw conclusions, or express personal judgments based on the text. This suggests that reading instruction in many schools still focuses heavily on mechanical reading kills rather than thoughtful comprehension.

One major issue is that classroom reading activities are frequently limited to short texts followed by simple factual questions.

Such practices do not encourage students to ask questions, express opinions, or explore hidden meanings. As a result, students may read quickly and correctly, but without truly understanding the text.

Another challenge is the lack of balance between literary and informational texts. While stories and narratives are commonly used, informational texts such as articles, reports, and instructions receive less attention. Since PIRLS includes both types, students who are unfamiliar with informational texts may feel confused and insecure during assessment.

Main Body 2: Causes of the Problem and Practical Solutions (Uzbekistan Context)

Several factors contribute to weak higher-order reading comprehension, particularly in the context of Uzbekistan's primary education system. One of the most important factors is teacher preparation. In recent years, significant reforms have been introduced to modernize education and align it with international standards, including participation in PIRLS. However, many primary school teachers are still transitioning from traditional, teacher-centered methods to more student-centered approaches.

As a result, reading lessons often focus on accuracy and repetition rather than interpretation and critical thinking.

Another challenge relates to classroom practice and assessment culture. In many Uzbek primary schools, students are accustomed to giving short, correct answers instead of explaining their ideas in detail. This limits opportunities for discussion, reflection, and independent thinking. When students are not encouraged to justify their opinions or make predictions, they struggle with PIRLS tasks that require inference and evaluation.

The home literacy environment also plays a crucial role in Uzbekistan. While many parents value education, not all families have equal access to children's books or regular reading habits at home. In rural areas especially, limited exposure to diverse texts can negatively affect vocabulary development and background knowledge, which are essential for comprehension.

To address these issues, reading instruction in Uzbekistan should increasingly focus on interactive and meaningful activities.

Teachers can integrate simple but effective strategies such as group discussions, open-ended questions, and text-based reasoning. Encouraging students to express personal opinions about stories or informational texts helps develop confidence and deeper understanding. In addition, greater attention should be given to informational texts that reflect real-life topics relevant to students' experiences.

This approach not only supports PIRLS preparation, but also helps students see reading as a useful and meaningful skill beyond the classroom.

Finally, cooperation between schools and families is essential. Schools can organize reading workshops, recommend age-appropriate books, and guide parents on how to support reading at home

Strengthening this partnership can significantly improve students' motivation and reading literacy outcomes.

PIRLS offers valuable insights into how well students can understand and use written texts at an early stage of their education.

One of the key problems highlighted by PIRLS is the limited development of higher-order reading comprehension skills. This issue is not the result of a single factor, but rather a combination of teaching practices, assessment methods, and home literacy environments.

By making reading instruction more student-centered, interactive, and reflective, schools can help children become thoughtful and confident readers. Improving reading literacy in this way will not only lead to better PIRLS results, but also prepare students for lifelong learning and meaningful participation in society.

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