

# THE SCIENTIFIC AND METHODOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPING OF READING COMPETENCE OF PUPILS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Reading competence is a fundamental aspect of foreign language education, playing a key role in the development of communicative skills and academic success. This article explores the scientific and methodological interpretation of the concept of developing of reading competence among pupils in English as a foreign language. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study includes theoretical analysis, surveys of teachers and students and classroom observations. The study was conducted among 29 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at a rural secondary school in Uychi district in Namangan region of Uzbekistan. The pupils were divided into 2 groups, the control group and the experimental one. Results indicate that traditional translation –based reading instruction remains common, while many students struggle with vocabulary, comprehension and motivation. However, when exposed to interactive and strategy-based reading tasks, students demonstrate noticeable improvement in understanding and engagement. The

study concludes that a well-structured methodological framework ,focused on learner needs ,text authenticity and skill integration ,is essential for effectively fostering reading competence in foreign language classrooms.

**Keywords:** reading competence,EFL,reading strategies,education research,foreign language education.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, the ability to read effectively in a foreign language, particularly English, has become an essential skill for school pupils. Reading competence not only facilitates language acquisition but also supports academic achievement and fosters independent learning. It enables learners to access a wide range of information, develop critical thinking, and engage with diverse cultures through written texts. Despite the recognized importance of reading, many pupils face challenges in developing adequate competence in this skill. Common difficulties include limited vocabulary, poor comprehension strategies, and a lack of motivation, often resulting from traditional, teacher-centered approaches that focus mainly on translation and rote learning. These methods do not always align with the communicative and cognitive demands of modern language education. In response to this issue, educational researchers and practitioners have emphasized the need for a clear scientific and methodological understanding of how reading competence is developed in foreign language education. This involves not only defining the concept itself but also identifying effective teaching strategies, appropriate materials, and assessment tools that support skill development in meaningful and learner-centered ways. This article aims to explore the theoretical foundations of reading competence in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), analyze current teaching practices, and propose methodological recommendations for enhancing reading instruction. The study seeks to contribute to both academic discourse and practical teaching by offering evidence-based insights into the effective development of reading competence among pupils.

Although lots of researches were made on the theme of development of reading competence of pupils we may still contribute towards the researches done by many other researchers and scholars by investigating and using new methods and approaches to develop reading competence.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The development of reading competence in foreign language education has been widely studied across various educational contexts. Scholars agree that reading is not only a foundational linguistic skill but also a critical component of communicative competence.

Russian researchers such as Galskova N.D. and Minyar-Beloruchev R.K. have contributed significantly to the theory of foreign language teaching. Galskova (2006) emphasizes the integration of communicative and cognitive goals in developing reading competence, noting that reading activities should reflect real-life language use. Minyar-Beloruchev (1990) underlines the methodological importance of text complexity, authenticity, and cultural context in fostering reading skills among language learners.

American scholars have also explored reading competence from pedagogical and cognitive perspectives. Grabe and Stoller (2002) identify reading as a multifaceted process involving decoding, comprehension, and critical analysis. They advocate for a strategic reading approach that encourages students to actively engage with texts. Similarly, Krashen (1989) introduces the concept of "comprehensible input," highlighting the importance of extensive reading in natural language acquisition and competence building. In the Uzbek context, educators such as Jalolov J.J. and Rakhmatova Sh. have emphasized the integration of national educational standards with communicative and interactive methods in language learning. Jalolov (2009) stresses the need for age-appropriate and culturally relevant texts to develop reading skills effectively. Rakhmatova (2021) highlights the role of formative assessment and differentiated instruction in reading lessons to support pupils with varying proficiency levels.

Collectively, these perspectives contribute to a holistic understanding of how reading competence can be nurtured through scientifically grounded and methodologically

sound approaches in foreign language classrooms. The convergence of international and local experiences underscores the importance of contextualization and learner-centered pedagogy.

## **METHODS/METHODOLOGIES**

This research is grounded in both qualitative and action research methodologies, combining classroom-based observation, student task analysis, and teacher interviews to explore the effectiveness of methods used in developing reading competence among 9th-grade pupils.

The study draws on the communicative approach outlined by Galskova (2006) and Minyar-Beloruchev (1990), focusing on authentic reading tasks that integrate language input with cultural content. Lessons are structured to promote not only comprehension but also engagement with real-world themes, reflecting Galskova's emphasis on the cognitive and cultural dimensions of reading.

Krashen's (1989) theory of comprehensible input provides the foundation for the text selection, ensuring that reading materials are age-appropriate and linguistically accessible to foster natural acquisition and learner motivation. In parallel, Grabe and Stoller's (2002) strategy-based instruction model is employed through pre-reading predictions, while-reading scaffolding, and post-reading discussions to improve comprehension and critical thinking.

Within the Uzbek context, the research applies Jalolov's (2009) recommendations on text appropriateness and educational alignment. Reading tasks are chosen from the national curriculum (specifically the Prepare textbook) and adapted to suit learners' interests and linguistic readiness. In-class formative assessments and scaffolded tasks are modeled on the methods described by Rakhmatova (2021), focusing on differentiated instruction and pupil autonomy. To gather data, the following methods were used: Diagnostic pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in reading competence. Classroom observation protocols to evaluate student engagement during reading tasks. Teacher surveys and interviews to gather qualitative insights into

methodological choices and challenges. Student reflections and journals to assess perceived improvements and interest in reading. This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how theoretical principles are applied in practice and how they influence the development of reading competence in the foreign language classroom.

The variety of methods were used in the research which was done at rural school number 6 in Uychi district. The number of 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils was 29. All of them were gathered and divided into 2 groups, one of which was experimental and the other one was control. The length of experiment was 4 weeks. During this period of time all of the pupils were involved, all of the participants were active during the lessons, which lasted for 45 minutes.

## **PROCESS STEPS**

Before beginning the research a survey designed for English teachers was administered to understand the existing methods and challenges in reading instruction and another survey for 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils was also taken to assess their current level of reading competence and to compare the results at the end of it. The research was conducted in several well-structured stages to ensure a systematic exploration of how reading competence can be developed and enhanced in a foreign language classroom.

To compare the pupils' progress in reading comprehension another survey was taken from them. Reading texts were selected from the "Prepare" textbook, with a focus on the final units relevant to students' interests and the national curriculum. Texts were chosen based on Krashen's (1989) principle of comprehensible input, ensuring they were both age-appropriate and linguistically accessible.

Pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities were developed based. Activities included prediction tasks, guided comprehension questions, vocabulary context exercises, summarizing tasks, and dramatization activities.

For pre-reading activity was chosen the activity which was called "mystery bag". The objective of it was to spark curiosity and activate background knowledge related to the

reading topic. In this activity the teacher prepares a small bag with 3-5 mystery items related to the text, the teacher shows the objects one by one and pupils are divided into two groups and share predictions about the text.

As for while-reading activities, a very interesting activity was chosen which is called “Read and highlight” (Color coded focus). Here the pupils read a section of the text and they are asked to highlight or underline the important facts in green, new and interesting vocabulary in yellow and confusing parts or questions in red. This improves active reading and attention, students become more aware of what they understand, don’t understand and what they find useful. The next activity was called “Dialogue creator” in which the teacher chooses a descriptive or narrative paragraph from the text that doesn’t include direct speech. The students work in pairs and create a short dialogue that might take place between two characters in that scene. They performed the dialogue and shared it in class. This helps students engage creatively and interpret characters’ thought and motives.

For post-reading activities was chosen summarizing or one sentence summary. After reading, each student had to write a one-sentence summary of the passage and they share and compare their sentences in groups. This enhanced comprehension and helped students identify main ideas.

Over a 4-week period, lessons were conducted using the designed methods. Each class followed a structured plan that incorporated communicative and cognitive engagement

Teachers observed students’ engagement, participation, and comprehension throughout each lesson. Pupils also completed short reflective journals about what they understood, found interesting, or struggled with after each session.

After the instructional period, a post-test was administered to assess progress in reading comprehension. Results were compared with the pre-test to measure improvements and identify effective strategies.

In-depth interviews with teachers were conducted to evaluate the practicality, effectiveness, and challenges of the applied methods. These insights were analyzed alongside student outcomes to draw final conclusions.

## TOOLS

Lots of and variety of tools were used during this research. The aim of them was to know how effective they were in the experiment and to get to know their results at the end of this research. Many English language teachers were involved into the survey in the google forms platform which was taken at the beginning of it and both experimental and control groups participated in the paper based survey taken at the beginning and at the end of the research.

## ANALYSING DATA/RESULTS

The table below presents the comparative results of the control group and the experimental one in developing reading competence. The control group was taught using traditional reading instructions and methods, while the experimental group was exposed to interactive and strategy-based methods.

Group	No. of pupils	Pre-test Avg.	Post-test Avg.	Progress Improvement	Category
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Control	14	52.3	59.1	6.8	Low Group
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Experimental Group	15	51.7	75.6	23.9	High
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The data clearly shows that the experimental group demonstrated a significant improvement in reading competence with a progress rate of 23.9%, which falls into the High improvement category. In contrast, the control group achieved only a 6.8% increase, categorized as Low improvement. These results provide strong evidence that interactive methods, such as task-based reading, vocabulary context training, and prediction strategies, are more effective in enhancing pupils' reading skills in foreign language education.

## ANALYSING A SURVEY TAKEN FROM 9<sup>TH</sup> FORM PUPILS



A SURVEY FOR THE 9<sup>th</sup> GRADE PUPILS

Part 1: Self-Assessment of Reading Skills

(Circle the best answer for you)

1. I can understand the main idea of a short text in English.

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

2. I can understand new words from context when I read in English.

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

3. I enjoy reading English texts.

- a) Strongly agree
- b) Agree
- c) Not sure
- d) Disagree
- e) Strongly disagree

4. I use a dictionary or translator when I don't understand a word in English.

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

5. I feel confident reading in English without help.

a) Strongly agree

b) Agree

c) Not sure

d) Disagree

e) Strongly disagree

Part 2: Reading Habits

6. How often do you read English texts (stories, articles, websites, etc.) outside the classroom?

- a) Every day
- b) A few times a week
- c) Once a week
- d) Rarely
- e) Never

7. What type of English texts do you usually read? (You can choose more than one)

- ☐ Short stories
- ☐ Textbook passages
- ☐ Social media posts
- ☐ Song lyrics
- ☐ News article

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Here is the survey for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils taken at school.

As for the first question about understanding the main idea of a short story most pupils reported that they “Often” or “Sometimes” understand the main idea. A smaller number selected “Always,” while few chose “Rarely.” While many students show developing comprehension, full confidence is still emerging. More practice with main idea identification is needed.

As for the second question about understanding new words from the context the responses were spread across “Often,” “Sometimes,” and “Rarely.” Only a few pupils chose “Always.” Pupils are still acquiring the skill of contextual guessing. Focused instruction on using clues within texts can enhance vocabulary inference.

To the third question about enjoying reading responses leaned toward “Agree” and “Strongly agree,” though some pupils were “Not sure.” Very few chose negative options. There is a generally positive attitude toward reading, but for some students reading may still feel like a task rather than an enjoyable activity.



In the 4<sup>th</sup> question about using a dictionary or translator the majority of pupils selected “Often” or “Sometimes,” showing that translation tools are widely used. Students rely heavily on support tools. There is room to train them in guessing meaning from context and building vocabulary memory.

To the question if they feel confident about reading competence many pupils answered “Not sure” or “Agree,” while some chose “Disagree.” Confidence in reading independently is developing, but not yet strong. Guided reading and encouragement can help improve self-assurance.

Most pupils chose “Rarely” or “Once a week.” A smaller number selected “A few times a week” or “Every day.” To the 6<sup>th</sup> question English reading outside class is limited. Encouraging reading through homework, reading clubs, or digital platforms could increase engagement.

As for the question about what type of English texts they usually read

most selected Textbook passages and Social media posts. Others also marked Song lyrics and Short stories. Pupils are exposed to simple and familiar text types. Expanding access to varied and level-appropriate authentic materials will support development.

### Overall Summary

The 29 pupils demonstrated:

Basic but growing comprehension and vocabulary strategies.

A generally positive attitude toward English reading.

Frequent reliance on dictionaries or translators.

Limited reading beyond classroom tasks.

These insights suggest that students would benefit from more structured strategy training, regular exposure to engaging texts, and encouragement to build reading habits.

The foundation is present, and with guided support, reading competence can be significantly improved.

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this research was to investigate the scientific and methodological foundations of developing reading competence among 9th grade pupils in the context of foreign language education. The study was grounded in the understanding that reading competence is not merely the ability to decode words, but a complex set of skills involving comprehension, vocabulary development, strategy use, and engagement with diverse text types.

The research process was structured in several key stages: initial diagnostics, implementation of differentiated teaching methods, observation of pupil behavior, a survey of reading attitudes and strategies, and a final comparative assessment of progress. This multifaceted design allowed for a thorough analysis of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading competence.

At the outset, a diagnostic test was conducted to evaluate baseline reading skills among pupils. The results showed that many students had limited abilities in identifying main ideas, inferring vocabulary from context, and reading independently. These initial findings informed the selection of teaching strategies used during the experimental phase.

During the intervention stage, an experimental group was taught using interactive and strategy-based approaches, such as pre-reading tasks, vocabulary prediction, contextual guessing, skimming and scanning techniques, and post-reading discussions. The control group, meanwhile, received conventional instruction focused on textbook-based reading and vocabulary memorization. This pedagogical contrast allowed the research to examine the practical impact of methodological innovation.

The survey instrument, administered to all 29 pupils, provided additional insights into their self-perception, reading habits, and motivational factors. While many pupils expressed a positive attitude toward reading, the data also revealed a reliance on external

aids like dictionaries and limited engagement with reading outside the classroom. These findings align with the diagnostic data, reinforcing the importance of cultivating autonomous learning strategies and reading fluency.

The post-test results revealed a significant difference between the two groups. Pupils in the experimental group showed markedly higher progress in comprehension, vocabulary use, and confidence. This improvement demonstrates that reading competence is significantly influenced by the methods and materials used in instruction. The experimental group also showed greater enjoyment and motivation toward reading, emphasizing the link between emotional engagement and academic performance.

Moreover, the research affirmed that developing reading competence requires an integration of scientific theory—such as the communicative approach, constructivist principles, and Bloom’s taxonomy—with methodological practice, including scaffolding, formative assessment, and learner-centered instruction.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, this research confirms that methodologically informed, interactive, and student-focused instruction has a profound impact on learners’ reading competence in a foreign language. It underscores the need for ongoing teacher training, the inclusion of authentic reading materials, and the creation of an environment where reading is viewed as both a skill and a lifelong habit.

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