

The theory of developing students' communicative competence based on the Pirls International Assessment Program

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to develop a theoretical framework for enhancing students' communicative competence by integrating principles and methodologies from the PIRLS International Assessment Program. Specifically, the objective is to identify how the PIRLS approach to reading literacy can inform the development of students' abilities to comprehend, interpret, and communicate effectively across diverse contexts.

Research/methodology: This article employed conceptual, analytical, comparative, and systematic methods to explore the role of the PIRLS international assessment program in fostering students' communicative competence. It analyzed PIRLS alongside other global assessment systems such as PISA, TALIS, EGRA, and TIMSS, linking their frameworks to competency-based education approaches. The study also examined how PIRLS is implemented in Uzbekistan compared to developed countries, supported by official documents and legal frameworks.

Results: Uzbekistan has strategically adopted international standards to enhance education quality, as outlined in Presidential Decree No. 5712 and Resolution No. 997, which mandate the implementation of assessments like PIRLS and the development of a national question bank. The PIRLS framework is central to the country's plan to establish a national evaluation system focused on primary students' literacy in reading, math, and science. Beyond benchmarking, PIRLS serves as both a diagnostic tool and a means to improve educational practices and address disparities within the system.

Conclusions: The PIRLS program is an important tool for improving students' communicative competence and reading literacy. In Uzbekistan, it is now seen as a way to raise educational standards rather than just a control method. This shift supports curriculum improvement, modern teaching methods, and better student communication skills.

Limitations: This study is conceptually grounded and does not include empirical data or field-based validation, which may limit the generalizability of its conclusions. Additionally, the analysis primarily focuses on the Uzbek education system, so its applicability to other national contexts may vary.

Contribution: This study contributes by offering a theoretical perspective on how the PIRLS assessment program can be leveraged to enhance communicative competence in primary education systems.

Keywords: *Communication, Competency, Development, Education, Globalization, Integration, Quality, Pedagogy, Society, Strategy, Technology*

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1. Introduction

The rapid renewal of social processes on a global scale demands accelerated development in the field of education as well. In developed countries, the PIRLS international assessment program is used to monitor trends in educational achievements, identify weaknesses in the system, ensure equity, and evaluate the quality of education provided to a new generation capable of effectively participating in all societal processes (Khabibjonov & Sakibayeva, 2024). The use of the PIRLS program to assess primary school students has become increasingly relevant for improving the quality of education (Pongsophon, 2024). More than one hundred countries around the world are participating in international assessment studies in order to objectively evaluate the quality of education implemented in their countries and assess students' reading literacy. Indeed, most of the studies conducted by the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) involve assessing students' academic performance in one or more subjects or based on interdisciplinary integration. This helps to conduct an in-depth analysis of educational processes both globally and within individual countries (Stiff, Lenkeit, Hopfenbeck, Kayton, & McGrane, 2023).

In the global community, there has been a shift from assessing students' ability to memorize curricula toward evaluating their competencies that is, their ability to apply the knowledge acquired at school in real-life situations, as well as to develop and assess their creative and logical thinking skills. In our country, special attention is being given to the creation of a national system for assessing the quality of education based on the PIRLS program, which measures primary school students' reading and comprehension levels, with the aim of implementing international programs for evaluating education quality within the public education system (Yusupalieva, 2024). The PIRLS international assessment program is important not only for primary school graduates but also for older students, as it helps them successfully continue to the next stages of education, find their place in social life, and gradually improve their level of competence (Farmonovna, 2025). Therefore, it is essential that both teachers and students view this assessment program not as a "testing tool" or "control method", but as an "opportunity to improve the education system", as required by the needs of the present time (Murphy, Little, & Bjork, 2023).

While numerous studies have explored communicative competence in the context of language learning and literacy, most have focused on pedagogical strategies without grounding them in internationally standardized assessment frameworks. Existing literature often treats communicative competence and reading literacy as separate constructs, overlooking the interdependent nature of comprehension, interpretation, and expression. Furthermore, limited theoretical work has attempted to integrate insights from the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) into a broader theory of communicative competence development, especially in primary education. This gap hinders the ability of educators to apply internationally benchmarked frameworks like PIRLS in shaping communication skills holistically.

This study aims to develop a theoretical framework for enhancing students' communicative competence by integrating principles and methodologies from the PIRLS International Assessment Program. Specifically, the objective is to identify how the PIRLS approach to reading literacy can inform the development of students' abilities to comprehend, interpret, and communicate effectively across diverse contexts. By doing so, the research seeks to bridge the gap between literacy assessment standards and communication-based pedagogy, thereby contributing to more comprehensive educational strategies for primary school students.

2. Literature review

2.1. Literature Review

Communicative competence is a concept introduced by Dell Hymes as an extension of Chomsky's linguistic competence. It refers to the ability not only to produce grammatically correct sentences but

also to use language appropriately in social and cultural contexts (Mardiana, 2024). This theory emphasizes that language learning involves knowing when, how, and to whom to speak. It integrates both linguistic rules and sociocultural norms of communication. Therefore, communicative competence is essential for real-life interaction and is broader than mere grammatical knowledge (Dara, Soomro, Ny, Hong, & Elshamy, 2024).

Canale and Swain expanded Hymes' theory by breaking communicative competence into four components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and word formation. Sociolinguistic competence involves the use of language that is socially and culturally appropriate. Discourse competence relates to the ability to construct coherent and cohesive texts. Strategic competence involves using communication strategies to overcome difficulties in understanding or expressing oneself (Mootoosamy & Aryadoust, 2024).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an instructional approach focused on developing students' communicative competence through real-life language use. CLT emphasizes interaction and authentic communication as core to language learning (Mislawiyadi, 2023). It encourages students to engage in tasks such as discussions, simulations, and role-plays that reflect daily communication. Students are thus exposed not only to linguistic structures but also to practical language use. This method is widely implemented in language curricula worldwide (Qasserras, 2023).

Integrating communicative competence theories with the PIRLS reading framework enriches the understanding of how students develop communication skills. Reading is viewed as a communicative act between author and reader, involving meaning construction. Thus, reading literacy becomes a vital component of communicative competence, particularly in written language contexts. Instruction should aim to develop both reading and communication in tandem. This integrated approach helps prepare students for real-world communication challenges (Nahdi, Yunitasari, Arianti, Atiaturrahmaniah, & Usuluddin, 2024).

The theories of communicative competence and reading literacy offer important implications for language education. Educators must design instructional approaches that address all dimensions of language use speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Tabasi, Tondowala, Tupamahu, Sigilipu, & Ayu Kartika Septiana, 2024). Teaching should be contextual, interactive, and learner-centered to reflect real communication scenarios (Bendixen, Daveronis, & Kennair, 2018). By applying models like CLT and PIRLS, teachers can develop students' language abilities more holistically. This theoretical integration supports lifelong learning and global communication skills.

2.2. Hypothesis

Developing students' communicative competence requires a multidimensional approach that integrates both linguistic and cognitive skills. The PIRLS assessment framework, which evaluates students' reading comprehension across various cognitive processes, offers valuable insights into how reading literacy contributes to broader language abilities. Given that reading involves interpretation, inference, and the evaluation of meaning, it aligns closely with the components of communicative competence such as discourse and strategic competence. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that incorporating PIRLS-based strategies into language instruction will significantly enhance students' overall communicative competence. This hypothesis assumes that students exposed to literacy tasks modeled after PIRLS will demonstrate improved ability to comprehend and communicate effectively across both oral and written modalities.

3. Research methodology

This scientific article was prepared using conceptual, analytical, comparative, and systematic methods. Finding the function and usefulness of the PIRLS international assessment program in fostering communicative competence was the primary goal. International education assessment systems, specifically the methods used in PIRLS, PISA, TALIS, EGRA, and TIMSS, were studied as a

methodological foundation, and competency-based approaches were subsequently examined in light of this.

Methodological techniques including analytical-methodological analysis, conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, and the examination of normative-legal underpinnings were used in the study. Specifically, the PIRLS program's methodology, goals, and evaluation standards were thoroughly examined using the analytical-methodological approach, along with the program's effects on students' communication and text-processing abilities. The theoretical underpinnings of communicative competence were discovered and connected to the PIRLS framework's assessment criteria through conceptual analysis. The planning and execution of the PIRLS program in Uzbekistan's educational system was also contrasted with the experiences of developed nations using comparative analysis, revealing similarities and differences. The function and future of the PIRLS program within the national education system were also made clear by the examination of normative-legal underpinnings, which was based on official documents like Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 997 and Presidential Decree No. DP-5712.

The research's practical component involved evaluating the reading and comprehension abilities of primary school pupils in order to examine the phases of communicative competence development. Furthermore, the potential for integrating contemporary educational technologies with PIRLS standards was also examined. Through the evaluation of their reading and comprehension skills, the phases of primary school pupils' communicative skill development were investigated from a practical standpoint. All things considered, the PIRLS program has been scientifically validated as a tool for evaluating reading literacy as well as an efficient way to foster critical life skills, especially communicative skills, in contemporary education. These methods demonstrated the PIRLS program's theoretical and practical importance in fostering life skills, particularly communicative competence, in addition to reading literacy.

4. Results and discussions

In recent years, the profound reforms and significant transformations taking place in our country have required a re-evaluation of all spheres of human life through new perspectives, concepts, and approaches shaped by globalization and integration processes. Nowadays, globalization and integration processes are reflected in every field across the world. Education has also become a priority area of state policy, and reforms have been initiated to develop it based on new and innovative ideas. The changes occurring in society and daily life have laid the groundwork for introducing innovative approaches into the education system and for accelerating the integration processes among education, science, and production. As a result, the implementation of innovative solutions in the educational process has become one of the pressing issues of the day. Studying international experiences and implementing the requirements of international standards into the system play a significant role in improving the quality and effectiveness of education. It is essential to examine global practices in assessing education quality, engage in comparative analysis with the existing system, closely cooperate with international and foreign organizations, implement international assessment projects, and enhance a suitable national evaluation system that meets modern demands. In the Presidential Decree No. 5712 of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 29, 2019, "On approval of the Concept for the development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030", it is stated that by the year 2030, Uzbekistan aims to be among the top 30 leading countries in international student assessment program rankings.

The PIRLS international assessment program should be regarded not merely as a testing mechanism or control method, but as a strategic opportunity to enhance the education system. According to Presidential Decree No. 5712, the key objectives of Uzbekistan's public education reform include ensuring access to quality education aligned with the innovative economic agenda, global best practices, and modern societal needs. Additionally, the development of human capital is emphasized as a fundamental factor in enhancing student competitiveness both in the national context and in the broader labor market (O'gli & Dolimovich, 2024).

Resolution No. 997 of the Cabinet of Ministers, titled “On measures for organizing international studies in the field of education quality assessment in the public education system,” outlines critical implementation priorities. These include conducting educational reforms based on findings from international assessment studies and developing a national database of standardized questions from global programs such as PIRLS and PISA. The integration of these questions into the national curriculum is aimed at aligning local educational standards with internationally recognized benchmarks.

The practical efforts being carried out in the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with the adoption of a government resolution on the organization of international studies in assessing education quality, and the establishment of cooperation with reputable organizations such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), hold significant importance for the development of the national education system.

Chapter Three of the “Concept for the development of the public education system of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030” states that a key objective is to establish a national system for assessing the quality of education based on the PIRLS program. This system aims to evaluate students’ literacy levels in reading, mathematics, and science subjects, specifically by assessing primary school students’ reading comprehension skills within the framework of international education quality assessment programs.

PIRLS is an international program for studying reading comprehension, which assesses how well primary school students in different countries read and understand texts. It also provides an opportunity to identify differences within national education systems (Ahmadaliyeva, 2025). The purpose of studying PIRLS is to compare the reading comprehension levels of fourth-grade students across different countries, as well as to identify disparities in reading literacy within national education systems. According to the international glossary of the study, “reading literacy” is defined as a person’s ability to fully express themselves in life and to understand and logically interpret various written languages necessary to achieve their goals (Hernández-Torrano & Courtney, 2021; Shukulloyevna, 2025).

The PIRLS assessment system is a vital tool for accomplishing strategic objectives like guaranteeing equity and producing a generation that is prepared to contribute to society, in addition to being used in developed nations to gauge the quality and equity of education. The fact that competency-based approaches, especially those used in international programs like PIRLS, PISA, and TALIS, aid in assessing students’ capacity to apply newly learned material in practical contexts is another crucial feature. Consequently, this provides an essential theoretical basis for the growth of communicative competence. PIRLS is now seen by the Uzbek educational system as a chance to innovate and enhance the system rather than just as a “monitoring tool”. Teachers and education specialists now have additional duties as a result, like improving methodological approaches and implementing competency-based assessment systems. By evaluating reading literacy as well as critical communicative skills like clarity and coherence in communication, analytical and critical thinking, and the capacity to articulate ideas in a question-and-answer format, the PIRLS program supports the fundamental goals of contemporary education.

5. Conclusion

In contemporary education, the PIRLS international assessment program is a crucial theoretical and practical instrument for determining and enhancing students’ communicative competence in addition to their reading literacy. This program develops critical abilities like text comprehension and analysis, coherent thought expression, and real-world communication. The way this assessment program is approached in Uzbekistan’s educational system is gradually evolving, with a growing propensity to see it as a chance to raise educational standards rather than as a “control tool”. This change helps students become globally competitive and improves teachers’ methodological approaches in addition to encouraging the modernization of educational content. According to analyses carried out within the PIRLS framework, students’ communicative competence is a fundamental component of their ability to think independently, participate in communication effectively, and become socially active individuals. Thus, among today’s most urgent tasks are developing an assessment system that is in line with

international standards, updating pedagogical technologies, and improving curricula based on PIRLS results.

5.1 Limitations and Future Study

This study is conceptually grounded and does not include empirical data or field-based validation, which may limit the generalizability of its conclusions. Additionally, the analysis primarily focuses on the Uzbek education system, so its applicability to other national contexts may vary. Future research should incorporate longitudinal data on students' communicative competence and reading performance, as well as comparative studies between countries implementing PIRLS to identify best practices and policy impacts.

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