

## THE CONTENT AND IMPORTANCE OF READING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LESSONS

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**Annotation.** *This article explores the content and significance of reading competence in English language education in Uzbekistan within the framework of ongoing educational reforms. It examines various definitions and components of reading competence, emphasizing the importance of linguistic competence, vocabulary development, grammatical knowledge, and morphological awareness in fostering effective reading skills. The study highlights that reading competence is a multifaceted process involving decoding, comprehension, and critical thinking, which are essential for academic success and functional language use. The research connects international theoretical perspectives with the local educational context, providing a framework to improve English reading instruction aligned with global standards.*

**Keywords:** Reading competence, English language education, reading comprehension, linguistic competence, vocabulary development, grammar knowledge, morphological awareness, ESL, second language acquisition, critical reading skills, language teaching reforms, Uzbekistan education

**Annotatsiya.** *Ushbu maqolada O‘zbekistonda amalga oshirilayotgan ta’lim islohotlari doirasida ingliz tili ta’limida o‘qish malakasining mazmuni va ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. O‘qish malakasining turli ta’riflari va komponentlari ko‘rib chiqiladi, tilviy malaka, lug‘at boyligi, grammatik bilim va morfologik tushunishning samarali o‘qish ko‘nikmalarini shakllantirishdagi ahamiyati ta’kidlanadi. Tadqiqotda o‘qish malakasi tushunish, tahlil va tanqidiy fikrlashni o‘z ichiga olgan ko‘p qirrali jarayon ekani ta’kidlanadi. Xalqaro nazariy qarashlar mahalliy ta’lim sharoiti bilan bog‘lanib, ingliz tilida o‘qishni rivojlantirish uchun zamonaviy standartlarga muvofiq yondashuv taklif etiladi.*

**Kalit so‘zlar:** *O‘qish malakasi, ingliz tili ta’limi, matnni tushunish, lingvistik malaka, lug‘at boyligi, grammatik bilim, morfologik xabardorlik, ingliz tili ikkinchi til sifatida, ikkinchi tilni o‘rganish, tanqidiy o‘qish ko‘nikmalari, til ta’limi islohotlari, O‘zbekiston ta’limi*

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of New Uzbekistan, increasing emphasis is being placed on language education—particularly the teaching of English—mirroring progress across many other sectors. As the President of Uzbekistan has stated, “English is the key to knowledge, progress, and development. We are nurturing a generation capable of speaking, writing, and conducting research in this language.” Learning English in alignment with international standards is creating wide-ranging opportunities for our youth to engage with the global

community. In support of this, starting from September 1, 2021, a special Presidential Award was established to recognize schools that achieve outstanding results in foreign language instruction.

Despite these advancements, one of the most critical—and often most challenging— aspects of English language education remains the teaching of reading comprehension. Many learners find this skill difficult, making it essential to develop and apply simple yet interactive methods for effective instruction. Building reading competence must begin with a clear understanding of its underlying meaning.

**Literature review.** Reading competence has long been recognized as a fundamental component of second language acquisition, particularly in the context of English language education. Numerous scholars have contributed to a deeper understanding of what reading competence entails and why it is essential for learners, especially in multilingual and developing educational environments such as Uzbekistan.

Díez-Mediavilla and Egío define reading competence as "the ability to extract specific information within a given context." This definition emphasizes the functional aspect of reading—how learners interact with texts to achieve specific purposes. Their perspective aligns with communicative approaches to language learning, which prioritize meaningful use of language over rote memorization. Expanding on this, Burt, Peyton, and Adams view reading competence as a multi-component process. According to them, reading involves not only decoding written text but also drawing on vocabulary knowledge and applying appropriate strategies to facilitate comprehension. This view is supported by research in psycholinguistics and educational psychology, which identifies reading as a complex integration of linguistic and cognitive skills.

A more analytical dimension is introduced by Freeley and Steinberg, who focus on critical reading skills. They argue that competence in reading includes the ability to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate written texts. This approach places importance on higher-order thinking skills, which are especially important in academic and professional settings, and are essential for learners of English as a second language (ESL). Mary J. Schleppegrell offers an applied linguistic perspective, suggesting that reading competence also includes mastery of academic language, as well as understanding various genres and structural conventions used in formal texts. Her research is particularly relevant to educational contexts where English is taught as a subject in schools, emphasizing the need to go beyond basic literacy to academic proficiency.

Collectively, these scholars present a multifaceted view of reading competence, one that integrates decoding, comprehension strategies, critical analysis, and genre awareness. Such an approach is essential for English learners in Uzbekistan, where reforms in language education aim to align with international standards and foster functional language use among students.

**Methodology.** This article employs a qualitative research approach to explore the content and importance of reading competence in the context of English language education in Uzbekistan. The study is grounded in theoretical analysis, drawing on both national

educational policies and international academic perspectives to examine how reading skills are defined, taught, and developed.

### **Data Sources and Collection**

The methodology is based on a review of:

- Official educational policy documents from the Republic of Uzbekistan, particularly those related to language education reforms and the promotion of English learning in schools.
- Scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks from researchers such as Díez-Mediavilla, Egío, Burt, Peyton, Adams, Freeley, Steinberg, and Schleppegrell, whose works focus on reading comprehension and competence in second language acquisition.
- The selection of these sources was guided by their relevance to the topic and their contributions to defining reading competence from cognitive, linguistic, and pedagogical perspectives.

### **Analytical Approach**

A conceptual synthesis method was used to analyze and compare definitions and frameworks of reading competence. Key themes such as decoding, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension strategies, critical thinking, and academic language were identified and integrated into a unified understanding of reading competence.

Additionally, the study connects these international perspectives to the educational context of Uzbekistan, particularly within the reforms of the “New Uzbekistan” agenda. This includes reference to recent initiatives such as the Presidential Award for Foreign Language Excellence, introduced in 2021, which highlights the nation’s commitment to improving English language instruction.

Provide educators and curriculum developers with a clear, research-informed framework for developing students' reading skills.

This methodology does not involve primary data collection (e.g., classroom observations or student assessments) but instead focuses on theoretical grounding and policy-contextual analysis to contribute to academic discourse and inform future empirical studies.

Reading competence is a multi-dimensional concept encompassing several interrelated skills. One of its foundational components is linguistic competence (language knowledge). This involves an interconnected set of skills that allows learners to comprehend written texts at the word, sentence, and discourse level. Without a solid grasp of the linguistic features of the language, learners face difficulties not only in decoding but also in understanding and interpreting what they read. Understanding sentence structure is especially important for accurately interpreting text. Although English word order is somewhat flexible compared to other languages, certain grammatical features—such as subject-verb agreement, tense, and determiners—play a critical role in conveying precise meaning. Syntactic and grammatical awareness helps learners:

- Identify the roles of sentence components (subject, object, verb);
- Interpret complex sentences (e.g., relative clauses or passive constructions);

- Understand tense and cause-effect relationships through verb forms and conjunctions.

Additionally, articles, prepositions, and modal verbs often carry subtle nuances that influence how an entire passage is understood. A rich and expanding vocabulary is arguably the most crucial factor in reading comprehension. During reading, vocabulary knowledge enables learners to infer meaning from context, understand nuanced expressions—such as idioms ("spill the beans" = to reveal a secret), collocations ("make a decision"), and domain-specific terminology (e.g., "photosynthesis" in scientific texts). A limited vocabulary becomes a significant barrier, particularly when reading academic or literary texts. Learners with insufficient linguistic knowledge encounter various difficulties (see Diagram 1.1).

Another important skill is the ability to recognize morphemic structure—understanding how prefixes, suffixes, and roots alter a word's meaning and grammatical function. By analyzing these components, learners can deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words, improving their language proficiency. This is especially relevant for English, a language rich in derivational and inflectional morphology. Thus, linguistic competence is not an optional add-on; it is the foundation of reading comprehension. For English language instruction to be effective, linguistic development must be integrated with reading activities. These components should not be treated as separate domains.

**Findings and Discussion.** In exploring the components of reading competence, it becomes evident that linguistic competence plays a foundational role. This includes grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, and morphological awareness—all of which are essential for decoding and interpreting texts effectively.

### *1. Grammatical Knowledge and Sentence Structure*

Comprehension is closely tied to a learner's understanding of sentence grammar. Accurate interpretation of subject-verb agreement, tense, clause structure, and conjunctions enables learners to extract logical meaning and follow the flow of information. For example, learners must distinguish between passive and active constructions or understand temporal relationships conveyed through verb tenses.

### *2. Vocabulary Depth and Breadth*

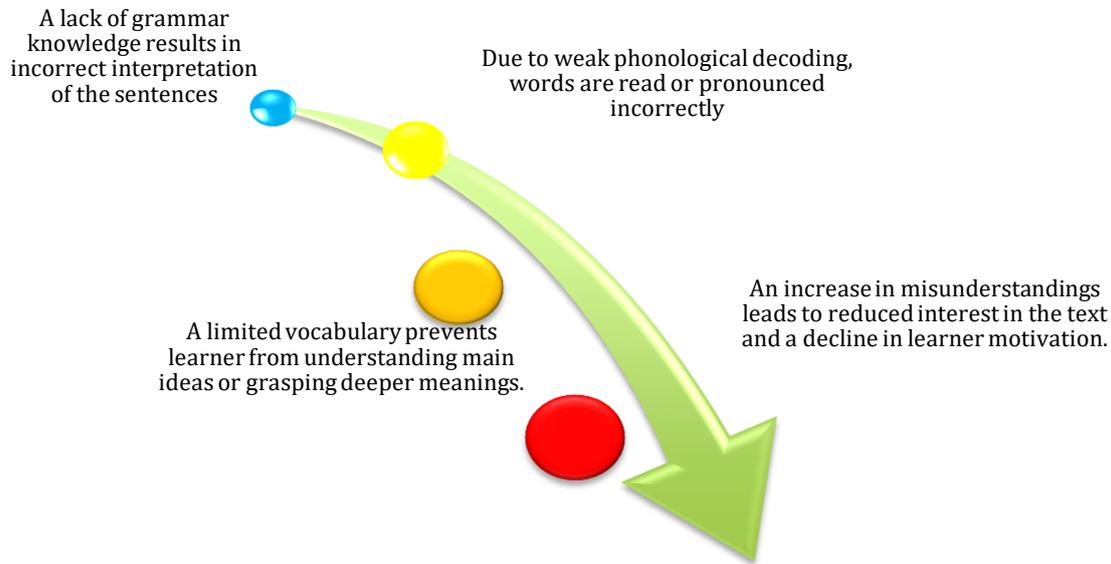
A broad vocabulary allows learners to derive meaning from context, grasp idiomatic expressions, and understand academic terminology. Limited lexical knowledge, on the other hand, creates major obstacles in reading comprehension, particularly when engaging with subject-specific or complex texts.

### *3. Morphological Awareness*

Understanding how affixes and root words construct meaning gives learners tools to decode unfamiliar words. In English, with its rich derivational and inflectional morphology, this skill is essential. It empowers students to expand their vocabulary independently and become more confident readers.

These findings emphasize the need for a holistic approach to reading instruction—one that integrates grammar and vocabulary development with reading activities, rather than

treating them as separate skills. Students must be taught not only to read but to read critically and linguistically.



**Diagram. 1.1. When linguistic knowledge is not enough**

### **Conclusion**

In summary, reading competence in English as a Second Language (ESL) extends far beyond mere word recognition or pronunciation. It encompasses a range of cognitive and metacognitive skills that allow learners to extract meaning, make connections, apply prior knowledge, and critically engage with texts. These processes are essential for academic success, personal growth, and lifelong learning, particularly in an increasingly global and information-driven society.

Cognitive reading skills such as memory, attention, and inference-making help learners not only understand but also analyze and evaluate information. Metacognitive strategies, on the other hand, empower students to monitor their understanding, adjust their reading techniques, and become self-regulated, independent learners. Together, these competencies form the foundation for deeper comprehension and more meaningful interaction with texts.

Fluency, vocabulary development, grammatical knowledge, and cultural awareness all reinforce reading proficiency and ensure that learners can access, process, and communicate information effectively. Reading-rich environments enhance language acquisition holistically—supporting writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills simultaneously. In ESL classrooms, strengthening reading competence opens doors to academic achievement, global citizenship, and full participation in real-world contexts. Given the increasing reliance on reading skills across subjects, standardized assessments, and everyday communication, prioritizing reading in English language instruction is not just beneficial—it is essential.

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