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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING READING LITERACY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract. This article highlights the role and importance of innovative approaches in developing reading literacy in primary school students. Reading literacy is an important factor in shaping students' skills in understanding, analyzing, evaluating the text, and using it in practical activities. The study analyzed the effectiveness of using interactive methods, information and communication technologies, digital educational resources, and modern pedagogical technologies. It also shows the possibilities of developing students' independent thinking, creative approach, and reading culture through innovative approaches. The article scientifically substantiates the advantages of education based on student activity in improving reading literacy and the impact of modern methods on the quality and effectiveness of education. The results of the study confirm that innovative approaches are an effective means of developing reading competencies in primary education.

Keywords: reading literacy, primary education, innovative approaches, interactive methods, digital education, information and communication technologies, reading culture, critical thinking, competency-based approach, educational effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to read fluently and comprehend written text with confidence underpins virtually every subsequent stage of formal education. Pupils who fail to achieve adequate reading proficiency by the end of primary school are known to face compounding academic disadvantages, since reading serves as the primary vehicle through which learners access content across all other disciplines. Despite decades of curriculum reform, many primary education systems continue to rely predominantly on repetitive drill-based reading instruction, which, while effective for basic decoding, often fails to sustain pupil motivation or to develop deeper comprehension skills.

In recent years, a growing body of pedagogical research has explored how gamified, socially collaborative, and digitally enhanced reading activities might address these shortcomings[1]. However, much of this research has been conducted in well-resourced educational contexts, leaving open questions about the feasibility and effectiveness of such innovations in schools with limited technological infrastructure, including many primary schools across Central Asia. Teachers in these contexts frequently express interest in innovative reading pedagogy but report uncertainty about which approaches yield the greatest returns given constrained instructional time and resources[5].

This study investigates the effectiveness of a combined package of low-resource innovative reading approaches implemented over a ten-week period in ordinary primary school classrooms. The research addresses three questions: (1) To what extent do innovative reading approaches improve decoding accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension compared with traditional instruction? (2) Which reading indicator shows the most substantial improvement? (3) What implementation challenges do primary school teachers encounter when adopting these approaches?

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The development of reading literacy is one of the priorities of the modern education system. The reading competence formed at the stage of primary education is considered an important factor that determines the success of students' further educational activities. The scientific research conducted on this problem shows that the use of innovative pedagogical technologies in the learning process gives effective results.

In particular, O'.Q. Tolipov and M. Usmonboyeva's work "Pedagogical Technologies' Applied Foundations" (2006) states that the introduction of modern methods into the educational process develops students' independent thinking and knowledge application skills[3]. N.A. Muslimov, M.H. Usmanbayeva and D.M. Sayfurov's research entitled "Innovative educational technologies" (2015) scientifically substantiates the role of innovative methods in increasing student activity. B.H. Khodjayev's work "Theory and Practice of General Pedagogy" (2017) noted that education organized on the basis of a competency approach serves to develop students' functional literacy[2].

Also, R.J. In Ishmuhamedov's work "Innovative technologies in education" (2016), it is explained that it is possible to increase students' interest in learning through interactive methods. The results of international evaluation programs, in particular, PIRLS studies, also show the importance of forming the skills of working with text, analyzing and drawing conclusions in the development of reading literacy[4].

Theoretical and practical methods were used in the research. The methods of studying, analyzing, comparing and summarizing scientific and pedagogical literature were used as theoretical methods. As practical methods, observation, interview, questionnaire and analysis of students' study results were used. The obtained data were processed on the basis of comparative analysis, and the effectiveness of innovative approaches in the development of reading literacy was evaluated.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 presents baseline and post-intervention scores across five reading literacy indicators for the experimental group. Reading motivation (+31 points) and comprehension (+27 points) showed the largest gains, while decoding accuracy, which was already relatively high at baseline, showed the smallest but still substantial improvement.

Indicator	Baseline (%)	Week 10 (%)	Gain (pts)
Decoding accuracy	61	80	+19
Reading fluency	57	78	+21
Vocabulary	55	76	+21
Reading comprehension	52	79	+27

Reading motivation	54	85	+31

Table 1. Experimental group reading indicator scores at baseline and week 10 (0–100 scale)

Figure 1 compares experimental and control group averages across all five indicators, showing that gains under the innovative reading package substantially exceeded those achieved through traditional instruction alone.

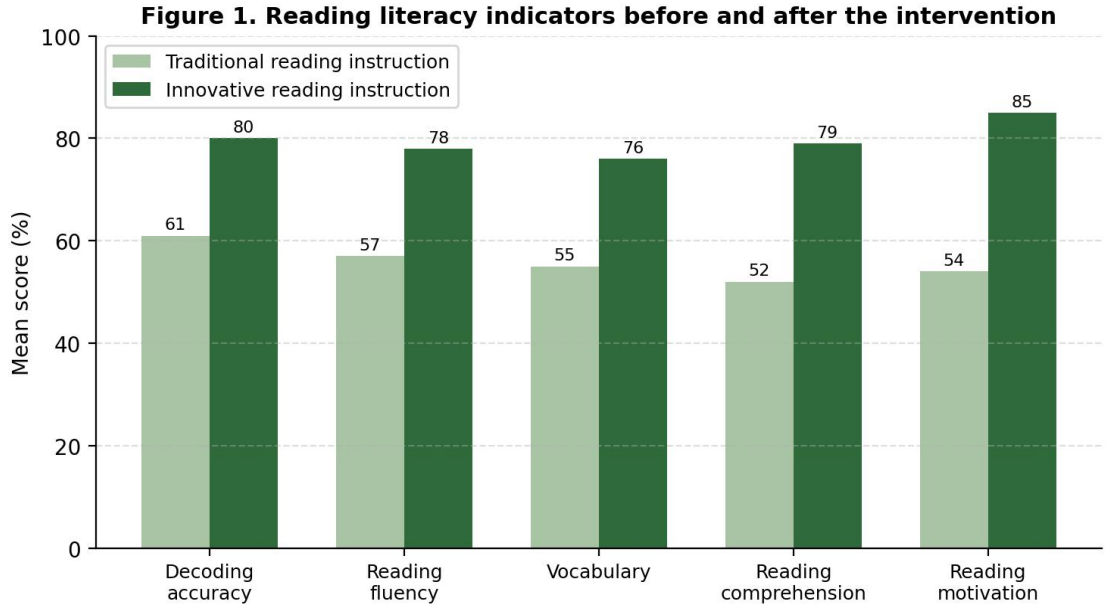


Figure 1. Reading literacy indicators before and after the intervention

Weekly oral reading fluency probes (Figure 2) show a consistent upward trajectory across the ten-week intervention, with the experimental group's average reading rate nearly doubling from 42 words correct per minute in week 1 to 81 words correct per minute in week 10. The rate of improvement was most pronounced between weeks 4 and 8, coinciding with pupils' growing familiarity with the guided repeated-reading routine.

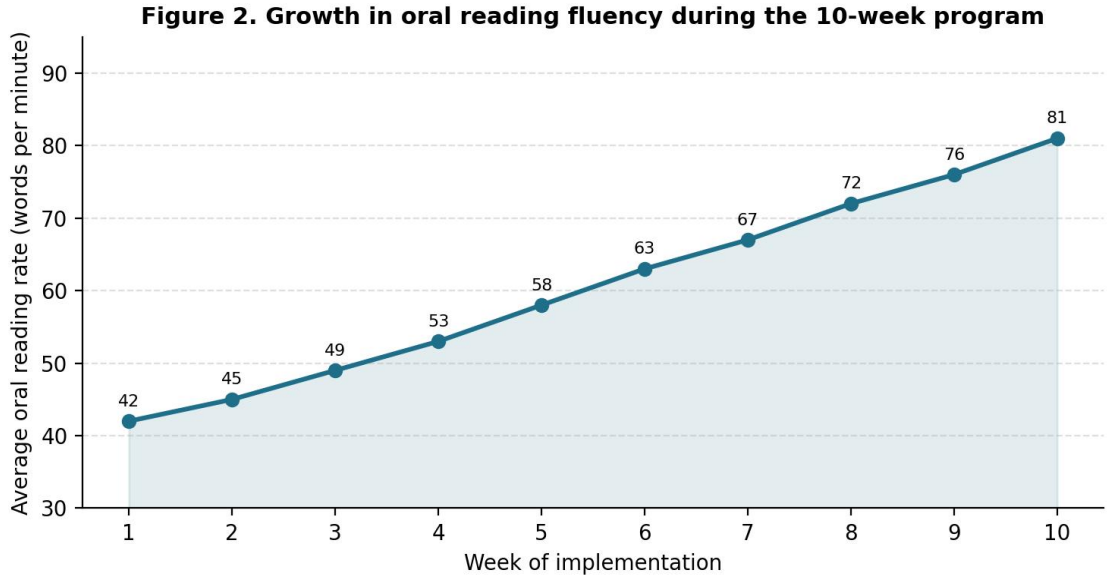


Figure 2. Growth in oral reading fluency during the 10-week program

Thematic analysis of teacher interviews identified three recurring themes: (1) markedly increased pupil enthusiasm for independent and voluntary reading, particularly linked to the phonics-based games and peer-reading circles; (2) logistical challenges in scheduling tablet-based sessions when device access was shared across multiple classes; and (3) a perceived need for a larger bank of leveled, curriculum-aligned digital storybooks to sustain the approach beyond the study period.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that a combined package of playful, socially interactive, and digitally supported reading activities can produce substantial gains in primary school pupils' reading literacy within a relatively short ten-week period. The particularly strong gains in reading motivation and comprehension suggest that innovative approaches may be especially effective at addressing the affective and higher-order cognitive dimensions of reading that traditional drill-based methods often overlook.

The near doubling of oral reading fluency observed in the experimental group is consistent with the view that repeated, guided practice combined with audio modeling provides pupils with both the practice volume and the corrective feedback necessary for rapid fluency gains. The comparatively smaller improvement in decoding accuracy likely reflects a ceiling effect, as baseline decoding scores were already relatively high for this age group.

Teachers' reports of scheduling difficulty around shared digital devices point to a practical constraint that is common in resource-limited primary schools. This suggests that the digital storybook component, while valuable, need not be treated as indispensable; the study's results indicate that gains were also substantially driven by the non-digital components — phonics gamification and peer-reading circles — which require minimal additional resources and could be prioritized in settings with limited technology access[8].

As with any classroom-based intervention study, several limitations warrant caution in interpreting these results. The sample was drawn from a limited number of schools within a single region, the ten-week duration does not permit conclusions about longer-term retention of reading gains, and the absence of random assignment at the pupil level introduces the possibility of selection effects between the experimental and control groups. Future research employing randomized designs and longer follow-up periods would strengthen confidence in these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that innovative, low-resource reading instruction — combining phonics-based gamification, guided repeated reading, peer-reading circles, and limited digital storybook use — can substantially accelerate reading literacy development among primary school pupils within a ten-week period. The most pronounced gains occurred in reading motivation, comprehension, and oral reading fluency, indicating that engagement-oriented instructional design may be as important as decoding drills in building well-rounded early readers. For primary school teachers and curriculum developers, the results suggest that meaningful improvements in reading literacy are achievable without extensive technological investment, provided that instructional time is restructured to prioritize active, socially engaging, and appropriately scaffolded reading practice.

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