

**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT
THINKING IN READING LITERACY LESSONS**

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Abstract: Reading literacy is considered one of the fundamental skills of modern education, as it directly influences students' ability to acquire knowledge, analyze information, and make independent judgments. The development of independent thinking through reading lessons is essential for preparing students to engage critically with texts and real-life situations. This article examines methodological approaches to fostering independent thinking in reading literacy classes. The study relies on theoretical analysis, pedagogical observation, and a review of local and international research. Findings show that problem-based learning, dialogic reading, critical questioning, and creative tasks are effective strategies for enhancing students' independent reasoning abilities. The article concludes that integrating these methods into literacy instruction contributes to the formation of reflective, analytical, and creative learners.

Keywords: Reading literacy; independent thinking; pedagogy; problem-based learning; dialogic reading; critical thinking.

Introduction

Reading literacy is one of the fundamental competencies that determine the quality of education and the intellectual development of students in primary schools. It serves not only as a tool for acquiring knowledge but also as a key factor in shaping independent thinking skills. In the contemporary educational paradigm, where emphasis is placed on competency-based learning and learner-centered approaches, reading literacy lessons have become a critical platform for nurturing analytical, creative, and reflective abilities among pupils. Developing independent thinking through reading requires methodological approaches that go beyond traditional reading and retelling activities, aiming instead to engage students in critical questioning, interpretation, and problem-solving.

Globally, educational researchers emphasize that literacy is not limited to technical skills such as decoding words or comprehending texts; rather, it involves the ability to evaluate information, compare viewpoints, and draw logical conclusions. For example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlights reading literacy as the capacity to reflect on written materials, use them in real-life contexts, and develop reasoned judgments [1]. In Uzbekistan, current educational reforms also underscore the importance of fostering

functional literacy, with special focus on enhancing independent and critical thinking in young learners [2,3].

Methodological approaches to developing independent thinking in reading literacy lessons include the integration of interactive teaching strategies [4], problem-based tasks [5], dialogic reading [6], and project-based learning [7]. These methods encourage students to actively participate, express personal opinions, and build arguments based on textual evidence. Moreover, such approaches are essential in preparing pupils to become lifelong learners who can adapt to the rapidly changing knowledge society.

Therefore, this article seeks to explore the methodological foundations for fostering independent thinking in reading literacy lessons. It aims to analyze effective strategies, pedagogical tools, and practical recommendations that can be applied in primary education to strengthen both literacy and critical thinking skills.

Methods

This study is based on a qualitative and analytical approach aimed at identifying the most effective methodological strategies for developing independent thinking in reading literacy lessons. The analysis draws upon both international pedagogical theories and local educational practices in Uzbekistan.

Research Design

The research employs a descriptive-analytical design, focusing on the study of pedagogical literature, national education policy documents, and classroom-based observations reported in previous studies. This design was chosen because it allows for the integration of theoretical foundations with practical teaching experiences [1].

Participants and Context

The study context is framed around primary school education, with emphasis on reading literacy lessons as a medium for intellectual and cognitive development. While the article does not rely on experimental participants, it synthesizes findings from Uzbek and international research to provide a comprehensive picture of effective methodologies [2,3].

Data Collection Sources

- National educational standards and official policy documents of Uzbekistan (e.g., State Educational Standards, Concept of Functional Literacy).
- Pedagogical and

psychological research on independent thinking and literacy development [4,5].

- Practical strategies described in recent academic publications and teacher manuals.

Methodological Approaches Analyzed

The following methodological approaches were analyzed as key strategies for fostering independent thinking during reading literacy lessons:

- **Interactive teaching methods** – engaging students in dialogue, discussion, and cooperative reading [6].
- **Problem-based learning (PBL)** – encouraging learners to solve real-life or text-based problems through reasoning [7].
- **Dialogic reading** – using questions, prompts, and scaffolding to promote critical reflection [8].
- **Project-based learning (PjBL)** – guiding students to complete tasks that require creativity, analysis, and synthesis [9].

These methods were compared to identify common pedagogical principles, such as active participation, critical questioning, reflection, and evidence-based argumentation.

Results

The analysis of methodological approaches for developing independent thinking in reading literacy lessons demonstrated several important outcomes. Firstly, the use of interactive and problem-based strategies significantly strengthened students' analytical abilities. Learners showed a greater tendency to ask questions, evaluate characters' actions, and interpret hidden meanings in texts, which indicated that they were moving beyond passive reading toward a more critical engagement with material [1,2]. Secondly, dialogic reading approaches contributed to the improvement of reflective thinking. When teachers employed open-ended questions and encouraged discussions, students began to compare their viewpoints with others, consider alternative perspectives, and provide reasoned justifications for their opinions [3]. This interaction created a supportive environment for critical reflection and argumentation.

Another important result was the development of creativity and imagination through project-based learning activities. Assignments such as dramatizations, storytelling, or visual projects not only improved reading comprehension but also stimulated innovative thinking and problem-solving skills [4]. Moreover, the inclusion of functional literacy tasks demonstrated a positive impact on real-life application. When students analyzed newspaper articles, engaged in small research projects, or connected stories to their everyday experiences, they perceived reading as

a meaningful and practical skill rather than a purely academic exercise [5].

The study also revealed the importance of national and cultural relevance in shaping independent thinking. In the Uzbek educational context, when reading materials reflected learners' cultural environment, traditions, and social realities, pupils exhibited higher motivation and deeper critical reflection [6]. Overall, the findings suggest that independent thinking is best fostered when teachers employ a balanced integration of interactive, problem-based, dialogic, and project-based methods, while also ensuring that reading tasks are connected to real-life contexts and cultural values. Such an approach not only enhances functional literacy but also equips students with the intellectual tools necessary for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of methodological approaches in shaping independent thinking during reading literacy lessons. The outcomes align with global research that emphasizes the transition from traditional reading practices toward interactive, reflective, and problem-oriented instruction. For example, the OECD's PISA assessments show that students who engage in higher-order reading tasks, such as interpreting and evaluating texts, consistently perform better in literacy and problem-solving skills [1]. This supports the evidence from our analysis that interactive and problem-based learning approaches enhance students' analytical abilities.

The role of dialogic reading deserves particular attention. Studies by Mercer and Littleton [2] demonstrate that dialogic interaction in classrooms fosters cognitive development by encouraging children to express, justify, and refine their ideas through social interaction. Our findings confirm this, as students who participated in open-ended discussions displayed stronger reflective thinking and the ability to consider multiple perspectives. This indicates that teachers must adopt dialogic strategies not merely as a supportive tool, but as a central element of literacy instruction.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of project-based learning (PjBL) in stimulating creativity and imagination is consistent with previous research that identifies PjBL as a key driver of innovative thinking in young learners [3]. By engaging in creative projects, pupils not only improved comprehension but also demonstrated the capacity to generate original ideas and solutions. This has particular relevance in the 21st century, where creativity and adaptability are considered essential skills for lifelong learning.

The study also reinforces the growing recognition of functional literacy as a core educational objective in Uzbekistan. National policy documents emphasize the integration of literacy with real-life tasks to ensure that education is not limited to rote learning but prepares students for active participation in society [4]. Our results illustrate that when reading assignments are linked to practical applications—such as analyzing media texts or creating small-scale research

projects—students gain a deeper appreciation of reading as a meaningful and useful skill.

Importantly, the cultural dimension of literacy cannot be overlooked. As Nishonova [5] and other Uzbek scholars have noted, using culturally relevant texts not only enhances motivation but also fosters a sense of identity and belonging. The findings of this study support this claim, showing that pupils demonstrate more engagement and deeper critical reflection when reading materials are connected to their own traditions and social environment. This suggests that independent thinking can be most effectively developed through a balance of global pedagogical strategies and locally grounded educational practices.

Overall, the discussion indicates that independent thinking in reading literacy lessons is not an isolated skill but rather an integrated outcome of interactive pedagogy, reflective dialogue, creative project work, and culturally relevant content. For Uzbekistan, this means that teachers must combine modern educational methodologies with the preservation of national values to achieve sustainable improvements in literacy and intellectual development.

Conclusion

The study has shown that reading literacy lessons in primary education play a crucial role in shaping pupils' independent thinking. The analysis revealed that interactive, problem-based, dialogic, and project-based approaches are the most effective strategies for encouraging students to think critically, reflectively, and creatively. These methods not only enhance reading comprehension but also contribute to the development of essential skills such as analytical reasoning, imagination, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-life contexts.

One of the key findings of this research is the importance of functional literacy, which enables students to connect classroom learning with practical situations. This shift from rote memorization to meaningful engagement allows learners to perceive reading as a vital life skill. Additionally, the integration of culturally relevant texts within literacy instruction was found to significantly increase motivation and deepen critical reflection, showing that independent thinking develops most effectively when educational practices are both globally informed and locally grounded.

For the Uzbek educational system, this implies that reading literacy lessons should not be limited to technical decoding of texts but must serve as a platform for the formation of independent thinkers who are capable of analyzing, evaluating, and generating ideas. Teachers should adopt innovative methodologies while also preserving national values, thereby ensuring that literacy instruction contributes to the holistic development of students as lifelong learners and active participants in society.

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