DEVELOPING PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS' TEXT COMPREHENSION SKILLS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract. This paper proposes a classroom methodology for developing primary school pupils' skills in working with texts through the instructional interpretation of international reading assessment frameworks. PIRLS provides the principal reference because of its focus on primary reading, while PISA is discussed to clarify the boundaries of age-appropriate adaptation. The study uses conceptual analysis of selected official frameworks and research-informed guidance, followed by pedagogical modelling. The proposed methodology connects a reading purpose, a target comprehension process, a text-dependent task, and observable evidence of learning. A sequence of teacher modelling, guided interaction, independent response, and transfer is illustrated through an original informational passage. Analytic assessment criteria distinguish information retrieval, inference, integration, and evaluation. The contribution is a practical design procedure rather than an empirical effectiveness claim. Further classroom research is required to establish its impact and the reliability of the proposed scoring criteria.

Keywords: primary education, reading literacy, text comprehension, PIRLS, international assessment, text-dependent questions, formative assessment, instructional scaffolding.

Introduction. Primary school pupils encounter texts in language lessons, science activities, instructions, and everyday communication. Their success depends on more than accurate word reading. They need to identify relevant information, connect ideas,

explain implicit relationships, and judge whether an interpretation is supported. Teaching these actions explicitly can make classroom reading more purposeful and reveal difficulties that a correct short answer may conceal.

International reading assessments offer useful descriptions of comprehension. However, translating an assessment framework into teaching requires additional instructional decisions. A framework identifies the processes to be assessed; it does not prescribe how a teacher should model a strategy, respond to a misunderstanding, or reduce support. A classroom methodology must therefore connect the intended reading process with pupil activity and evidence that the process has occurred.

This paper aims to develop such a methodology for primary education. The guiding question is: how can international reading assessment frameworks inform text selection, question design, and formative assessment while preserving meaningful engagement with texts? The paper uses the term "skills in working with texts" to encompass locating information, constructing meaning, explaining an interpretation, and evaluating textual support. It focuses on comprehension rather than the teaching of decoding.

Conceptual Background. PIRLS is the most directly relevant international reference for the present purpose because it assesses reading achievement at the fourth grade [1]. Its framework combines two reading purposes with four comprehension processes. The purposes concern literary experience and the acquisition and use of information. The processes cover retrieval of explicitly stated information, straightforward inference, interpretation and integration, and evaluation and critique [2]. These categories help teachers examine whether their questions require varied forms of meaning-making.

PISA has a different target population: students aged approximately fifteen [3]. Its broader emphasis on using and reflecting on texts can inform discussion of long-term literacy goals, but its assessment tasks should not be transferred unchanged to primary classrooms. In the present methodology, PIRLS supplies the primary organising reference. The relationship between international programmes is interpreted through their educational purposes and target populations, rather than by treating all their items as interchangeable exercises.

Research-informed guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation recommends teaching comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice [4]. Its account of reading strategies also highlights questioning, clarification,

summarising, and inference, together with opportunities to monitor understanding [5]. These sources support the instructional decision to make a reading action visible before expecting pupils to perform it independently. The specific lesson sequence proposed below is the authors' methodological synthesis.

An important distinction concerns reading performance and the explanation of performance. A pupil may select the correct option by recognising a familiar phrase or guessing. Asking the pupil to locate the relevant sentence and explain the connection produces additional evidence. Conversely, an incomplete written answer may reflect limited writing fluency despite adequate oral comprehension. Teachers therefore need to interpret responses in relation to both the target process and the mode of response.

Methodology. The study is conceptual and methodological. Five sources were selected purposively: official descriptions of PIRLS and PISA and two research-informed publications addressing reading instruction. Selection depended on relevance to the age group, the clarity of the comprehension processes described, and the usefulness of the source for classroom planning. This is a focused conceptual analysis, not a systematic review.

The analysis compared the purposes of the frameworks, their target populations, and their descriptions of reading activity. Pedagogical modelling was then used to develop a planning procedure, an illustrative passage, a task sequence, and assessment criteria. The passage and tasks are original instructional examples; they are not released PIRLS items. No participants were recruited, no intervention was conducted, and no achievement gains were calculated. The findings consist of design propositions that require subsequent empirical evaluation.

Findings and Discussion. The proposed planning procedure connects four elements: reading purpose, target process, pupil action, and evidence. The teacher first establishes why pupils will read a particular text. For a literary passage, the purpose may concern understanding a character's decision. For an informational passage, it may involve explaining a process or using information to make a practical choice. A meaningful purpose helps organise the lesson around the text rather than around disconnected question types.

The teacher then identifies the comprehension action that needs attention. "Understand the passage" is too broad to guide feedback. "Combine two observations to explain why a character changed a plan" is more specific. The task should make that action necessary, while the expected response should show how the pupil used the text.

This relationship permits the teacher to distinguish a missing fact from a weak inference or an unsupported evaluation.

Text selection is the next decision. A suitable passage should be accessible in vocabulary and structure yet contain relationships that require thought. Length alone does not determine difficulty. An apparently short paragraph may contain unfamiliar concepts or several implicit references. Teachers should check whether the background knowledge needed for comprehension can be introduced without giving away the answer to the central task.

The final planning decision concerns transfer. Pupils should encounter another passage or situation in which the same comprehension action is useful. Repeating a memorised answer does not show independent strategy use. A new text with a comparable reasoning demand offers a better opportunity to observe whether pupils can select and explain evidence without the original prompts.

Instructional Sequence. Before reading, the teacher introduces the purpose and clarifies essential vocabulary. A brief prediction may activate relevant knowledge, but pupils are reminded that predictions remain provisional. The teacher identifies what readers should look for without revealing the conclusion they will be asked to construct.

During the first reading, pupils establish the overall situation. Subsequent rereading targets a specific question. The teacher models the connection between a question and a passage by explaining, for example, “This sentence tells me what happened, but I need the next observation to explain why the plan changed.” Such modelling should expose a reasoning action and remain short enough to preserve pupil participation.

Guided practice follows. Pupils discuss an interpretation in pairs, locate supporting information, and explain how it supports the claim. A sentence frame such as “I think ... because the text says ...; this shows ...” may help pupils organise an answer. The frame is temporary. Once the relationship is understood, pupils should formulate responses in their own words.

Independent practice requires each pupil to answer a new question or work with a short new passage. The teacher records the support needed and gives feedback on the weakest part of the response. The lesson closes with reflection on the reading action used: what information was selected, how it was connected, and whether an initial interpretation changed.

An Illustrative Informational Passage. The following original passage, "Water for the School Garden," illustrates the procedure: "The school gardening club wanted to water its vegetable bed without wasting water. On Monday, the children poured one full jug over the bed all at once. Some water ran onto the path. On Tuesday, they used the same full jug but poured slowly near the roots. Little water reached the path. The teacher asked them to repeat both methods before recommending one. A notice beside the bed said: 'Every garden should use exactly one jug each day.' The children wondered whether a large garden would need the same amount as their small bed."

The passage presents observations, a request for further checking, and a general claim. Its purpose is to support an evidence-based practical decision. It does not establish an experimentally verified watering rule. This limitation is part of the reading task: pupils can examine what the observations support and what they leave unresolved.

A retrieval question asks, "Where did some water go on Monday?" An adequate answer identifies the path. A pupil who gives a general statement about wasting water may understand the topic but has not yet answered the specific question. Feedback directs attention to the observation rather than supplying the complete response.

An inference question asks, "Why might pouring slowly near the roots reduce wasted water?" Pupils connect the method used on Tuesday with the smaller amount reaching the path. A satisfactory explanation refers to both the action and the observation. Merely repeating that the children used the same jug does not explain the inferred relationship.

An integration task asks pupils to write a provisional recommendation using information from both days. For example, they might recommend trying slow pouring because less water reached the path, while acknowledging that the teacher requested repetition. The answer combines observations with the status of the conclusion. The term "provisional" can be explained as "a recommendation we still need to check."

An evaluation question asks, "Does the passage justify the notice saying that every garden needs exactly one jug each day?" A supported answer explains that the observations concern one small bed and do not establish the needs of every garden. This task evaluates a claim against the available evidence. It does not require pupils to know an exact scientific watering schedule.

These questions illustrate distinct reasoning demands, but teachers need not use every category in every lesson or always present them in the same order. They should

select questions according to the text, the learning purpose, and pupils' readiness. A balanced teaching programme can revisit the processes across different genres and contexts.

Adapting the Approach to Literary Reading. For a narrative, retrieval may establish what a character said or did. Inference may concern a motive that is not directly stated. Integration can connect actions from different parts of the story, while evaluation can examine whether a proposed interpretation fits the character's words and the ending. The evidence remains textual, although more than one interpretation may be defensible.

The teacher should distinguish unsupported opinion from alternative interpretation. "I like the character" expresses a preference. "The character becomes more considerate because the final action contrasts with the earlier refusal" is an interpretation that can be checked. Pupils can discuss the adequacy of the evidence without being required to adopt the teacher's personal preference.

Differentiation and Classroom Assessment. Support should address the actual barrier to comprehension. A pupil who cannot locate information may benefit from a smaller search area or a rereading prompt. A pupil who locates the correct sentence but cannot explain it needs help connecting evidence to the claim. Oral rehearsal can support pupils whose writing limits the expression of their understanding. Listening to the passage may help participation, but it changes the task conditions and should be recorded when interpreting an independent reading response.

The proposed analytic criteria use three descriptive levels for each target action: independent, completed with a relevant prompt, and not yet demonstrated. Retrieval is assessed through the relevance and accuracy of selected information. Inference is assessed through the relationship between the claim and textual clues. Integration is assessed through meaningful connections across parts of the passage. Evaluation is assessed through attention to the adequacy or limits of evidence.

These levels are classroom tools rather than an internationally calibrated scale. They should guide feedback before being converted into a total score. A correct answer produced after extensive prompting should not be treated as equivalent to independent performance. Recording the kind of support used makes subsequent instructional decisions more informative.

For example, if a pupil rejects the garden notice simply because "it is wrong," feedback can ask, "Which part of the passage helps you decide whether the rule applies

to all gardens?" A later task should use a different passage with a similarly broad claim. This checks whether the pupil can examine scope independently rather than recall the earlier explanation.

Implementation and Research Limitations. The methodology can be applied to familiar classroom texts and does not require a digital platform. Printed passages, paired discussion, and short written responses are sufficient. In Uzbek primary classrooms, the tasks should be delivered in the language of instruction and adapted to pupils' vocabulary and curriculum. The English examples in this paper illustrate the design logic rather than prescribe the language of classroom delivery.

Its effectiveness remains to be tested. A future study should use comparable baseline and final passages, document teaching time and support, and include independent transfer tasks. Assessors would need shared scoring examples and checks of agreement. Reading fluency, vocabulary, and prior knowledge should also be considered. Such a design would permit a more defensible evaluation than counting completed practice items or interpreting enthusiasm as evidence of comprehension gains.

Conclusion. International assessment frameworks can inform primary reading instruction when their descriptions of comprehension are translated into purposeful pupil activity. The proposed methodology connects a reading purpose with a target process, a text-dependent task, and observable evidence. Teacher modelling, guided explanation, independent response, and transfer provide an instructional structure for developing these skills.

PIRLS offers the principal reference for the primary age group, while PISA clarifies broader literacy aims and the limits of direct task transfer. The original passage and questions demonstrate how pupils can move from locating information to evaluating the scope of a claim. The contribution is a practical, theoretically informed design procedure. Its impact on pupil achievement and the reliability of the classroom criteria require empirical investigation.

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