

The Role of Reading Literacy and its Impact to Continuous Professional Development

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Abstract. *The article states that English as a Second Language (ESL) learning develops and reinforces four basic language competencies: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These ESL competencies are linked to spoken and written communication and are organized into three subject-specific competencies. Teachers can help students develop skills in locating, evaluating, organizing, and retaining information from reading. Furthermore, the article provides information on continuous professional development and its role in future teachers' success.*

Key words: *reading, skill, comprehension, ESL teachers, competence, continuous professional development (CPD), strategies, context, reading fluency, rereading, decoding.*

The “Uzbekistan-2030” strategy emphasizes achieving quality indicators in the training of future foreign language teachers and focuses on developing teachers’ practical professional competencies [1]. Over the past five years, a unique practical system for training future English language teachers has been established in our country’s higher pedagogical institutions; this system is a priority of modern pedagogy.

As a result, future English language teachers have developed professional competencies in a short time and have had opportunities to improve them during subsequent stages of their studies through practical application. Graduating English language teachers have gained experience in language teaching methodology, translation, pedagogical creativity, and individualized instruction.

The importance of reading lies in its lifelong benefits: it improves memory, builds a robust vocabulary and knowledge base, and adds richness and depth to life for those who achieve true comprehension.

Decoding, fluency, and vocabulary skills are key to reading comprehension. The ability to connect ideas within and between sentences helps children understand the text as a whole. Reading aloud and discussing experiences can help children develop reading skills.

The purposes of reading include gaining information, improving writing, learning about current events, and scanning for quick facts. Reading can also be for entertainment or to learn how to entertain others. Continuous professional development is necessary for future ESL teachers to maintain their competencies, increase their knowledge, and develop their skills.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a commitment to lifelong learning. CPD encourages proactively identifying opportunities to learn new things, refresh existing knowledge, improve skills, or stay current with developments in the profession. Typical CPD activities include reading relevant publications, news articles, podcasts, trade magazines, case studies, and industry updates.

There are several types of CPD:

- **Informal Learning:** This learning happens naturally in the course of one’s work.

- Formal Learning: This learning takes place in a more structured environment, such as face-to-face courses, online workshops, or lectures. Examples include online training programs, remote learning labs, eLearning courses, workshops, webinars, and in-person classroom instruction.
- Informal learning is unstructured and asynchronous; it occurs without specific objectives or predetermined goals.

Steps to ensure continuing professional development include:

- Attending and participating in webinars.

When examining the competencies that (future) teachers appear to possess and those that seem to need development, it becomes clear that knowledge and practice of pre-reading activities are well-established. However, the lack of awareness of reading strategies and metacognitive strategies (Taylor et al., 2006) raises questions about whether pre-reading activities are merely techniques that have been learned without a deeper understanding of their purpose or effectiveness. This suggests a limited understanding of L2 reading processes and how comprehension is achieved. If teachers do not fully grasp how L2 reading develops, they may struggle to integrate pre-reading tasks into the process or comprehend their role. It appears that teachers have learned that certain approaches are preferred or considered good practice and conform without understanding the underlying theory.

This is further evident in the treatment of unfamiliar vocabulary, particularly the expectation that elementary L2 readers can guess unfamiliar words from context. Despite research indicating that a vocabulary knowledge of approximately 98% is necessary for such guessing to be possible (Stahl & Nagy, 2006), this expectation persists in methodology books, most of which do not address the needs of young L2 learners in primary school. Children at A1 or earlier stages of language development fall well below the threshold required to guess any word in a text. Their working memory and other executive functions are primarily focused on decoding, first at the word level and then gradually combining deciphered words into sentences and comprehending the text as a whole (Grabe, 2009, pp. 36-37). Guessing at this level involves attempting to identify a word based on its initial letters rather than sounding out each letter and constructing a phonological representation. In summary, the theoretical knowledge that teachers appear to possess is insufficient for the teaching situations they often encounter, as it does not address early L2 reading. Until the decoding process becomes automatic, young learners will face significant challenges in comprehending the meaning of a text (Grabe, 2009, p. 23).

Conclusion:

It is unsurprising that some learners have developed strategies to support their comprehension, such as relying on pictures or matching words in questions to words in the text. These teachers are sharing insights from one-on-one teaching experiences. Imagine the challenges faced by teachers who have not had such experiences and are responsible for a group of fifteen learners. They may mistakenly assume that students understand the text, which could have negative consequences as the course progresses, especially for struggling readers.

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