

ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN READING THROUGH INTERACTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES (IN THE CASE OF SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS IN UZBEKISTAN)

Azamat Mukhriddinovich Kodirov

Namangan state institute of foreign languages

Annotation: The communicative approach in language education emphasizes meaningful interaction, learner autonomy, and real-life communication. Reading, traditionally viewed as a passive skill, has been reimaged within this framework as an active, dialogic process. This article explores six innovative reading strategies—jigsaw reading, joint reading, parallel reading, shared reading, shadow reading, and Jeopardy-based reading—that embody the communicative language teaching (CLT) philosophy. Each method enhances reading comprehension while fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and communicative competence.

In today's globalized world, proficiency in English is no longer a luxury but a necessity—particularly for pupils in specialized schools in Uzbekistan. As the country continues to strengthen its educational standards and align with international academic benchmarks, a strong emphasis has been placed on the development of English language skills, especially reading comprehension. For upper-grade students, reading is not only a skill to be mastered, but a gateway to accessing global knowledge, excelling in academic contexts, and preparing for future professional and academic attempts abroad.

Reading is a cornerstone of language acquisition, serving both as a means of acquiring knowledge and as a communicative act. As a receptive skill, reading enables pupils to absorb written information. However, for reading to be truly communicative, it should be motivated by a specific goal. Without a clear communicative intent—such as seeking information, forming opinions, or sharing ideas—reading risks becoming a mechanical process with limited cognitive or linguistic value. In the context of foreign language education, reading is not merely about decoding text but involves understanding, interpreting, and transforming information. These three levels of engagement—extraction, interpretation, and transformation—reflect how pupils use reading to participate in communication. Extraction entails identifying the explicit information in the text, interpretation involves making inferences and clarifying meaning, and transformation refers to synthesizing or personalizing the information.

Reading tasks in the classroom are typically designed to meet different objectives: skimming for the main idea, scanning for specific details, and intensive reading for comprehensive understanding. These skills should be developed from the earliest stages of language learning using short, accessible texts that relate to pupils' experiences and interests. For instance, even analysing image captions can provide

meaningful engagement by prompting pupils to categorize images, hypothesize content, and draw connections.

Beyond these traditional types, the communicative approach to reading emphasizes the social and cognitive aspects of literacy. This includes setting purposeful tasks, encouraging interaction, and integrating speaking and writing activities. Thus, reading becomes an active, dialogic process rather than a solitary one. The use of different types of reading does not exhaust the possibilities of communicatively-oriented teaching of these types of speech activity. The other side of communicative tasks is the nature of speech-cognitive operations that students can perform in the process of reading. These operations are the following: extracting information, understanding information and transforming information. This kind of reading is found in real life when we accurately transmit the content of the text to those who are not aware of it. Comprehension of information involves the interpretation of what is written with its own explanation, clarification and opinion (Buranova, Buranova, 2020).

An effective way to make reading more interactive is through collaborative strategies. Among these, jigsaw reading stands out. Developed by Elliot Aronson in 1971, this method divides a text into segments, each assigned to a different pupil. After reading their portion, pupils regroup to share information and reconstruct the entire text collectively. Jigsaw reading promotes cooperation, accountability, and communicative competence as pupils must listen, question, and articulate their understanding (Aronson, 2000). In the jigsaw model, pupils often use graphic organizers—like clusters, mental maps, or fishbone diagrams—to aid comprehension and prepare for group discussions. Once individual comprehension is achieved, pupils reconvene in new "expert" groups to consolidate information before presenting it to their original teams. This layered collaboration ensures multiple exposures to the content and fosters skills such as summarizing, critical thinking, and perspective-taking.

Jigsaw reading involves dividing a text into several parts, with each pupil or group reading only one section. Pupils then share their information with others to reconstruct the whole story or argument. This information gap activity fosters interaction and interdependence (Kagan, 2009). Jigsaw reading promotes speaking and listening through information exchange, encourages summarizing and paraphrasing, builds comprehension through collaboration. This technique aligns with constructivist theories, where meaning is built through peer communication (Vygotsky, 1978). It is especially effective for narrative texts, biographies, or problem-solution articles.

In addition to jigsaw reading, several complementary techniques enhance the communicative value of reading.

In joint reading, pupils collaboratively read a text while taking on specific roles (e.g., summarizer, vocabulary master, questioner). This task division ensures active participation from all group members and reinforces individual accountability. This technique encourages deep text analysis, develops role-specific skills (e.g.,

inference, questioning) and supports scaffolding among peers. Joint reading mirrors cooperative learning models that emphasize shared cognitive processing and learning through dialogue (Slavin, 1995).

Parallel Reading: In this method, pupils read different texts addressing a common theme or problem. They then exchange findings, analyze variations in perspective or detail, and integrate their understanding. This not only broadens content exposure but also cultivates comparative thinking and discussion skills (Smith & Elley, 1997). Parallel reading requires pupils to read two or more texts with related themes, but different perspectives, and then compare them. This method stimulates critical thinking and interpretative discussion. For instance, comparing news articles from different countries on the same topic can lead to rich cultural and linguistic insights (Harmer, 2007).

Shared Reading: Typically guided by the teacher, shared reading involves reading a common text as a group. Each pupil may take on a specific role, such as vocabulary tracker, questioner, or summarizer. This scaffolding ensures that all pupils contribute meaningfully and benefit from peer modelling (Holdaway, 1982). It is typically used with beginners and involves the teacher reading aloud while pupils follow the text. The teacher pauses to ask questions, highlight vocabulary, and model fluency.

Shadow Reading: A technique often used to improve pronunciation and fluency, shadow reading requires pupils to read along silently or aloud while listening to a fluent reader. This dual input strengthens the auditory-visual connection and enhances intonation and rhythm, making it particularly useful in developing oral reading skills (Murphey, 1992). It involves pupils listening to an audio or teacher model while simultaneously reading the text aloud, mimicking intonation, rhythm, and stress. This method supports pronunciation, fluency, and reading confidence.

To further increase engagement, Jeopardy-style games based on reading comprehension can be incorporated. These games pose questions of varying difficulty related to a text, prompting pupils to recall and discuss key details. The competitive yet cooperative nature of such games boosts motivation, fosters a deeper review of material, and allows pupils to apply their understanding in a dynamic way (Wang, 2009). Inspired by the TV quiz show, Jeopardy-based reading turns comprehension questions into a competitive, point-based game. Categories such as “Details,” “Vocabulary,” “Inference,” and “Main Idea” challenge pupils to recall and apply information from a text.

For instance, after completing a shared or parallel reading activity, a class can be divided into teams to answer comprehension questions under time constraints. This promotes quick recall, reinforces learned content, and encourages active participation from all pupils, including those who might otherwise be reluctant to contribute. When played in teams, this method boosts collaboration, strategy use, and interactive learning, especially in mixed-ability classrooms (Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2006).

Implementing these interactive reading strategies requires thoughtful planning and a deep understanding of pupil needs. Teachers must select texts that align with pupils' language proficiency and interests, avoiding overly complex syntax or vocabulary. Group formation is also critical; each group should be balanced to ensure equitable participation and minimize the risk of disengagement.

Teachers serve as facilitators, guiding pupils through tasks, modelling strategies, and providing support where necessary. They must also monitor group dynamics to ensure that all voices are heard and that no single group dominates. Especially in gamified settings, it's essential to maintain a positive, encouraging classroom atmosphere.

It is advisable to introduce unfamiliar strategies gradually. For example, before launching a jigsaw activity, teachers should model the process and clarify expectations. Similarly, with shadow reading, pupils should first practice with short texts before progressing to more extended readings.

The integration of jigsaw, parallel, shared, and shadow reading methods offers numerous benefits. These include enhanced reading comprehension and retention through repeated exposure and active processing, improved oral and written communication skills, development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, greater learner autonomy and responsibility and stronger classroom cohesion and peer learning dynamics

Moreover, such approaches create a bridge between receptive and productive language skills. Pupils not only understand the text but also engage in speaking and writing tasks that require them to reformulate, summarize, and express opinions.

Reading in a foreign language classroom should be more than a solitary activity. When methodologically organized and enriched with collaborative and gamified elements, reading becomes a dynamic, communicative, and cognitively rich process. Techniques such as jigsaw, parallel, shared, and shadow reading, along with Jeopardy-style games, transform the classroom into an interactive learning environment where pupils learn to read and read to communicate. Ultimately, such strategies empower pupils to become confident, independent, and communicatively competent readers. Each of these reading techniques aligns with the core principles of the communicative approach—interaction, learner engagement, and real-world relevance. By incorporating jigsaw reading, joint reading, parallel reading, shared reading, shadow reading, and Jeopardy-based tasks, teachers create environments where reading is both purposeful and participatory. These methods transform reading into a skill of interaction, helping pupils not just understand texts, but use them to communicate, collaborate, and think critically.

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