

## THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPING CREATIVE COMPETENCE IN READING LITERACY LESSONS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF PIRLS AND IELTS)

**Kuchkorova Nargiza Mamajonovna**

Professor of the Department of Continuing Education, Tashkent Oriental University,  
Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences

### Abstract

This article analyzes the interrelationship between the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assessment systems and examines their specific features in evaluating reading literacy. While PIRLS is primarily aimed at assessing the level of reading comprehension among primary school students, IELTS is a prestigious international examination designed for learners of English as a foreign language. The article highlights the objectives of both systems, their assessment mechanisms, and their significance in fostering students' creative competence.

### Keywords

PIRLS, IELTS, reading literacy, creative competencies, reading strategies.

In the context of globalization and rapid development, modern realities impose increasingly urgent and wide-ranging demands on the state and society. Achieving strategic global goals, reaching new milestones, and securing a place among developed countries require highly qualified, knowledgeable, experienced, and modern-minded professionals. Meeting the demand for such competitive personnel is closely linked to the development of human capital—simply put, discovering individual potential and mobilizing it toward the achievement of great objectives. [3,5]

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>1</sup>, priority areas for the systematic reform of general secondary and extracurricular education have been identified. These include elevating the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of the younger generation to a qualitatively new level and introducing innovative forms and methods of teaching into the educational process. By 2030, Uzbekistan aims to rank among the top 30 countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) international assessment. Furthermore, tasks have been set to establish a national system for assessing education quality based on international studies evaluating students' literacy levels in reading, mathematics, and science. [1]

Within the framework of this Concept, special emphasis is placed on fostering students' critical thinking skills, independent information search, analytical abilities, and competencies. It is envisaged to introduce general education programs and new state educational standards that meet the demands of a modern innovative economy. In assessing students' knowledge, continuous participation in international assessment programs such as PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and others is also предусмотрено.

Additionally, in order to organize international research in the field of education quality assessment within the public education system, establish international cooperation, and comprehensively support and encourage students' research and innovative activities particularly

the creative ideas and creativity of the younger generation the following programs have been approved in accordance with the government resolution: [2]

- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA);
- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which assesses primary school students' reading comprehension levels;
- The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which evaluates students' achievement in mathematics and science.
- The organization of international assessment programs aimed at studying the teaching and learning environment in general secondary education institutions, as well as teachers' working conditions—namely the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)—has been initiated.
- To achieve this objective, the National Center for Implementing International Studies on Education Quality Assessment was established under the State Inspectorate for Supervision of Education Quality under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.
- In addition, in accordance with a government resolution, the National Center has been entrusted with several key responsibilities: forming a national database of assessment items aligned with the frameworks of international studies, developing supplementary methodological manuals and educational resources on international assessments, and engaging talented pedagogical staff in research activities related to international evaluation programs. [3,6]
- The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international program designed to assess the reading literacy of primary school students. Success in this program lays a solid foundation for students' future academic and professional development. In today's rapidly globalizing world, increasingly complex and expanding demands are placed upon the state and society. Achieving high strategic goals and securing a достойное place among developed nations requires the preparation of knowledgeable, experienced, modern-minded, and highly competent specialists. The formation of competitive human resources is directly linked to the development of human capital that is, unlocking an individual's internal potential and directing it toward significant achievements.
- Pursuant to the relevant Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, priority directions for the consistent reform of general secondary and extracurricular education have been identified. The document outlines the objectives of elevating the moral, ethical, and intellectual development of the younger generation to a new level, introducing innovative forms and methods into the educational process, and ensuring that by 2030 Uzbekistan ranks among the top 30 countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). At the same time, one of the key goals is the creation of a national assessment system aimed at evaluating students' literacy in reading, mathematics, and science.
- The Concept emphasizes the development of students' critical thinking, independent information search, and analytical skills, and предусматривает the introduction of new state educational standards and curricula aligned with the demands of the modern economy. It also предусматривает regular participation in international assessment programs such as PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and PIRLS.

- Furthermore, in accordance with a government resolution, measures are being implemented to establish international assessment research within the public education system, expand international cooperation, and support students' scientific and innovative activities. In particular, the organization of programs such as PISA (assessment of student literacy), PIRLS (assessment of primary students' reading comprehension), TIMSS (assessment of achievement in mathematics and science), and TALIS (study of teaching environments and teachers' working conditions) has been launched.
- To ensure the effective implementation of these tasks, the National Center for International Studies on Education Quality Assessment was established under the Cabinet of Ministers. The Center is responsible for developing a national item bank aligned with international assessment programs, producing methodological guidelines, and involving teachers in scientific research activities related to international assessments.
- The PIRLS program serves to determine the level of reading literacy among primary school students. High achievement at this stage provides a strong foundation for further participation in international examinations assessing language proficiency. In particular, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a globally recognized examination system for learners of English as a foreign language.
- Although PIRLS and IELTS differ in their target audiences and assessment purposes, both programs focus on evaluating reading literacy. Despite differences in objectives and approaches, they share a common emphasis on developing students' abilities to read, comprehend, and analyze texts. Specifically, the Reading section of IELTS and the PIRLS assessment demonstrate methodological alignment in evaluating reading comprehension strategies and higher-order thinking skills.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is recognized worldwide as one of the most prestigious examination systems for learners of English as a foreign language. The interconnection between IELTS and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) lies in the fact that both programs are aimed at assessing learners' reading literacy. Although they differ in objectives and methodology, both systems prioritize the development and evaluation of reading, comprehension, and analytical skills. The similarities between the IELTS Reading section and PIRLS are outlined below.

### **1. Reading and Comprehension Strategies**

Both assessment systems are designed to identify the strategies learners use in the process of understanding texts.

**IELTS Reading:** Participants read lengthy and conceptually complex texts and demonstrate their ability to identify the main idea, understand the author's viewpoint, distinguish between facts and arguments, and draw conclusions. The tasks vary in format, including matching information, multiple-choice questions, sentence completion, and summary tasks, all of which require higher-order thinking skills.

**PIRLS:** This program evaluates students' ability to locate information in a text, analyze it, and achieve deep comprehension. Special attention is given to distinguishing between main and supporting ideas, making inferences, interpreting meaning, and explaining textual content.

### **2. Text Types and Content**

Both programs expose learners to diverse genres of texts; however, they differ according to age group and purpose.

**IELTS:** The texts are primarily academic, social, or general-interest in nature. They are structurally complex and presented in academic or semi-formal contexts. Through these texts, candidates' academic readiness and general worldview are assessed.

**PIRLS:** Designed for younger learners, PIRLS includes literary narratives, popular science texts, and informational passages. The texts are age-appropriate, engaging, and structured to support practical comprehension and meaning-making.

### 3. Question Types and Task Performance

Both IELTS Reading and PIRLS assess learners' logical thinking, memory, and analytical abilities.

**IELTS Reading:** Candidates employ strategies such as skimming (reading for gist), scanning (locating specific information), synthesizing information, and identifying relevant ideas. Effective time management and strategic reading are essential components of successful performance.

**PIRLS:** Students complete tasks aimed at understanding the overall meaning of a text, identifying the author's purpose, locating explicit facts, and drawing analytical conclusions. They are also required to justify their responses based on textual evidence, which strengthens reasoning skills.

### 4. Development of Creative Competence

Creative competence refers to a learner's ability to regulate their reading process, identify gaps in understanding, and evaluate their own performance.

**IELTS Reading:** During the examination, candidates consciously monitor their reading activity by managing time, selecting appropriate strategies for each question type, and verifying the accuracy of their answers. This process enhances independent learning and self-assessment skills.

**PIRLS:** The study encourages students to explain their understanding of a text, draw conclusions, and justify their opinions. Such reflective engagement fosters awareness of reading strategies and supports their further development.

### 5. Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Literacy

Both programs aim to provide a comprehensive evaluation of reading literacy.

**IELTS:** This examination measures the ability to understand academic and everyday English texts. It is widely used internationally to determine language proficiency levels and assess reading competence in global academic and professional contexts.

**PIRLS:** This study determines the level of reading literacy among school students and serves as a basis for drawing conclusions about the quality of education. Its primary function is to identify learners' achievements, strengths, and areas requiring improvement within the educational process.

In conclusion, despite targeting different age groups and purposes, IELTS and PIRLS demonstrate significant alignment in their approach to assessing reading literacy. Both evaluate the ability to comprehend, analyze, and extract relevant information from texts. IELTS measures advanced reading literacy through complex and globally oriented materials, whereas PIRLS assesses foundational reading competence through age-appropriate tasks. Their shared feature lies in the learner's ability to select effective reading strategies and consciously regulate the process of meaning-making.

The development of creative competencies contributes not only to achieving high results within the framework of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), but also serves as a foundation for successful foreign language acquisition and achievement in international assessment systems in the future. For instance, students who acquire skills such as in-depth text

analysis, distinguishing between main and supporting ideas, and identifying the author's purpose during PIRLS preparation are likely to demonstrate effective performance in the Reading section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

In PIRLS studies, students achieve success by consciously applying reading strategies, regulating their thinking processes, and evaluating their own understanding. The reading competencies formed at this stage provide a solid foundation for future foreign language learning, enabling learners to comprehend texts quickly and accurately, and to differentiate between central and secondary ideas.

Furthermore, PIRLS results serve as important indicators of students' linguistic and cognitive potential. Learners with a well-developed level of reading literacy tend to achieve high results in international examinations, including IELTS, particularly in analyzing complex academic texts and locating relevant information efficiently.

Thus, students who demonstrate high performance in PIRLS are more likely to succeed in foreign-language assessment programs in the future. This requires teachers and parents to consistently foster reading culture and comprehension skills from an early age. Students with advanced reading literacy are better positioned to remain competitive in academic and international educational contexts.

### **Lesson Plan**

**Topic:** The Interrelationship of International Assessment Programs in Developing Creative Competence in Reading Literacy Lessons (on the Example of PIRLS and IELTS)

**Level:** Higher Education (Primary Education Program)

**Course:** Methodology of Teaching Reading Literacy

**Lesson Type:** Practical–seminar session

**Duration:** 80 minutes

### **Lesson Objectives**

The main objective of this session is to explain to students the similarities and differences between PIRLS and IELTS in assessing reading literacy and to reveal their methodological alignment. Additionally, the lesson aims to demonstrate effective practical approaches to fostering and developing creative competence in reading literacy classes.

Developing analytical and critical thinking skills, innovative approaches, and the application of creative strategies among future primary school teachers is identified as a priority task.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Explain the methodological relationship between PIRLS and IELTS assessment systems;
- Design creative reading tasks for literacy lessons;
- Apply strategies such as skimming, scanning, analysis, and summarizing when working with texts;
- Independently develop an innovative lesson fragment for primary school learners.

### **Teaching Materials**

- A sample literary or informational text in the PIRLS format;
- A shortened academic text from the IELTS Reading section;
- Handouts;
- Presentation slides;
- Whiteboard and markers.

### **Lesson Procedure**

**1. Organizational Stage** The lesson begins with greetings, attendance checking, and introduction of the topic.

**2. Motivation Stage** A discussion is organized around the following questions:

- “What qualities should a creative teacher possess?”
- “Is reading literacy limited only to understanding a text?”

Students’ responses are summarized, and the relevance of the topic is justified.

**3. Presentation of New Knowledge** The objectives, target age groups, text types, and assessment approaches of PIRLS and IELTS are explained. It is emphasized that PIRLS assesses primary school students’ reading literacy, whereas IELTS evaluates learners’ ability to comprehend academic and everyday texts in English as a foreign language.

Students are divided into small groups to discuss opportunities for developing reading literacy through these two programs. Based on the provided texts, they create creative questions and tasks that encourage independent thinking. Examples include:

- Proposing an alternative title for the text;
- Continuing the storyline;
- Evaluating the author’s position.

**4. Practical Activity Stage** Students design a 10-minute lesson fragment for Grade 4. The fragment must include:

- A reading strategy (e.g., skimming or scanning);
- A creative task;
- A reflective creative question such as: “How did you determine your answer?”

Groups present their lesson fragments and exchange feedback.

**5. Consolidation Stage** Students analyze their learning process through reflective statements such as:

- “I already knew...”
- “I have newly learned...”
- “I can apply...”

This reflective process supports the development of creative competence.

#### **Assessment Criteria**

Students’ performance is evaluated based on:

- Analytical thinking;
- Quality and originality of creative tasks;
- Methodological justification;
- Participation in group work;
- Presentation skills.

**Homework.** Students are assigned to:

- Develop a creative reading task based on a PIRLS-type text;
- Prepare a written reflection on adapting IELTS Reading strategies to primary school level.

Developing creative competence in reading literacy lessons is a key requirement of modern education. The skills formed through PIRLS such as distinguishing main and supporting information, drawing conclusions, and interpreting texts create a strong methodological foundation for future success in international assessment systems like IELTS.

Therefore, students majoring in primary education should clearly understand this alignment and be prepared to effectively apply innovative and creative methods in their future pedagogical practice.

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