

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPING READING COMPETENCE

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Abstract: *Reading competence in a foreign language is a complex psycholinguistic activity that integrates decoding, lexical access, inference, and meaning construction. This article reviews major psycholinguistic perspectives on developing reading competence and compares international theoretical models with Uzbek methodological interpretations. Using qualitative comparative literature analysis, the study systematizes bottom-up, top-down, interactive-compensatory, and construction–integration approaches, highlighting their shared emphasis on the interaction between linguistic processing and background knowledge. A comparative table summarizes how these perspectives conceptualize cognitive mechanisms such as attention, working memory, vocabulary knowledge, and strategic comprehension regulation. The results show that international scholarship primarily explains the cognitive architecture of reading, while Uzbek research intensifies practical instructional implications, including learner-centered strategy training, motivation, and contextual adaptation. The discussion outlines how these insights support ICT-based reading instruction through scaffolding, multimodal tasks, and feedback-driven comprehension monitoring.*

Keywords: *psycholinguistics; reading competence; comprehension; cognitive processing; interactive models.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading competence in a foreign language is not limited to the mechanical recognition of written symbols; it is a complex psycholinguistic activity in which learners decode, integrate, and construct meaning while actively regulating comprehension. Contemporary research explains reading as the interaction between bottom-up processing (from letters and words to meaning) and top-down processing (from prior knowledge, expectations, and context to textual interpretation). Interactive and compensatory models integrate both directions of processing and account for individual differences in readers' resources (Stanovich, 2000). This article reviews core psycholinguistic foundations of reading competence and compares international perspectives with Uzbek scholarly interpretations, outlining the cognitive mechanisms underlying reading (attention, working memory, long-term memory, and inference) and discussing pedagogical implications for strategy-based instruction and ICT-supported learning environments.

Literature Review. Psycholinguistics highlights two main models for explaining the reading process. In the bottom-up model, the reader processes written symbols

sequentially, converting them into words, sentences, and finally the overall meaning. In the top-down model, the reader first constructs a general understanding based on prior knowledge, predictions, and context, and then interprets textual symbols according to that hypothesis. Modern research, however, increasingly describes reading as an interactive process in which both routes operate together (Stanovich, 2000).

Cognitive mechanisms play a special role in reading. Attention enables readers to focus on salient textual elements, working memory temporarily stores incoming information for syntactic and semantic integration, and long-term memory links new information with stored knowledge. Inference supports meaning construction by allowing readers to derive information that is not explicitly stated, based on contextual cues and background knowledge.

International psycholinguistic scholarship models reading as a universal processing system that includes decoding written signals, recognizing lexical units, integrating syntactic and semantic information, and constructing global meaning as a mental or situation model. Construction–integration accounts explain comprehension through the interaction of a textbase and a situation model (Kintsch, 1998). Lexical-quality perspectives further argue that the accuracy and efficiency of word knowledge strongly constrain comprehension and word-to-text integration (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014).

Uzbek researchers interpret reading not merely as recognizing linguistic units, but as a complex cognitive activity connected with speech perception and text comprehension. For example, Boboxonova emphasizes the principles of speech activity, speech perception/text comprehension, and psycholinguistic approaches to text analysis, supporting the view that perception–comprehension processes must be central in developing reading competence (Boboxonova, 2019). In a similar logic, Kurbanbayeva describes the task of a psycholinguistic approach as investigating how cognitive processes such as perception, memory, semantic processing, and text comprehension function, and selecting strategies aligned with these mechanisms (Kurbanbayeva, 2025).

From the perspective of practical methodological conclusions, Kurbanbayeva connects the psycholinguistic approach with a system of strategies, arguing that integrative methods such as annotated reading, reflection, and working with multimodal texts support deeper reading competence (Kurbanbayeva, 2025). Yusupova further specifies the psycholinguistic component in intensive reading and emphasizes the need to select methods aligned with perception mechanisms, attention stability, and information-processing processes; she argues that the VARK model (Visual–Auditory–Read/Write–Kinesthetic) can activate perceptual channels and support reading rate, comprehension, semantic analysis, and motivation (Yusupova, 2025).

Table 1. Comparative psycholinguistic perspectives on reading competence

Main dimension	Views of international scholars	Views of Uzbek scholars
Nature of the reading process	Reading is a universal cognitive process of decoding	Reading is a complex cognitive activity connected with speech

	written signals and constructing meaning; comprehension is explained through processing mechanisms (Goodman, 1967; Kintsch, 1998; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014; Stanovich, 2000).	perception and text comprehension; it is interpreted together with learner resources and educational conditions (Boboxonova, 2019; Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
Models and approaches	Bottom-up, top-down, and interactive/compensatory approaches are central (Stanovich, 2000).	The interactive approach is accepted but strengthened through methodological design and adaptation to learner factors (Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
Main research focus	“How does reading work?”—theoretical models and mechanisms are prioritized (Kintsch, 1998; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014).	“How do we teach and improve outcomes?”—building strategy and task systems grounded in psycholinguistic mechanisms is prioritized (Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
Cognitive mechanisms	Word recognition (orthography–phonology–semantics), integration, inference, and mental model construction are central.	Attention, working/long-term memory, semantic processing, and comprehension monitoring are linked to instructional tasks (Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
Text perception and discourse	Comprehension is explained via cognitive constructs such as textbase and situation model (Kintsch, 1998).	Text perception is linked to speech activity and understanding the author’s idea and pragmatic purpose (Boboxonova, 2019).
Context and cultural factor	Context/background knowledge is important, but explanations are often universalized within general cognitive accounts.	Educational-cultural conditions, cultural load of the text, and learner experience are emphasized (Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Kodirov, 2025).
Role of the native language (L1)	L1 influence is discussed within transfer/interference frameworks; empirical approaches vary.	L1 influence is linked to learner errors, comprehension difficulties, and strategy choice (local methodological approaches).
Motivation and personal factors	Motivation is often examined in adjacent psychological traditions and indirectly linked to reading models.	Motivation, psychological readiness, and prior knowledge are treated as internal resources shaping reading effectiveness (Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
Methodological solutions	General recommendations are derived from theory, while models often remain central.	Practical solutions are emphasized: annotated reading, reflection, multimodal texts, and activating perceptual channels (VARK)

		(Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025).
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Research Methodology. This article uses a qualitative comparative literature-analysis methodology. First, key international psycholinguistic models of reading were identified to represent major traditions (bottom-up, top-down, interactive-compensatory, construction-integration, and lexical-quality accounts). Second, Uzbek scholarly interpretations were reviewed to capture how these constructs are adapted to national educational contexts and classroom implementation. Third, a comparative synthesis was conducted to systematize convergent and divergent viewpoints, with thematic coding of core constructs (processing direction, cognitive mechanisms, strategy design, and contextual factors) and their mapping into a structured table.

Results and Discussion. The comparison demonstrates that international psycholinguistic research primarily focuses on explaining the universal cognitive architecture of reading. Reading is conceptualized as a processing system that includes decoding written signals, lexical recognition, and syntactic-semantic integration, culminating in global meaning construction as a mental/situation model (Kintsch, 1998; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Interactive perspectives explain comprehension as the interaction of background knowledge, predictions, and textual signals, making the question “How does reading work?” central in theoretical inquiry (Stanovich, 2000).

In Uzbek scholarship, cognitive foundations are preserved, but they are more strongly linked with linguodidactic and methodological design. Reading competence is interpreted as a cognitive activity connected with text comprehension (speech perception), and its development is explained through purposeful strategy selection, staged task organization, and activation of internal learner resources such as motivation, psychological readiness, and prior knowledge (Boboxonova, 2019; Kurbanbayeva, 2025; Yusupova, 2025). Consequently, reading effectiveness is analyzed not only at the model level but also within the real educational context, including the cultural load of texts and learners’ experience (Kodirov, 2025).

The synthesis further suggests that foreign-language reading should be treated as a joint activity of meaning construction (decoding and lexical-syntactic-semantic processing) and conscious regulation of comprehension (planning, monitoring, and evaluation). At early stages, learners benefit from establishing letter-sound and spelling-sound correspondences, linking written forms with phonological and lexical representations. At later stages, comprehension develops as active hypothesis testing and schema building, where readers generate predictions, verify them with textual evidence, and revise interpretations when necessary.

At the lexical level, strategic processing becomes essential for coping with unfamiliar vocabulary. Nation emphasizes that intensive reading can promote vocabulary development through systematic practice of contextual guessing, word-part analysis, and dictionary use; the guessing-from-context strategy can be applied step by step (Nation, 2009). This supports the practical implication that ICT-based reading tasks should incorporate scaffolds for hypothesis formation and verification, feedback-driven

monitoring, and multimodal support aligned with learners' perceptual channels (Yusupova, 2025).

Conclusion. The findings indicate that international psycholinguistic traditions explain reading competence mainly through universal cognitive mechanisms and theoretical models of processing, while Uzbek research places stronger emphasis on pedagogical contextualization and strategy-based instructional design.

These approaches are complementary: together they support a comprehensive competence framework that integrates decoding, lexical quality, inference, and discourse integration with learner-specific resources, motivation, and sociocultural conditions.

Methodologically, the synthesis justifies the use of strategic reading tasks such as annotated reading, reflection, multimodal text work, and perceptual-channel activation, particularly within ICT-supported environments that can provide adaptive scaffolding and feedback.

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