



Developing Students' Skills In Understanding Explicit And Implicit Information In Literary Texts Based On Pisa Tasks

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the didactic potential of PISA-based reading tasks for developing students' ability to understand explicit and implicit information in literary texts. Particular attention is given to the transition from locating directly stated information to integrating details, generating inferences, identifying cause-and-effect relations, interpreting characters' motives, and revealing meanings that are not expressed literally. The study considers reading comprehension as an active process in which students combine textual evidence with contextual knowledge and construct a coherent representation of meaning. It is argued that appropriately designed PISA-type tasks can transform literary reading from reproductive comprehension into evidence-based interpretation. The findings indicate that a gradual progression from literal comprehension to inferential interpretation facilitates deeper engagement with literary texts and contributes to students' analytical reading, reasoning, and independent interpretation skills.

KEYWORDS: PISA, reading literacy, literary text, explicit information, implicit information, inference, reading comprehension, interpretation, textual evidence, analytical reading.

INTRODUCTION

Reading a literary text requires more than recognizing words, recalling events, or reproducing information directly presented by the author. Meaning in fiction is constructed through the interaction of plot, character, detail, imagery, context, and the reader's ability to establish relationships between separate parts of a text. Some information is explicitly stated and can be identified through direct reading, while other meanings remain implicit and must be reconstructed through inference. Therefore, one of the significant objectives of literary education is to teach students to distinguish between what the text states directly and what can reasonably be concluded from textual evidence.

The PISA reading literacy framework provides an appropriate methodological foundation for this purpose. PISA considers reading literacy to involve locating information, understanding texts, evaluating them, and reflecting on their content and form. Within the understanding process, a distinction is made between representing literal meaning and integrating information to generate inferences. This distinction is particularly relevant to literary education because understanding fiction often depends on the reader's ability to move from visible textual facts to motives, relationships, emotional states, symbolic implications, and authorial intentions that may not be stated directly.

Developing these abilities is especially important because students who can successfully retrieve individual facts may still encounter difficulties when required to explain why an event



occurred, infer a character's intention, connect distant episodes, or justify an interpretation. Consequently, PISA-based tasks can be used not merely as assessment instruments but also as didactic tools for systematically developing deeper levels of literary comprehension.

The study employed theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, and didactic modelling. The reading processes described in the PISA framework were compared with the cognitive operations required for interpreting literary texts. Particular attention was paid to two interconnected levels of comprehension: identification of explicit information and construction of implicit meaning through inference.

The methodological framework was also based on the conception of reading comprehension as interaction among the reader, the text, and the reading activity. Snow emphasizes that comprehension emerges through the simultaneous interaction of these components rather than through decoding alone [2]. Kintsch's construction-integration model was used to explain the process through which readers connect individual textual propositions and prior knowledge in order to construct a coherent mental representation of a text [3]. The distinction between reading skills and consciously selected reading strategies described by Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris was considered when modelling instructional procedures for locating evidence and generating inferences [4].

Within this framework, PISA-type questions were treated as prompts capable of directing the student from literal comprehension toward increasingly complex interpretation. Rather than measuring only whether a student remembers a fact, the tasks were analysed according to whether they require the reader to identify textual evidence, connect information from different passages, infer unstated relationships, and justify a conclusion.

The analysis shows that the development of literary comprehension is most effective when explicit and implicit information are treated as interconnected rather than separate components of reading. Explicit information provides the evidential foundation from which implicit meanings can be derived. A student cannot reliably interpret a character's hidden motivation without first locating relevant actions, statements, descriptions, or narrative details. Therefore, PISA-based instruction should initially encourage accurate retrieval of textual evidence and subsequently require students to transform this evidence into interpretative conclusions.

For example, a conventional question such as "Where did the character go after the conversation?" requires retrieval of directly stated information. A cognitively more demanding question such as "What does the character's decision after the conversation suggest about his attitude toward the conflict?" requires the student to combine an explicit action with contextual information and infer an unstated psychological meaning. The difference between these questions is didactically significant. The first checks whether information has been found, whereas the second requires the reader to construct meaning from information.

PISA-oriented tasks can also train students to distinguish a valid inference from an unsupported assumption. In literary reading, students frequently express personal opinions about characters or events without connecting those opinions to the text. When a task requires an interpretation to be supported by a specific episode, phrase, action, or descriptive detail, the student learns that implicit meaning is not arbitrary. An inference should emerge logically from textual evidence. Research on children's comprehension has demonstrated the importance of

inference-making for successful understanding and has linked weaknesses in inference generation with comprehension difficulties [5].

Another important didactic possibility involves connecting information located in different parts of a literary text. Authors often reveal a character indirectly: a detail introduced at the beginning may acquire meaning only after a later event. A PISA-type question can direct students to compare these passages and explain their relationship. Such tasks develop the ability to integrate information rather than process each paragraph in isolation. This corresponds to the PISA understanding process in which readers construct an integrated representation by establishing temporal, causal, and semantic connections between pieces of information.

Understanding implicit information also involves recognizing the communicative function of artistic details. A description of silence, gesture, landscape, repeated objects, or changes in tone can convey emotional and conceptual meanings without directly naming them. Instead of asking students only to identify a stylistic device, teachers can formulate a task that requires them to explain what the detail suggests about a character or situation and which textual evidence supports that interpretation. This shifts classroom attention from terminology toward functional comprehension of literary form.

The gradual sequence from explicit information to inference is equally important for differentiated instruction. Students with weaker comprehension can begin with locating prominent information and establishing simple connections, whereas more proficient readers can work with competing evidence, indirect characterization, ambiguity, and alternative interpretations. The PISA framework itself reflects progression from locating explicitly stated information at lower proficiency levels to integrating, evaluating, and reflecting on more complex information at higher levels. Thus, task difficulty can be regulated not simply by increasing text length but by changing the cognitive operation demanded from the learner.

The results further suggest that teachers should evaluate not only the final answer but also the reasoning that connects textual evidence with interpretation. When students explain how they reached a conclusion, comprehension becomes visible and open to correction. This approach strengthens metacognitive awareness because learners begin to monitor whether their interpretation actually corresponds to the text. Reading strategies become purposeful actions rather than accidental responses, which is consistent with the distinction between conscious strategies and more automatic reading skills proposed by Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris [4].

PISA-based reading tasks help students understand both explicit and implicit information in literary texts. They develop the ability to locate details, connect ideas, infer meanings, interpret motives, and support conclusions with textual evidence.

By comparing passages, identifying causal relationships, and explaining significant details, students become more analytical and independent readers who understand not only what a text says, but also what it implies.

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