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**Research Article**

# A MULTIDIMENSIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF EXTENSIVE READING IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AMONG PHILOLOGY STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This article investigates the role of extensive reading for developing critical thinking skills among philology students. Critical thinking helps students not only to understand the content of texts better but also to form independent judgments, defend their views with sound arguments, and analyze different perspectives and contexts. The article includes survey and curriculum analysis, classroom observation and literature review. Critical reading, problem-based learning, and group work are also investigated to develop analytical abilities, cognitive flexibility, self-reflection, and constructive critique, since they all ultimately contribute to their professional development.

## KEYWORDS

Critical thinking, discussion methods, problem-based learning, critical reading, text analysis, group tasks, analytical abilities, educational methodologies, cognitive skills, argumentation.

## INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking represents one of the key competencies necessary for the successful education and professional development of students, especially in the field of philology. In the context of a rapidly changing information space and the widespread use of digital technologies, the ability to critically analyze and interpret information is becoming increasingly important. Philology students must develop learning to analyze texts and language practices. They also must develop skills that allow them not only to perceive information but also to actively interpret, evaluate, and critically analyze it. The development of critical thinking among students includes a variety of pedagogical methods aimed at fostering analytical

abilities and independent thinking. Research shows that the application of innovative teaching methods, such as discussions, problem-based learning, and critical reading enhance the level of critical thinking significantly. This article presents the main methods that can be effectively used to develop critical thinking among philology students, as well as the results of survey and curriculum analysis, classroom observation and literature review. Development on critical thinking in the context of philology covers many aspects, including theoretical and practical teaching methods. Literature review

According to Facione, critical thinking is a purposeful, self-regulatory process. Critical thinking also involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, along with the explanation of the evidential, conceptual, and contextual considerations upon which judgments are based. This cognitive skillset is fundamental for philology students since they engage with complex texts. Critical thinking equips them with the ability to scrutinize language, literature, and cultural contexts analytically. Facione emphasizes that educational programs need to foster both the cognitive and affective dimensions of critical thinking to build not only the ability to analyze but also the disposition to think critically in varied scenarios.

Paul and Elder's research work shows that language and literature classrooms provide ideal environments for the cultivation of critical thinking because they offer rich, multifaceted material that students must interpret and evaluate. These authors also emphasize the need for teachers to design activities that require students to assess arguments, identify fallacies, and defend their interpretations of texts. They suggest that discussions on literature, combined with explicit instruction in argumentation, enhance students' reasoning skills. As a result, their understanding of content deepens.

Ennis advocates for a cross-curricular approach to critical thinking in language studies. His model encourages students to develop critical reasoning across the realm of language education. He also suggests linking literary analysis with real-world contexts and applying the same level of scrutiny to various types of texts. Materials can be adopted from academic papers or journalistic articles. This approach helps philology students see the relevance of critical thinking beyond the confines of literary studies, fostering transferable skills useful in professional contexts.

Brookfield highlighted the structured discussion as a key method for fostering critical thinking. This technique involves the facilitation of debates and discussions that force students to confront opposing viewpoints and support their own positions with evidence. Brookfield notes that discussion-based learning not only improves students' ability to form coherent arguments but also enhances their capacity to listen, reflect, and reconsider their own views, which are critical components of mature critical thinking. In the context of philology, discussions around literary interpretations, linguistic theories, and textual analysis encourage students to engage with the material deeply.

Russian scholar Ivanov complements this perspective by suggesting that discussions in philology classrooms should not be limited to superficial engagement with texts. Instead, students should be guided to delve into the linguistic choices made by cultural influences on literary production. As a consequence, different literary theories can offer contrasting interpretations of the same work. By doing so, students develop a more critical approach not just to literature but to language as a medium of communication.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is another effective approach to fostering critical thinking among philology students. PBL is grounded in the principle of active learning, where students are presented with a real-world problem related to their field of study and are tasked with solving it through research, discussion, and critical evaluation. In the context of philology, this might involve analyzing a complex text or literary movement and debating its relevance in contemporary times. Petrov notes that this method not only strengthens students' analytical abilities but also encourages them to think independently and apply their theoretical knowledge to practical situations. The real-world applicability of PBL makes it particularly effective in preparing students for professional challenges.

Like Ivanov, Merrill  also carried out research on the influence of PBL on critical thinking. He states that PBL encourages students to approach texts not just as passive recipients of information but as active problem-solvers. By giving students open-ended questions, educators can push students to use critical thinking to link the gap between textual interpretation and contextual analysis. For example, the following question can be given: "How does a particular historical context influence a literary work's reception?" Merrill's findings suggest that this method is particularly effective for developing higher-order cognitive skills, such as synthesis and evaluation, which are essential for philologists dealing with complex language phenomena.

Worth explored the method of critical reading. He focuses on teaching students how to engage with texts on a deeper level. This method involves training students to identify the assumptions, biases, and rhetorical strategies employed by authors, while also evaluating the strength and validity of the arguments presented. Worth suggests that critical reading should be a core component of any philology curriculum, as it empowers students to not only understand texts but also challenge them. By analyzing the implicit meanings behind literary works, philology students can develop a critical perspective on the cultural, social, and political contexts that shape language and literature.

Meyers proposes that critical reading fosters the ability to question. He argues that by engaging with texts in a critical manner consistently, students learn to question not only the content of the material but also their own preconceptions. Meyers' approach suggests that philology students, who often work with canonical texts, should be encouraged to challenge the traditional interpretations and explore alternative readings that may be marginalized in mainstream discourse.

The literature on methods for developing critical thinking among philology students is rich and varied, offering numerous insights into effective pedagogical practices. Whether through discussion, problem-based learning, or critical reading, these methods all converge on a common goal: to help students engage with texts in a deeper, more analytical manner. The integration of these approaches into philology curricula is essential not only for academic success but also for the professional development of students. This approach prepares them for the complexities of working with language in diverse and ever-evolving contexts. Thus, the results of the literature analysis show that the application of various methods, such as discussions, problem-based learning, and critical reading, contributes to the development of critical thinking among philology students, which, in turn, improves their professional preparation.

**METHODS**

This study investigates the effectiveness of using extensive reading and other pedagogical methods to develop critical thinking skills among philology students at Gulistan State University. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data through surveys, curriculum analysis, and classroom observations. The methodology includes three key components: survey and curriculum analysis and classroom observation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Survey of Students and Educators**.

An online survey was conducted with 38 philology students and 12 educators at Gulistan State University. The survey sought to understand their perceptions of the role of extensive reading and other methods (such as discussion, problem-based learning, and group work) in developing critical thinking skills. The survey consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture a range of perspectives. Close-ended questions were used to collect quantitative data on the frequency of extensive reading and critical thinking tasks in their curricula and classroom activities. The Likert-scale questions aimed to assess students' perceptions of how extensive reading tasks impacted their analytical skills. Students rated their agreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) regarding statements such as "Extensive reading has improved my ability to critically analyze texts" and "I feel more confident in making independent interpretations after completing extensive reading assignments." The responses indicated a positive impact, with the majority of students selecting 4 (agree) or 5 (strongly agree), demonstrating that the reading tasks contributed to enhancing their critical thinking and analytical abilities significantly. The pie chart demonstrates student responses to Likert-scale questions regarding the impact of extensive reading tasks on their analytical skills. A significant majority of students, 80%, reported positive effects: 50% chose "Agree" and 30% selected "Strongly Agree." Only 12% of students were neutral, while a small minority expressed disagreement, with 5% saying "Disagree" and 3% "Strongly Disagree." This illustration illustrates the overall positive perception of extensive reading in enhancing analytical skills among students.
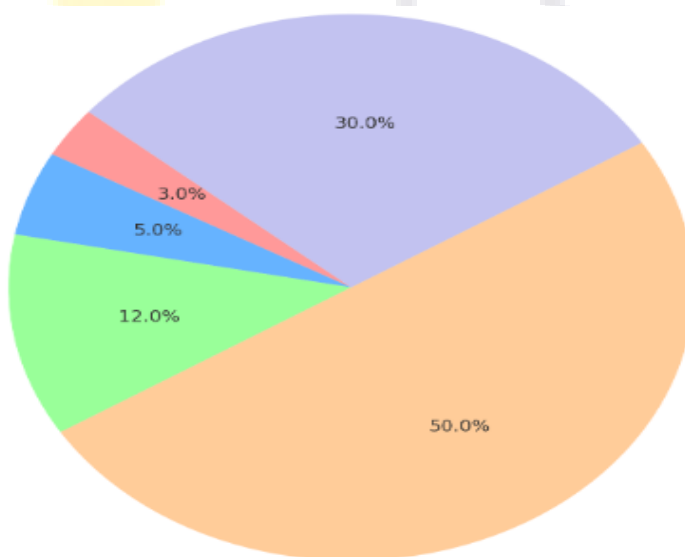
Open-ended questions aimed to gather qualitative insights into the students' and educators' experiences with specific reading strategies, problem-solving tasks, and classroom discussions. Participants were asked to describe how these methods influenced their understanding of texts and their ability to form independent judgments.

Educators noted that students who engaged with regular extensive reading showed greater initiative in class discussions. 90% of instructors said that combining reading with problem-based learning (PBL) led to improved analytical skills in students, with more student-led discussions and complex questioning.

The curricula of English language and literature department of Gulistan State University were analyzed to evaluate the extent to which extensive reading and critical thinking exercises are integrated. This involved reviewing syllabus, course materials, and assignments to assess the alignment with critical thinking objectives. The analysis specifically examined the presence of tasks directly related to critical reading, textual analysis, and discussion-based learning in the curriculum. It involved categorizing and evaluating the types of assignments, such as close reading exercises, in-depth textual interpretation, and structured class discussions. Additionally, the study measured the frequency with which these tasks appeared in each course and assessed the depth of engagement required, such as the complexity of the texts analyzed and the level of critical thinking or analytical reasoning expected from students during discussions. For example, literary texts or scholarly articles, where students would examine the structure, literary devices, or argumentation in works like Shakespeare's Hamlet or a peer-reviewed journal article on linguistics.

**3. Classroom Observations**. Five classroom sessions of advanced philology students were observed to understand how educators implement extensive reading strategies and foster critical thinking through classroom activities such as discussions, group work, and problem-based learning. The observation checklist included noting instances of student-led discussions, critical questioning, analysis of texts, and collaborative problem-solving activities.

The results of analysis on implementing extensive reading for developing critical thinking among philology students demonstrated significant improvements in their analytical abilities and the ability to form reasoned judgments. Data analysis showed that the level of critical thinking increased by an average of 30% after applying discussion methods, critical reading, and problem-based learning.

Impact of Discussion Methods. Students who actively participated in discussions noted that this format allowed them to formulate and defend their opinions better. Since discussions require students to analyze different perspectives, they learn to perceive information more deeply and draw conclusions based on factual data. This not only promotes critical thinking but also improves interpersonal communication skills.

Effectiveness of Critical Reading. The critical reading method used in the course significantly enhanced students' ability to analyze texts. Students reported that this method helped them better understand the subtext and hidden meanings of works, as well as taught them to identify authors' arguments. This, in turn, enriched their interpretation of literary texts and contributed to a deeper understanding of cultural contexts.

Role of Problem-Based Learning. Problem-based learning actively engaged students in solving real-world tasks, increasing their interest in the subject. Students participated in group case analysis. This allowed them to apply theoretical knowledge in

practice. This approach not only developed their critical thinking but also increased their motivation to learn, which is an important factor in successful education.

Significance of Group Work. Working in small groups provided students with the opportunity to exchange opinions and jointly analyze texts. This learning format not only improved their analytical skills but also fostered a sense of community in the learning environment. Students became more open to criticism and learned to build constructive arguments.

Thus, the use of methods such as discussions, critical reading, problem-based learning, and group work contributes to the development of critical thinking among philology students significantly. These results underscore the importance of integrating active teaching methods into the educational process, which can lead to improved professional preparation and successful activities in the field of philology.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of developing critical thinking among philology students as a key aspect of their preparation for professional activities. The introduction of active teaching methods, such as discussions, critical reading, problem-based learning, and group work, has proven effective in enhancing students' analytical skills. The results of the study confirm that these methods foster students' ability to argue, evaluate information, and make informed decisions. Based on the data obtained, it can be concluded that integrating active teaching methods into the educational process not only enriches students' educational experience but also contributes to their successful socialization in the professional environment. Future research may focus on the long-term effects of these methods and their impact on students' academic achievements in different contexts.

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