AUTHENTIC LITERARY ENGLISH TEXT AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING ANALYTICAL READING

Oxana Rogulska

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor,
Khmelnytskyi National University, Ukraine
e-mail: oxana.rogulska@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0001-5603-0274

Olha Mahdiuk

Ph.D., Assistant Professor,
Khmelnytskyi National University, Ukraine
e-mail: tychynskao@ukr.net, orcid.org/0000-0002-6778-3586

Summary

The purpose of this article is to discover the importance of analytical reading of authentic literary texts in foreign language teaching, to reveal the difference between analytical and basic reading, to characterize three main models of engaging with the text while reading analytically in a foreign language, to cover the benefits of using authentic literary texts in analytical reading, to highlight the stages of working with authentic literary texts in language learning and to introduce the tasks and exercises designed to be completed during the Pre-reading, While-reading, and Post-reading stages.

Key words: foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, English language learner, learning process, language education strategies.

1. Introduction

In the context of new approaches and changes in foreign language teaching and language education strategies, analytical reading of authentic literary English texts becomes an important and integral aspect of foreign language learning, while the concept of 'analytical reading' requires rethinking, and its implementation as an integral component of learning demands the development of a number of methodological principles. Analytical reading of authentic foreign literature broadens students' outlook and develops their logic, intellect and cognitive interests. It allows students to understand the foreign language in its socio-cultural context, teaches them to recognise its stylistic diversity and understand its expressive potential.

2. Analytical Reading vs. Basic Reading

Analytical reading plays a leading role in understanding reality, studying other cultures, and forming a positive attitude towards the country and people whose language is being studied.

The primary difference between analytical reading and basic reading is the level of engagement and the goal of the reader. Basic reading focuses on literal word recognition and surface-level comprehension, while analytical reading is an active, critical process aimed at achieving a deep, thorough understanding of the text's structure, arguments, and underlying meaning (See Table 1).

Table 1

Analytical Reading vs. Basic Reading

Feature	Basic Reading (Non-Critical)	Analytical Reading (Critical/Deep)
Main Goal	to get the gist or surface information (What does the text say?).	to achieve deep understanding, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation (How does the text work and what does it mean?).
Focus	vocabulary, literal meaning, basic plot/facts.	author's purpose, intent, structure, arguments, literary devices, tone, and cultural context.
Process	passive reception; simply recognizing and restating key remarks.	active, reflective, and analytic engagement; breaking down the text into its parts and relating them to the whole.

Information obtained from texts for analytical reading (factual, sociocultural, historical etc.) stimulates students' independent thinking, encourages spontaneous speech and develops the ability to express their thoughts, subjective views, interests and life position *(Bouvet, 2002)*.

3. Three models of interaction with a text

With the right approach to analytical reading, students develop artistic taste and learn to analyse and generalise, give arguments and debate. When reading analytically in a foreign language, you engage with the text across multiple layers, often categorized by *three main models*:

1. *Linguistic (Language Model).* This model focuses on the language itself, treating the text as a linguistic product.

Lexical and Grammatical Analysis: paying close attention to complex sentence structures, verb tenses, word choice, and idiomatic expressions to understand how they contribute to meaning.

Stylistic Analysis: examining rhetorical and literary techniques (like metaphor, irony, narration style) to interpret the text consciously and build advanced language skills.

Pattern Recognition: identifying repeated words, images, contrasts, or sentence structures to understand underlying themes or the author's preferred stylistic tendencies.

2. *Cultural (Cultural Model).* This treats the text as a source of information about the target culture.

Contextualization: researching the social, political, and historical context in which the text was written to fully grasp its implications.

Cultural Insight: interpreting characters, settings, and events in relation to the foreign culture's norms, values, and literary traditions. This helps learners get an experience of the "real context" of the language.

3. *Personal Growth (Reader-Response Model).* This model focuses on the interaction between the reader and the text.

Critical Evaluation: judging the validity, fairness, and logic of the author's arguments or message.

Forming Personal Opinions: expressing attitudes, describing personal experiences, and integrating the new information with existing knowledge. This makes the study of the language more memorable and personalized *(Alptekin, 2002)*.

4. The benefits of using authentic literary texts

Authentic literary texts are invaluable resources for analytical reading in foreign language learning. They are defined as texts created by native speakers for native-speaking audience, not specifically for language teaching. They reflect the natural language, cultural nuances, and social contexts of the real world, making them valuable for gaining a deeper understanding of a language and its associated culture. Examples include any published literature, from classic novels to contemporary short stories *(Gholami, Alavi, 2018)*.

Using these texts for analytical reading helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use, providing rich linguistic and cultural input.

The benefits of using authentic literary texts are:

– *exposure to authentic language and style:* they contain natural language, including idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, diverse linguistic styles, and complex sentence structures that are absent in simplified materials; provide a full range of discourse features, enhancing students' linguistic competence;

– *cultural and intercultural competence:* literary texts offer deep insights into the target culture's values, customs, history, and social issues; encourage learners to compare the text's culture with their own, promoting intercultural awareness and competence;

– *motivation and engagement:* authentic texts are often more interesting, engaging, and relevant than contrived classroom materials, as they deal with universal or topical themes like love, identity, or social issues;

– *development of analytical and critical thinking skills:* analytical reading, a cognitive skill, stimulates deep thought and critical approaches to the text; encourages learners to look beyond surface meaning to analyze elements like theme, tone, author's purpose, symbolism, and narrative structure;

– *preparation for the "real world":* by dealing with unedited and challenging material, students develop the strategies needed to cope with real-life language outside the classroom *(Durak, 2024)*.

5. The stages of working with authentic literary texts

The stages of working with authentic literary texts in language learning typically follow a three-part framework: *Pre-reading (Pre-text), While-reading (Text), and Post-reading (Post-text)*. This structure is designed to guide students from preparation and comprehension to deeper analysis and creative application.

1. Pre-reading (Pre-text) Stage. The primary goal of this stage is to prepare students for reading the text. Pre-reading activities, also known as pre-text or before-reading activities, are tasks or exercises designed to be completed before a student reads a text. Their primary purpose is to prepare the reader's mind for the content, activate prior knowledge, build necessary vocabulary, and set a purpose for reading. This makes the reading process more effective, engaged, and comprehensible.

To activate background knowledge:

– *brainstorming:* students quickly list anything that comes to mind about the topic, key vocabulary, or the title of the text.

– *K-W-L Chart:* Students complete the "K" (What I Know) and "W" (What I Want to Know) columns before reading. The "L" (What I Learned) is completed afterward.

– *anticipation guides:* a set of statements related to the text's themes or content are presented. Students agree or disagree with each statement and discuss their reasoning. This sparks curiosity and makes them think critically about the topic before they even read it.

– *quickwrite/free writing:* students write non-stop for a short time (e.g., 2-5 minutes) about a topic or question related to the text.

These activities help students connect new content to what they already know, reducing cognitive load.

To preview and predict:

– *text feature walk:* students examine the title, headings, subheadings, captions, images, graphs, bolded words, and introduction/conclusion to predict the text's content and structure.

– *skimming and scanning:* students quickly look over the text to identify main ideas, key terms, or general organization without reading every word.

– *making predictions:* based on the title, cover, or text features, students predict what the text will be about, what problems might arise, or what information they expect to find.

– *picture/illustration analysis:* students analyze any visual aids and discuss their connection to the text's potential content.

These tasks help students get a general sense of what the text is about and how it's organized.

Building Vocabulary and Concepts:

– *vocabulary introduction:* the teacher presents and defines 5-10 essential, high-utility words from the text, often with examples.

– *concept maps/webs:* students create a visual diagram connecting related ideas and concepts about the topic.

Activities focused on key language ensure comprehension isn't blocked by unknown words.

2. While-reading (Text) Stage. This stage focuses on active engagement with the text and developing essential reading strategies for comprehension.

Core While-Reading Strategies:

– *annotation:* this is the most direct form of active reading. It involves marking up the text with symbols, highlights, underlining, and notes in the margins. Readers may use: underlining/highlighting for main ideas, key terms, or important details; question marks for confusing or unclear parts; exclamation points for surprising or important information; marginal notes to paraphrase, summarize a section, make connections, or record reactions/questions);

– *predicting:* periodically pausing at natural breaks (like chapter or section endings) to anticipate what will happen next or what information will be presented. Readers should confirm or revise their predictions as they continue reading;

– *clarifying/monitoring:* the act of self-checking for comprehension. If a section is confusing, the reader stops, rereads, uses context clues to define unfamiliar words, or breaks down complex sentences;

– *visualizing:* creating mental images of the characters, setting, events, or processes described in the text to deepen engagement and understanding;

– *questioning:* asking "W" questions (who, what, where, when, why, how) about the content to keep the mind focused and seek deeper meaning from the text;

– *paraphrasing/summarizing:* pausing after a paragraph or section to briefly restate the main idea in one's own words. This is a powerful check for understanding and retention.

Interactive While-Reading Activities. These activities are often done in a classroom setting and promote social interaction and collaboration during the reading process:

– *information transfer:* students complete a graphic organizer, chart, or story map (e.g., for characters, setting, problem, solution, or cause/effect) as they read, extracting and synthesizing information directly from the text;

– *True or False Statements:* students are given a list of statements and must read the text to verify if they are true or false, providing textual evidence to justify their choice;

– *Jigsaw Reading:* a text is divided into parts, and different groups read different sections. They complete a task on their section, then teach or share their learned information with the rest of the class, collectively creating a complete picture of the whole text;

– *"Say Something" Technique:* in pairs or small groups, readers stop at pre-determined points (or when a question arises) and take turns sharing a thought, prediction, or question with their partner before continuing to read;

– *peer discussion:* at specific intervals, students pause to share their thoughts, insights, or confusing points with a partner or group. This includes activities like Character Analysis to track traits and motivations as they are revealed;

– *Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA):* the instructor guides the reading by pausing at strategic points to ask students to make predictions, read to a certain point to confirm them, and then make new predictions. This process is repeated until the reading is complete *(Verkhovtsova, 2022)*.

3. Post-reading (Post-text) Stage. Post-reading, or post-text, activities are designed to help students consolidate, reflect on, and respond creatively or critically to the text they have read. These activities move beyond simple comprehension checks to encourage deeper analysis, application, and connection to other skills (speaking, writing, etc.).

Comprehension and Recall Activities. These activities check how well students understood the main ideas and details of the text.

Summarizing/Retelling:

– *verbal or written summary:* students write or orally present a summary of the text. For a story, they might use the "Somebody Wanted But So Then" framework;

– *sequencing:* students re-order shuffled sentences, paragraphs, or pictures that represent the main events of the text.

Comprehension Questions/Quizzes:

– *answering questions:* the teacher asks a set of questions, moving from literal details (Level 1) to inferential meaning (Level 2), and finally to applied, critical thinking questions (Level 3);

– *student-generated questions:* students create quiz or discussion questions for their peers to answer.

Graphic Organizers:

– *Story Map:* students complete a map with the main elements of a narrative text: characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution;

– *Venn Diagram:* used to compare and contrast two elements from the text (e.g., two characters, or the topic in the text versus the student's own experience);

– *Flow Chart:* used for sequential or factual texts (like procedures or cause-and-effect relationships) to show steps or connections.

Critical Thinking and Discussion Activities. These activities encourage students to analyze the content and form their own opinions.

– *class discussions:* teacher-led or student-led discussion on the text's themes, the author's message, point of view, or structure;

– *reader response:* students write or discuss their personal reactions to the text, characters, incidents, or ideas;

– *Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, Text-to-World connections:* students relate the reading to their own life, another text, or real-world events;

– *agree/disagree statements:* students discuss and justify their position on various statements related to the text's content or underlying issues;

– *language and cultural analysis:* analyzing literary style, linguistic features, and rhetorical devices (e.g., figurative language); discussing the cultural context and its implications.

Creative and Integrated Skills Activities. These tasks use the text as a springboard for practicing other language skills (speaking, writing, and performance).

Role-Playing/Drama:

– *reader's theater:* students read from a script (often a modified version of the text) to act out the story;

– *acting out:* students act out a scene from the text or a hypothetical follow-up scene (e.g., a meeting between characters years later);

Writing/Innovation:

– *alternative endings:* students creatively write a new ending for the story;

– *character diary/letter:* students write a diary entry from a character's point of view or a letter between two characters;

– *creating a text type:* students transform the text into a different format, such as a news report, a movie review, a comic strip, or a wanted poster.

Presentations and Projects:

– *group presentations:* students prepare and deliver a presentation on a specific aspect of the text or its topic;

– *creating media:* students find or create images, music, or videos that relate to the text and present them as a collage or project.

– *retelling from a new perspective:* students retell the story from the point of view of a different character.

– *vocabulary and grammar review:* activities that use words and phrases from the text to reinforce language learning, such as gap-filling exercises, paraphrasing key sentences, or creating new sentences using the target vocabulary *(Grabe, Stoller, 2011)*.

6. Conclusions

In summary, analytical reading transforms the learning process, shifting it from passive information reception to active engagement and critical enquiry. It goes beyond mere comprehension, training the mind to analyse complex arguments, evaluate evidence and synthesise diverse perspectives.

For English language learners, analytical reading is the bridge that connects basic language knowledge to advanced proficiency, academic competence and true intellectual mastery of the language. Analytical reading improves more than just vocabulary and grammar; it also fosters a deep understanding of literary techniques, cultural nuances and the intentions of authors. This allows learners to participate in high-level academic and professional discourse with confidence.

Crucially, the habits developed through analytical reading – critical thinking, focused attention and the capacity for deep thought – extend far beyond the classroom. These are fundamental skills for effective citizenship, informed decision-making and professional success in an information-saturated world. Therefore, embracing this method is a vital investment in lifelong learning and intellectual autonomy, not just an educational preference.

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