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**Аннотация:** *В статье рассматриваются проблемы, связанные с развитием аналитического чтения, предусматривающего максимально полное и точное понимание всей содержащейся в тексте информации, имплицитной и эксплицитной, и ее критическое осмысление. Особое внимание обращается на целенаправленный анализ содержания читаемого с опорой на языковые и логические связи текста, а также на приемы, развивающие аналитическое мышление студентов – задания проблемного характера, требующие мыслительных операций.*

**В.А. Зайцева**

## **CRITICAL READING DEVELOPMENT**

This article covers some aspects of critical reading development of university students. Critical reading presupposes activities involved in thinking, reasoning, decision making, problem-solving, and all other forms of higher mental processes [5, 2]. At the center of attention are university-age students who have already developed academic skills in their native language and who are acquiring English for professional purposes.

It is widely accepted that reading is a process of hypothesis formation and verification; it is a communicative act between a writer and a reader (possibly a large number of readers). According to this notion reading presupposes some kind of criticism. This point of view is supported by Harris and Hodges (1981) who define critical reading as the process of making judgments in reading: "evaluating relevancy and adequacy of what is read"[2, 23]: evaluating content, organization, development, unity, and clarity of the text.

Psychologists consider the problem of interrelation of language, speech and thinking is very important. "The development of any language is closely connected.... with a gradual development of thinking. So, teaching communication in a foreign language as an aim incorporates two tasks: teaching a foreign language and developing thinking in it" [1, 262]. The interrelationship between reading and

thinking is supported by Vygotsky's (1962) theory of the relationship between thought and word, suggesting that words give rise to thoughts, which, in turn, are expressed in words. So, it follows that the development of thinking can be accounted as the development of critical awareness at the process of reading.

Reading, as an important part of foreign language learning process, aimed at achieving autonomous learning by developing strategic competence, stimulates students' thinking about the text, promotes reflection on the reading process, gives students practice with an effective strategy for vocabulary building, and serves as a basis for assessment of students' communicative speech.

Taking into account these points of view students of Modern Foreign Languages Department, who acquire English for academic/professional purposes, are taught reading through critical reading approach, during the whole course of learning as well as in mass media classes, made up for third-year students (where they usually read two- to four-page articles in class followed by vocabulary developing tasks, comprehension questions and discussion) and in classes on stylistics that entails linguistic analysis.

In mass media classes reading of relatively simple news articles facilitates students' abilities to read quickly, acquiring vocabulary through that enables students to derive meaning with the help of context clues, escaping learning of an isolated list of words without reference to the context and routine dictionary work that can kill interest in reading as well as interfere with comprehension. The ultimate goal is to familiarize students with journalese language, register and stylistic devices that are presented in a piece of news as well as with certain typical features of different article types (editorials, news articles, feature articles ....). It is also useful to ask students to write a summary or personal reaction to what they have read and involve them in discussion on the key problems. It is not only an accountability measure, but also a way to help students better understand and appreciate what they are reading for their critical awareness development.

Several strategies are used for developing critical awareness while reading. Certainly they depend on students' language proficiency and maturity level and can be classified as the pre-reading stage (that generates a critical awareness of how and why texts are written), while-reading stage (when questioning and interpretive abilities are triggered – annotating and analyzing stage), and post-reading stages, with a focus on both language and content (summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting, and reflecting). It is important to raise the students' awareness of reading as a skill to the process of becoming a critical thinker. At the process of reading students should:

- evaluate what they have read and make a decision;
- be challenged with increasingly demanding and thought-provoking tasks, which are practical and oriented to helping them enhance their thinking powers and develop their critical skills;
- follow some guidelines that may be applied to all kinds of texts with the traditional five Ws (who/whom, what, when, where, and why/how) as the basic critical awareness procedure;

-relate new information with prior knowledge to go deeper into the essence of reading material [3, 16];

-retrieve information to select those chunks that are essential for the understanding of the material and may be useful for their further interpretation.

Research proves that critical reading can be taught and that students do not become critical readers without instruction. Reading experts also confirm that the reading process becomes a critical act if the students are challenged by provocative reading materials and learning activities [4, 24]. By introducing certain learning tasks the tutor helps students work out some critical awareness skills that are necessary for better critical independent reading as a part of their professional literacy.

For this purpose some specific learning thought-provoking tasks are used to direct the students' attention to the points that elicit responses to help arouse critical attitude to reading material and focus the discussion. For example:

Read the article carefully and ask yourself these questions:

-What information does this article convey?

-Has the author formulated a problem/issue? Is it clearly defined? Is its significance (scope, severity, relevance) clearly established?

-What is the author's purpose for writing the article?

-Is there a thesis statement in this article?

-What examples does the author offer to support his general idea?

-What micro-themes are discussed in it?

-Are the facts in the article accompanied by the author's personal comment?

-How would you determine the tone of the article (objective, ironic, comic or nostalgic)?

-Is the author positive covering the information?

-What is your evaluation of the events given in the article?

Read the text of the article again and:

-make a list of special words and phrases used for coherence – transitional words;

-examine the article to identify the function of the direct address, quoted speech, use of repetition, parallel constructions and phrases, varieties in sentence-openings, exclamation marks, choice of words, signals of coherence and logic;

-answer: What is it communicated through the language: reassuring, expressing attitudes, feelings, introducing information, personal meanings or suggesting of persuading? What kind of message have you read (convincing/persuasive/entertaining/thought provoking/boring/normal/matter of fact/fact loaded/forceful/interesting/....)? Give your reasoning.

Analyze the article taking into account the following:

-the setting of the article (subject, place/state, time);

-the theme and the details;

-the problem and its outcome;

-the techniques the author uses to arouse the interest of the readers.

Application of this critical awareness approach has been successful in classes having a positive effect on the students' reading habits: the students find it

stimulating and enjoyable, as they become more independent and develop learning autonomy. Experience shows that critical reading approach fosters better reading by helping university students to focus on the ideology and assumptions behind the author's words and paves the way to more efficient reading comprehension.

The effectiveness of critical awareness activities, of course, depends on the tutor, whose role becomes even more crucial.

The tutors' primary tasks are:

- to define specific target needs, to create active involvement conditions in class;
- to get university students to examine texts in more critical, reflective ways;
- to encourage them to take assertive positions against texts;
- to direct them to a step-by-step search for critical context awareness, having them comprehend and produce appropriate discourse.

In sum, the roles of tutors are to strengthen and motivate university students by developing their critical literacy as powerful learning tool which is necessary for their further professional activities.

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