



## Article

# Beyond Comprehension: Expanding Reading Competence Through Cognitive and Critical Approaches in Philology

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the evolving concept of reading competence in philology education, emphasizing the need to move beyond traditional approaches focused primarily on vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. While these components remain essential, they are insufficient for developing a comprehensive understanding of literary texts. The study highlights the importance of incorporating stylistic awareness and critical interpretation as integral elements of reading competence. By analyzing literary texts through a stylistic and interpretative lens, students can develop deeper cognitive engagement, enhance analytical thinking, and improve their ability to interpret implicit meanings. The article proposes a more holistic model of reading competence that integrates linguistic, stylistic, and critical dimensions, thereby contributing to more effective philological training. The findings suggest that such an approach not only improves reading proficiency but also fosters independent thinking and interpretative skills among students.*

**Keywords:** *reading competence; philology education; stylistic awareness; literary texts; critical interpretation; reading fluency; vocabulary acquisition; analytical thinking; interpretative skills; language teaching methodology.*

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## 1. Introduction

The In recent years, the concept of reading competence in philology education has expanded beyond basic comprehension to include deeper cognitive and interpretative abilities. Traditional approaches often emphasize vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency; however, they tend to overlook the importance of stylistic awareness and critical interpretation of literary texts [1].

This study proposes a cognitive-stylistic approach to developing reading competence, where students are guided not only to understand the text but also to analyze its stylistic features and interpret its deeper meanings. Such an approach enables learners to engage with literary texts on a more profound level, fostering analytical thinking and enhancing overall language proficiency [2].

The concept of reading competence has been widely explored in the fields of applied linguistics and language pedagogy. Traditionally, reading has been viewed as a combination of decoding and comprehension processes (Grabe, 2009). However, recent studies emphasize that effective reading, particularly in philological education, requires deeper cognitive engagement with texts. "Despite numerous studies on reading competence, there is still insufficient research on integrating cognitive and stylistic approaches in philology education." The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of a cognitive-stylistic approach in developing reading competence among philology students [3].

### The following research questions guide the study:

How does the cognitive-stylistic approach affect students' reading comprehension?

Which stages of the model are most effective in improving reading skills?

Does stylistic analysis improve interpretative abilities?

## 2. Literature review.

Scholars such as Kintsch (1998) highlight the role of cognitive processing in reading, arguing that comprehension is constructed through interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and textual information. Similarly, Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as a complex process involving the extraction and construction of meaning [4].

In the context of literary texts, stylistic competence becomes equally important. Carter and Long (1991) suggest that literature provides a unique opportunity for learners to engage with authentic language and develop interpretative skills. Furthermore, Hall (2005) emphasizes that stylistic analysis enhances learners' awareness of linguistic features such as metaphor, symbolism, and narrative voice.

Recent pedagogical approaches advocate for integrating cognitive and stylistic dimensions in teaching reading [5]. According to Paran (2008), literary texts can significantly contribute to language development when learners are guided to analyze both form and meaning. This supports the idea that reading competence should not be limited to surface-level understanding but should include deeper interpretative abilities.

Despite these developments, many teaching practices still focus primarily on vocabulary and basic comprehension. Therefore, there is a need for an integrated approach that combines cognitive processing and stylistic analysis in developing reading competence among philology students. However, most traditional teaching methods still prioritize vocabulary and basic comprehension, leaving stylistic interpretation underdeveloped [6].

## 3. Methods

This study adopts a mixed-method research design to investigate the effectiveness of a cognitive-stylistic approach in developing reading competence among philology students.

The participants of the study were 2 second-year philology students at a higher educational institution. The students were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using the proposed four-stage model, while the control group followed a traditional reading approach.

The instructional materials included selected excerpts from literary works such as "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald and "Pygmalion" by George Bernard Shaw. These texts were chosen due to their rich stylistic features and relevance to the students' academic curriculum.

### **Instruments**

Pre-test and post-test (reading comprehension, vocabulary, interpretation)

Observation checklist

Student feedback questionnaire

### **Procedure**

**The experiment lasted 6 weeks and included four stages:**

1 Lexical activation

2 Fluent reading

3 Stylistic decoding

4 Interpretative analysis

The experimental procedure was conducted over a period of six weeks and consisted of four stages: lexical activation, fluent reading, stylistic decoding, and interpretative analysis. Various tasks were designed for each stage, including vocabulary pre-teaching, timed reading exercises, stylistic feature identification, and critical

#### 4. Results and Discussion.

**Table 1.**

**Quantitative Results**

Skill Area	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Improvement
Reading comprehension	54%	82%	+28%
Vocabulary retention	57%	80%	+23%
Interpretative skills	50%	85%	+35%

Students in the experimental group showed significantly higher improvement compared to the control group [7].

**Observations**

- Increased engagement in literary discussions
- Higher confidence in text interpretation
- Better identification of stylistic devices

Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests measuring reading speed, vocabulary retention, and comprehension accuracy. In addition, qualitative data were obtained through classroom observations and student feedback [8-12].

Results and Discussion. The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed approach. The findings of the study demonstrate that the cognitive-stylistic approach had a positive impact on the development of reading competence among philology students. The results indicate noticeable improvements in students' ability to process literary texts more efficiently and interpret them more deeply.

Students exposed to the four-stage model showed better engagement with the texts compared to those following traditional methods. In particular, the stage of lexical activation facilitated easier comprehension of complex vocabulary, while fluent reading activities contributed to increased reading speed and confidence [13-15].

Moreover, the stylistic decoding stage enabled students to identify and analyze key literary features such as metaphors, imagery, and narrative techniques. This not only enhanced their linguistic awareness but also improved their ability to interpret underlying meanings within the texts.

The interpretative stage proved to be especially effective in fostering critical thinking. Students demonstrated a greater ability to express personal responses, justify their interpretations, and engage in analytical discussions [16-20].

Overall, the integration of cognitive and stylistic elements created a more holistic learning experience. The results support the idea that reading competence in philology education should extend beyond basic comprehension to include deeper analytical and interpretative skills [21].

In conclusion, this study highlights the effectiveness of a cognitive-stylistic approach in enhancing reading competence among philology students. By integrating lexical, fluency-based, stylistic, and interpretative stages, the proposed model addresses multiple dimensions of reading [22].

The findings suggest that literary texts, when used systematically, can significantly contribute to the development of both linguistic and cognitive skills. The approach not only improves reading performance but also encourages deeper engagement with texts and fosters critical thinking. These findings support Kintsch (1998), who emphasized the importance of cognitive processing in reading comprehension. Similarly, Carter and Long (1991) highlighted the value of literary analysis in language learning [23].

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The integration of four stages (lexical, fluency, stylistic, interpretative) created a structured learning environment that enhanced both linguistic and analytical abilities [24].

## 5. Conclusion.

The study contributes to the field of language pedagogy by offering an innovative model that bridges the gap between traditional reading instruction and modern educational demands. It is recommended that future research explore the application of this model in different educational contexts and with larger sample sizes.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the development of a cognitive-stylistic model for enhancing reading competence among philology students. Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on vocabulary and comprehension, the proposed model integrates cognitive processing with stylistic analysis and interpretative reading. This holistic framework provides a deeper understanding of literary texts and contributes to the advancement of modern language teaching methodology.

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