

Развитие навыков критического чтения на английском языке: сравнительный анализ эффективности обучения студентов филологических и экономических специальностей

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Введение. В современном глобализованном мире развитие навыков критического чтения на английском языке остается одной из основных задач высшего образования. Данный навык необходим для полноценного анализа информации, принятия решений и развития критического мышления. Однако уровень сформированности критического чтения может варьироваться в зависимости от академической подготовки студентов.

Цель статьи: оценить эффективность обучения критическому чтению среди студентов филологических и экономических специальностей, выявить ключевые различия и определить влияние различных учебных форматов на развитие данного навыка.

Материалы и методы. В исследовании приняли участие 120 респондентов ($N=120$), равномерно распределенных между студентами-филологами ($n=60$) и студентами-экономистами ($n=60$) со второго по четвертый курс Финансового Университета. Применялся стратифицированный метод отбора с учетом курса и специальности студентов для обеспечения репрезентативности данных. Оценочная структура включала специализированные задания на критическое чтение на основе аутентичных английских текстов из проверенных источников, дополненные комплексной многокомпонентной системой оценки. Анализ данных проводился с использованием статистического пакета SPSS 25, применялись U-критерий Манна-Уитни, тест Вилкоксона, корреляционный анализ Спирмена, критерий хи-квадрат и контент-анализ.

Результаты. Исследование выявило, что студенты филологических специальностей показали более высокие результаты по скорости чтения ($p = 0,003$) и грамотности ($p < 0,001$), однако различий по аналитической глубине, выявлению аргументов и формулированию позиции между группами не обнаружено ($p > 0,05$). Независимое обучение оказалось более эффективным, чем классные занятия, по всем показателям критического чтения ($p < 0,01$). Корреляционный анализ показал отрицательную связь между скоростью чтения и грамотностью ($r = -0,32$; $p < 0,05$) и положительную связь между глубиной анализа, выявлением аргументов и формулированием позиции ($r > 0,5$; $p < 0,01$). Контент-анализ ответов студентов показал, что филологи значительно чаще анализируют структуру текста (75%), чем студенты экономических специальностей (53,3%). В то же время студенты экономических специальностей чаще упоминали критическую оценку достоверности источников (58,3%), хотя различие не достигло уровня статистической значимости ($p = 0,202$). Эти различия подчеркивают влияние профессиональной подготовки на приоритетные стратегии критического чтения на английском языке.

Заключение. Полученные результаты подчеркивают необходимость дифференцированного подхода к развитию навыков критического чтения у студентов различных академических направлений. Кроме того, выявленное преимущество независимого обучения в развитии критического чтения подтверждает необходимость увеличения его доли в образовательных программах. Дальнейшие исследования необходимы для разработки и оптимизации эффективных методик обучения, направленных на улучшение навыков критического мышления при работе с текстами на иностранном языке в различных академических областях.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

критическое чтение, критический анализ, обучение иностранному языку, понимание прочитанного, академическая грамотность

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Developing critical reading skills in English: a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of teaching students majoring in philology and economics

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The development of critical reading skills in English remains one of the main objectives of higher education in today's globalised world. This skill is necessary for comprehensive analysis of information, decision-making and development of critical thinking. However, the critical reading skills level can vary depending on the academic background of students.

The aim of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching critical reading to students majoring in philology and economics, to identify key differences, and to assess the impact of different teaching formats on the development of this skill.

Materials and methods. The survey involved 120 respondents (N=120) evenly distributed between philology students (n=60) and economics students (n=60) in their second to fourth years at the Financial University. The stratified selection method was used, with regard to the year of training and the students' specialisation, to ensure the representativeness of the data. The assessment structure included specialised critical reading assignments based on authentic English texts from verified sources, supplemented by a comprehensive multi-component evaluation system. Data analysis was performed using the SPSS 25 statistical package, the Mann-Whitney U-test, the Wilcoxon's test, the Spearman's rank correlation analysis, the chi-square test, and the content analysis.

Results. The study revealed that students majoring in philology showed higher results in reading speed ($p = 0.003$) and literacy ($p < 0.001$); however, no differences were found between the groups in terms of analytical depth, identification of arguments, and formulation of positions ($p > 0.05$). Independent learning proved to be more effective than classroom instruction in all critical reading indicators ($p < 0.01$). Correlation analysis showed a negative relationship between reading speed and literacy ($r = -0.32$; $p < 0.05$) and a positive relationship between depth of analysis, finding arguments, and formulation of position ($r > 0.5$; $p < 0.01$). Content analysis of students' responses showed that philology students tended to analyse text structure significantly more often (75%) than economics students (53.3%). At the same time, economics students more often showed critical assessment of the reliability of sources (58.3%), although the difference did not reach the statistical significance level ($p = 0.202$). These differences highlight the impact of professional training on priority strategies for critical reading in English.

Conclusion. The obtained results emphasise the need for a differentiated approach to the development of critical reading skills in students of different academic disciplines. In addition, the revealed advantage of independent learning in terms of the development of critical reading confirms the need to increase its share in educational programmes. Further research is needed to develop and optimise effective teaching methods aimed at improving critical thinking skills when working with texts in a foreign language in various academic fields.

KEYWORDS

critical reading, critical analysis, foreign language teaching, reading comprehension, academic literacy

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid globalization and digitalization of society, the ability to critically perceive and analyze information in a foreign language is becoming a key competence of a modern specialist. This is emphasized in the UN's evaluation standards, which highlight critical analysis as a prerequisite for effective decision-making at the institutional level [1]. Language policy studies (e.g., in Portuguese-speaking countries) also underscore the role of institutional strategies in shaping communicative competencies and national identity through language [2]. In modern communication, critical thinking serves as a vital defense against manipulation and disinformation, allowing individuals to make informed judgments [3]. Moreover, innovations in education, such as telecommunication-based learning projects, have proven effective in enhancing student engagement and academic outcomes, further supporting the integration of critical analysis in teaching practices [4].

This is a necessary element for decision-making and is an important component of the result-oriented management process [6; 7]. In the United Nations system, in the guidelines for evaluating the results achieved by this system, a preliminary assessment is mandatory. The preliminary assessment is based on a critical analysis of the potential value of the event before deciding on its implementation.

In this regard, UNESCO has played a crucial role in promoting education policies that enhance critical thinking, literacy, and digital competencies on a global scale. Recognizing the increasing complexity of information processing in the modern world, one of the key frameworks supporting this vision is the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report) [5], which evaluates the effectiveness of educational policies worldwide. This report provides governments and institutions with data-driven insights to improve critical reading, media literacy, and problem-solving skills – all essential for decision-making in a rapidly changing environment.

Critical reading is a fundamental component of critical analysis, which allows one to interpret and evaluate textual information at a qualitatively new level [8]. The Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL) specifically targets countries where literacy rates remain below 50%, ensuring that disadvantaged communities gain access to educational resources [9]. These programs integrate modern methodologies, including AI-driven learning platforms and online literacy initiatives, to support individuals' ability to critically analyze and interpret information in both native and foreign languages. This skill is of particular importance in the context of working with texts in foreign languages where critical understanding of the content is inextricably linked with overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, which significantly increases the cognitive load and requires the development of specific competencies [10].

To address these challenges, initiatives aimed at fostering media literacy and critical analysis have gained significant attention in recent years [11; 12]. One such initiative is the European Digital Media Observatory's (EDMO) Guidelines for Effective Media Literacy Initiatives [13], which seeks to enhance individuals' ability to critically engage with media content, particularly in the face of misinformation and disinformation. Given the increasing reliance on digital sources for information, the ability to navigate complex media landscapes is crucial for learners dealing with foreign-language texts, where linguistic nuances and cultural contexts play a decisive role in comprehension.

The EDMO guidelines provide a structured approach to developing media literacy programs, ensuring that individuals not only acquire the necessary language skills but also develop the ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret the credibility of the content they consume.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical reading is a complex cognitive process that includes the ability to analyze a text on a deep level, evaluate the author's argumentation, identify hidden meanings, and form one's position regarding what is read [14]. These skills are especially important in the era of information overload [15] when the ability to distinguish reliable sources from unreliable ones and critically evaluate content becomes necessary for academic and professional success [16]. Studies emphasize the need for robust critical reading and thinking skills to navigate this complexity effectively. For example,

research exploring the evolving collaboration between artificial intelligence and human researchers highlights the irreplaceable role of human judgment, contextual understanding, and ethical reasoning in information evaluation and scientific inquiry [17]. Furthermore, recent literature reviews show that physical activity, such as walking or motor-stimulating games, has a positive effect not only on students' general cognitive engagement but also specifically on reading comprehension and academic success [18]. Together, these findings underscore the importance of developing critical evaluation skills to maintain high academic and professional standards in a cognitively demanding environment.

In modern pedagogical practice, the survey, question, read, recite, and review (SQ3R) method of critical reading [19] developed by the American philosopher and psychologist P.F. Robinson based on cognitive psychology has established itself as an effective tool for improving students' information and reading culture. This technique, which is actively used in the Russian educational space, as confirmed by the works of V.M. Filatov, is a structured five-step approach to working with text: a preliminary review of the material (survey), the formulation of questions (question), and three stages related to reading, retelling, and repetition (read, recite, review). This method acquires special value in the context of individualization of the educational process, allowing students to adapt the pace and depth of mastering the material to their needs [20, p. 311].

As a development of the SQ3R methodology, a more detailed Mood, Understand, Recall, Detect, Elaborate, and Review (MURDER) strategy was developed, which complements the basic model of critical reading with important psychological and pedagogical elements. This technique includes six consecutive stages: creating the right mood (Mood), reading with understanding (Understanding), reproducing the material (Recalling), assimilating information by integrating it with existing knowledge (Detect), expanding understanding through self-questioning (Expand), and final repetition (Repeat) [20, pp. 311-312]. The MURDER learning strategy is a comprehensive cognitive approach to information processing and preservation, where each component performs a special pedagogical function. The method begins with creating an optimal emotional state for learning, requiring a positive atmosphere without fear or tension, after which it proceeds to a deep understanding of the material through translation, interpretation, and extrapolation. This is followed by active repetition and assimilation of the material using various educational resources and ends with expanding knowledge through critical thinking and practical application and a systematic review for the effective transfer of information from short-term memory to long-term memory [21].

It is traditionally believed that philology students who study language and literature professionally have more developed critical reading skills compared to other students [22; 23]. This assumption requires empirical verification, especially in the context of foreign languages [24; 25]. The question arises about the impact of the field of expertise on the development of critical reading skills.

This study aims at a comparative analysis of critical reading skills in English among philology and economics students. The choice of these two groups is explained by the differences in their educational programs and professional orientation [26]. While philologists focus on language learning and text analysis, economists focus on working with data and performing quantitative analysis [27; 28].

Research shows that critical thinking skills vary among students in different fields. Arum and Roksa [29] found that liberal arts students performed better on critical thinking tests compared to business students [30]. However, other studies, such as the work by Nicholas and Labig Jr [31], have not shown significant differences in critical thinking skills among students in different fields.

These studies confirm the need to consider different learning formats when evaluating critical reading skills. Tung and Chang [32] found that integrating critical thinking assignments into an English course significantly improved critical reading skills. This underlines the importance of developing critical thinking in language learning [33]. Economics students could perform better in aspects related to data analysis and critical evaluation of information, which would be consistent with the findings of Dwyer et al. [34] on the impact of the professional context on the development of critical thinking.

The analysis of existing literature confirms that critical reading is a multifaceted cognitive skill essential for academic success in today's information-saturated environment. Prior studies underscore the increasing importance of critical evaluation in distinguishing reliable information from manipulation, especially amid the rise of AI and digital communication tools. However, empirical data remains inconsistent, suggesting the need for further comparative studies.

Since that our study raises the following questions:

1. Are there significant differences in critical reading skills in English between philology and economics students?
2. How does the learning format (classroom vs. independent learning) affect the effectiveness of critical reading among students in different fields?
3. What aspects of critical reading (speed, literacy, depth of analysis) differ between philology and economics students?

To answer these questions, we conducted an experiment where students worked with texts of neutral subjects in the classroom and independently. This allowed us to assess the level of language proficiency and the ability to evaluate information critically.

The study hypothesis suggested that philology students would demonstrate higher reading speed and literacy, especially in a classroom setting.

The results may be important for understanding the role of the academic field in developing critical reading skills in a foreign language and optimizing teaching methods in higher education institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Study respondents: The study involved 60 philology students and 60 economics students of years 2-4 studying English as part of their educational program.
2. Assessment tools: specially designed tasks for critical reading, including academically neutral texts (the tasks were based on real messages in Telegram channels and newspapers www.independent.co.uk <https://gulfnews.com/> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/>) on daily news, urban and public life, incidents, publications about athletes and celebrities) in English.
3. Procedure: a) Classroom: respondents completed critical reading tasks under the supervision of researchers; b) Independent: respondents received tasks to perform outside the classroom.
4. Estimated parameters and evaluation methods:
 - The speed of reading and completing tasks was measured in minutes for each task.
 - Literacy was assessed on a 10-point scale by two independent experts.
 - Assessment of the depth of analysis (0-5 points): 0: Lack of analysis, simple retelling of the text. 1: Superficial analysis, identifying only obvious ideas. 2: Basic analysis, identifying the main ideas and some connections between them. 3: Good analysis, identifying most key ideas and their interrelationships. 4: In-depth analysis, identifying all key ideas, their interrelationships, and some hidden meanings. 5: Comprehensive analysis, identifying all key ideas, their interrelationships, and hidden and contextual meanings.
 - The scale for assessing the ability to identify key arguments and hidden meanings: for each text, a list of key arguments and hidden meanings was compiled (usually 5-7 elements). The assessment was based on the number of correctly identified elements: 1 point for each correctly identified key argument, and 2 points for each correctly identified hidden meaning. The maximum score depended on the text and ranged from 10 to 14.
 - The scale for assessing the ability to formulate one's position (0-5 points): 0: Lack of own position. 1: A weakly formulated position without argumentation. 2: A clearly formulated position with minimal argumentation. 3: A well-formulated position with basic reasoning. 4: A clearly formulated position with strong arguments and counterarguments. 5: An exhaustively formulated position with strong argumentation, consideration of counterarguments, and demonstration of critical thinking. Evaluation criteria for each score: • Clarity of wording; • Logic of the argument; • Use of evidence from the text; • Consideration of alternative points of view; • Originality of thinking. Each

aspect was evaluated on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 meant "absent", 0.5 meant "partially present", and 1 meant "fully present". The final score was the sum of the scores in all five aspects.

5. Statistical methods:

- The Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the results between the groups (philologists vs economists).
- The Wilcoxon test for related samples was used to analyze the differences between classroom and independent learning.
- The correlation analysis between the evaluation parameters was conducted using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.
- The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to assess the impact of the professional field and the format of the work on the results [35].
- The consistency of the experts' estimates was checked using the Kendall concordance coefficient [36].
- The chi-square criterion was used to analyze categorical data.
- A qualitative analysis of the written responses was conducted using content analysis, followed by the application of Fisher's test to compare the frequency of occurrence of various response categories between groups.

6. Ethical considerations: Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before starting the study. The anonymity of the data was ensured by assigning a unique code to each participant. After completing the study, the respondents received the results.

7. Data processing: All quantitative data were processed using the SPSS version 25 statistical package.

RESULTS

Data analysis showed the absence of a normal distribution for most measured variables (Shapiro-Wilk test, $p < 0.05$), which justified using nonparametric statistical methods.

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare critical reading skills between philology and economics students. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of critical reading skills between groups

Parameter	Philologists	Economists	U-statistics	p-value
Reading speed (min)	35 (30-40)	42 (36-48)	1245.5	0.003
Literacy (1-10)	8.5 (7.5-9.0)	7.0 (6.0-8.0)	1098.0	<0.001
Depth of analysis (0-5)	4.0 (3.0-4.5)	3.5 (3.0-4.0)	1765.0	0.724
Identification of arguments (0-10)	7.5 (6.5-8.5)	7.0 (6.0-8.0)	1543.0	0.124
Formulation of the position (1-5)	4.0 (3.5-4.5)	3.5 (3.0-4.0)	1687.0	0.476
<i>Note:</i> The data is presented in the median format (interquartile range)				

Statistically significant differences between the groups were found in reading speed ($p = 0.003$) and literacy ($p < 0.001$). Philology students showed higher performance in these aspects. There were no statistically significant differences in other parameters.

To assess the impact of the learning format (classroom vs. independent learning) on the effectiveness of critical reading, the Wilcoxon test was applied for related samples. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of critical reading indicators depending on the learning format

Parameter	Classroom learning	Independent learning	Z-statistics	p-value
Reading speed (min)	38 (33-44)	40 (35-46)	-3.765	<0.001
Literacy (1-10)	7.5 (6.5-8.5)	8.0 (7.0-9.0)	-4.213	<0.001
Depth of analysis (0-5)	3.5 (3.0-4.0)	4.0 (3.5-4.5)	-3.987	<0.001
Argument identification (0-10)	7.0 (6.0-8.0)	7.5 (6.5-8.5)	-3.542	<0.001
Formulation of the position (1-5)	3.5 (3.0-4.0)	4.0 (3.5-4.5)	-3.124	0.002
<i>Note:</i> The data is presented in the median format (interquartile range)				

Statistically significant differences between classroom and independent learning formats were found in all parameters ($p < 0.01$). The results of independent work were higher than in the classroom.

To study the relationships among various aspects of critical reading, a correlation analysis was performed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The interpretation of the strength of the bond was carried out on the Cheddock scale. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation matrix of critical reading parameters

Parameter	Reading speed	Literacy	Depth of analysis	Argument identification	Formulation of the position
Reading speed	1.00				
Literacy	-0.32*	1.00			
Depth of analysis	-0.18	0.25*	1.00		
Argument identification	-0.22*	0.19	0.58**	1.00	
Formulation of the position	-0.15	0.23*	0.62**	0.54**	1.00
$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$					

The analysis of the correlation matrix showed the following significant relationships:

1. A moderate negative relationship was found between reading speed and literacy ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.05$). This may indicate that students who read faster may make more mistakes in literacy.
2. A weak positive relationship was observed between literacy and depth of analysis ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$) and between literacy and position formulation ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that more literate students tend to have a slightly deeper analysis and a better formulation of their position.
3. A noticeable positive relationship was found between the depth of analysis and the identification of arguments ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and between the depth of analysis and the formulation of the position ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students capable of deeper analysis are better at identifying arguments and formulating their positions.

4. A noticeable positive relationship was found between the identification of arguments and the formulation of a position ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$), which indicates a connection between these critical reading skills.

5. A weak negative relationship was observed between the reading speed and the identification of arguments ($r = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$), which may indicate that a more thorough identification of arguments requires a little more time to read.

The remaining correlations were statistically insignificant or too weak for interpretation ($r < 0.2$).

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to assess the impact of the professional field (philologists vs economists) and the study format (classroom vs independent learning) on the results of critical reading.

Table 4

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis analysis

Factor	H-statistics	df	p-value
Professional field	7.234	1	0.007
Work format	15.678	1	<0.001
Interaction	2.345	1	0.126

The results show that the professional field ($p = 0.007$) and the work format ($p < 0.001$) have a significant impact on the results of critical reading. The interaction between these factors did not reach the level of statistical significance ($p = 0.126$).

The consistency of the experts' estimates was checked using the Kendall concordance coefficient (W).

$$W = 0.82, \chi^2 = 98.4, df = 4, p < 0.001$$

The resulting value of $W = 0.82$ indicates high consistency between experts in assessing students' critical reading skills.

The chi-square criterion was used to analyze the distribution of critical reading levels (low, average, high) between philologists and economists.

Table 5

Distribution of critical reading levels

Level	Philologists	Economists
Low	10 (16.7%)	18 (30%)
Average	32 (53.3%)	34 (56.7%)
High	18 (30%)	8 (13.3%)

$$\chi^2 = 7.82, df = 2, p = 0.020$$

The results show statistically significant differences in the distribution of critical reading levels between philologists and economists ($p = 0.020$).

A content analysis of the respondents' written responses demonstrated several key categories in approaches to critical reading. To compare the frequency of occurrence of these categories between groups, the exact Fisher's test was applied.

Table 6

Frequency of key categories occurrence in written responses

Category	Philologists (n=60)	Economists (n=60)	p-value
Text structure analysis	45 (75%)	32 (53.3%)	0.013
Argumentation assessment	50 (83.3%)	41 (68.3%)	0.054
Identification of the author's position	52 (86.7%)	38 (63.3%)	0.003
Critical evaluation of sources	28 (46.7%)	35 (58.3%)	0.202

The results show that philologists more often mentioned the analysis of the text structure ($p = 0.013$) and the identification of the author's position ($p = 0.003$) in their approaches to critical reading. The differences in the frequency of mentioning the argumentation assessment approach the level of statistical significance ($p = 0.054$). In terms of critical assessment, no significant differences were found ($p = 0.202$).

Based on the results, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the study hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Philology students demonstrate higher critical reading skills in English compared to economics students.

The hypothesis was partially confirmed. Statistically significant differences in reading speed ($U = 1,245.5$, $p = 0.003$) and literacy ($U = 1,098.0$, $p < 0.001$) were found in favor of philology students. No significant differences were found in other parameters of critical reading (depth of analysis, identification of arguments, formulation of position).

Hypothesis 2: Independent learning is more effective for developing critical reading skills than classroom learning, regardless of the students' major.

The hypothesis was confirmed. Statistically significant differences were found between classroom and independent learning formats in all parameters of critical reading ($p < 0.01$ for all comparisons). The results of independent learning were better than the results of classroom learning for both groups.

Hypothesis 3: Philology students outperform economics students in reading speed and literacy, while economics students may perform better in-depth analysis.

Result: The hypothesis was partially confirmed. Philology students showed better results in reading speed ($p = 0.003$) and literacy ($p < 0.001$). However, the assumption of the superiority of economics students in the depth of analysis was not confirmed, as no statistically significant differences in this parameter were found ($p = 0.724$).

DISCUSSION

The results provide a comprehensive look at the differences in critical reading skills between philology and economics students and the impact of the learning format on these skills. The data confirm existing ideas about developing critical thinking among students in different fields [37; 38] and expand our understanding of this problem, demonstrating its complexity.

The significant differences we found in reading speed and literacy between philologists and economists in favor of the former group are consistent with the conclusions of Arum and Roksa [29] who noted higher rates of critical thinking among humanities students. Our study introduces an important clarification: This advantage seems limited only to certain aspects of critical reading [39]. The fact that we did not find significant differences in the depth of analysis, identification of arguments, and formulation of positions echoes the results of Nicholas and Labig Jr [31] who did not observe significant differences in critical thinking skills between students in different fields. This observation

raises an interesting question about which components of critical thinking are most closely related to the student's professional field, and which components develop more universally [31].

Our findings on the impact of the learning format on critical reading skills are of particular interest. The observed advantage of the independent format over classroom learning for both groups expands the conclusions of Tung and Chang [32] and Le et al. [40] on the importance of integrating critical thinking tasks into the English course. Our results highlight that independent work can be especially effective for developing these skills, perhaps because it provides students with more time for reflection and in-depth analysis. This observation has important implications for developing educational programs and can serve as an argument in favor of increasing the share of independent work in curricula, as supported by studies highlighting the benefits of independent assignments for fostering deeper comprehension [41], enhancing student autonomy [42], and improving overall academic outcomes [43].

The correlation analysis, which showed significant links between various aspects of critical reading, especially between the depth of analysis, the identification of arguments, and the formulation of one's position, confirms the complex nature of critical thinking described in the Paul & Elder model [14]. These results highlight the importance of developing all aspects of critical thinking in their interrelationship, rather than focusing on individual components.

The content analysis of the respondents' written responses allowed us to draw interesting conclusions about the differences in approaches to critical reading between philologists and economists. The fact that philologists more often focused on analyzing the structure of the text and identifying the author's position may reflect their training. The lack of a significant advantage for economists in critically evaluating sources was unexpected and may indicate the need to strengthen this aspect in their training. These observations are consistent with the ideas of Dwyer et al. [34] and Ospankulova et al. [44] on the influence of the professional context on critical thinking and emphasize the importance of the specifics of various fields when developing programs for critical thinking development.

The high consistency of expert assessments observed in our study confirms the reliability of the assessment methods and indicates the possibility of developing standardized tools for assessing critical reading skills [45]. This can be especially useful for conducting inter-university and interdisciplinary comparisons.

Our study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, we limited ourselves to comparing only two fields, which does not allow us to make broad generalizations. Second, the study was conducted within the framework of one educational institution, which may limit the external validity of the results. We did not consider the factors of students' previous experience and their characteristics, which may affect critical reading skills.

Nevertheless, the results have important practical implications. They emphasize the need for a differentiated approach to developing critical reading skills among students in different fields and the importance of including a significant share of independent work in curricula [46; 47]. The differences in approaches to critical reading between philologists and economists can be used to develop more targeted and effective teaching methods.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study represents a significant contribution to understanding the features of developing critical reading skills in English among students in various fields, in particular philologists and economists. The results expand existing knowledge in this field and raise several new questions that require further study in the context of foreign language learning.

Special attention should be paid to the discovered advantage of independent learning over classroom learning in developing critical reading skills in English. This result has important implications for developing curricula and methods of teaching English, emphasizing the need to increase the share of independent work with English texts.

The differences in approaches to critical reading in English between philologists and economists (the more frequent focus of philologists on analyzing the structure of the text and identifying the author's position) open up new prospects for the development of specialized methods of teaching critical reading in a foreign language for students in different fields.

Our study has several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. A limited number of fields and conducting research within a single educational institution may limit the possibility of broad generalizations in the context of teaching English.

The results open up some areas for further research. It would be interesting to study the dynamics of the development of critical reading skills in English throughout the entire study period, compare a larger number of fields, and investigate the influence of pedagogical approaches on these skills in the context of foreign language learning.

Practical recommendations arising from our study include increasing the share of independent work with English texts in curricula, developing specialized tasks for the development of critical reading in English, considering the specifics of different fields, and introducing regular assessment of critical reading skills in a foreign language to monitor student progress.

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