



Four Stage Analytical Reading Model Improves Teacher Training Outcomes

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Abstract. General Background: Reading is a central component of foreign language education, yet it is often limited to surface-level comprehension in teacher training contexts. Specific Background: Pre-service teachers frequently lack structured approaches to guide learners toward interpretive, critical, and culturally informed engagement with literary texts. Knowledge Gap: Existing pedagogical practices rarely provide practical, classroom-ready models that integrate linguistic, interpretive, and cultural dimensions of reading within realistic instructional settings. Aims: This study proposes and tests a structured four-stage analytical reading model designed to scaffold progression from basic comprehension to reflective and creative engagement. Results: Implemented in a 50-minute session with 11 undergraduate teacher trainees using a literary text, the model demonstrated development in linguistic awareness, interpretive reasoning, cultural reflection, and creative-pedagogical expression, as evidenced through annotations, discussions, and creative outputs. Novelty: The study introduces a feasible, theory-informed model that integrates classical reading strategies with critical and creative tasks, aligned with Bloom's taxonomy, scaffolding theory, and transactional reading theory. Implications: The findings indicate that analytical reading supports multidimensional teacher development, positioning literature as a bridge between language proficiency, intercultural competence, and pedagogical identity formation in foreign language education.

Keywords: Analytical Reading, Teacher Education, Cultural Competence

1 Introduction

Reading is one of the most fundamental skills in foreign language education, yet its full potential often remains underutilized in teacher training. Pre-service teachers are typically trained to check comprehension, explain vocabulary, and ensure grammatical accuracy, but they rarely move beyond these surface-level tasks. As a result, they may struggle to guide their future students toward deeper engagement with texts—toward interpretation, cultural reflection, and critical inquiry.

Analytical reading offers a way to bridge this gap. It transforms reading from a mechanical exercise into a dialogic process. Reader extracts meaning from a text. Through analytical reading, teacher trainees learn to recognize symbols, question character motivations, explore cultural perspectives, and reflect on ethical dilemmas. This kind of engagement extends beyond lexical analysis - literature can be examined at multiple levels—syntax and sentence structure, stylistic devices, semantic fields, dialogue and speech, intertextual references, rhythm and sound patterns, and recurring imagery or symbols [3]. They prepare future educators to cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural competence in their classrooms.

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The novelty of this study lies in presenting and testing a structured four-stage model of analytical reading that integrates classical reading strategies with modern pedagogical tools. Unlike traditional comprehension-based approaches, this model demonstrates how analytical reading can be systematically embedded into teacher education to foster linguistic proficiency, interpretive reasoning, cultural reflection, and the formation of pedagogical identity.

To illustrate the model, the study employs Pete Hamill's short story "Going Home" [1], a text that has transcended its literary origins to become part of American cultural folklore. The story's central symbol the oak tree covered with yellow handkerchiefs has been widely recognized as a metaphor of forgiveness and second chances, inspiring adaptations in Reader's Digest, television dramatizations, and even the popular song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree." This cultural resonance makes the text particularly suitable for analytical reading tasks: it invites students to explore universal themes of hope, reconciliation, and empathy, while also connecting literature to broader cultural traditions.

Ultimately, the aim of this study is twofold: to demonstrate that systematic analytical reading enhances linguistic proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking, and to show that it also shapes the pedagogical identity of future foreign language teachers. Literature, when taught analytically, becomes more than a tool for language learning—it becomes a bridge between language and life, preparing educators to guide their students through the complexities of meaning, culture, and human experience.

2 Literature Review

In foreign language classrooms, reading has traditionally been taught as a technical skill: students memorize vocabulary, answer comprehension questions, and practice accuracy. Classic works such as Ur [2] and Nuttall [3] provided teachers with structured methods—graded tasks, pre-/while-/post-reading activities, and explicit strategy instruction. These approaches built solid foundations, but they often stopped short of encouraging students to ask deeper questions. Learners could follow the plot, but they were rarely guided to explore how syntax, stylistic devices, or symbolic motifs contribute to meaning.

Already in the early 1990s, Brumfit and Carter [4] reminded educators that literature should not be treated as a decorative supplement. They argued that literary texts provide authentic language, cultural richness, and opportunities for personal engagement—qualities that go far beyond vocabulary lists and comprehension checks. Their work laid the groundwork for later approaches that treat reading as a multidimensional process, combining linguistic, cultural, and affective dimensions.

Later scholars expanded this vision. Wallace [5] insisted that reading is never neutral: it is an ideological act that requires learners to interrogate texts rather than simply decode them. Rosenblatt's transactional theory [6] reinforced this idea, showing that meaning is co-created between reader and text. These perspectives opened the way for teaching reading as a dynamic, interpretive process, where personal response and cultural reflection are just as important as comprehension.

Recent studies confirm the relevance of this shift. Akhmetova [7] demonstrated that literature-based tasks help students connect linguistic form with cultural meaning, while Ali, Khan, and Hussain [8] showed that in EFL contexts, reading often serves as the main gateway to authentic language and cultural perspectives. Together, these

findings highlight literature's unique power to foster empathy, intercultural competence, and identity formation—qualities essential for future teachers.

At the same time, scholars have emphasized the importance of analyzing texts at multiple levels. Beyond vocabulary, attention to syntax, stylistic devices, semantic fields, dialogue, intertextual references, rhythm, and recurring imagery allows learners to grasp how different elements interact to create meaning. Such a multi-level approach aligns with Bloom's taxonomy [9] and Bruner's scaffolding theory [10], ensuring that students progress from surface comprehension to deeper interpretive and reflective engagement.

Yet challenges remain. Many teacher training programs still emphasize surface-level comprehension checks, leaving interpretive and ethical dimensions underdeveloped. Practical, classroom-ready models of analytical reading are rare, especially those that fit short sessions and small-group formats. Assessment criteria for higher-level skills—such as moving from literal understanding to symbolic analysis—are often vague.

This study responds to those challenges by proposing a four-stage model of analytical reading. Grounded in Bloom's taxonomy [9], Bruner's scaffolding theory [10], and Rosenblatt's transactional theory [6], the model integrates critical reading techniques with creative response tasks. It is designed to be feasible within a single 50-minute session and adaptable to small-group contexts, bridging the gap between theoretical insights and classroom practice [11].

3 Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative classroom-based exploration, because the richness of reading lies not only in what students understand but in how they interpret, respond, and interact with each other. As Creswell [11] notes, qualitative approaches are especially effective for capturing the complexity of classroom dynamics and the subtle processes through which learners construct meaning. The research focused on a single 50-minute session, layering observation, textual analysis, and student reflection. The aim was practical: to test whether a structured four-stage model of analytical reading could realistically work in everyday teaching conditions.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The methodological framework drew on established theories of reading pedagogy. Bloom's taxonomy [9] provided the cognitive scaffolding, ensuring that tasks moved step by step from comprehension to analysis and creation. Bruner's scaffolding theory [10] guided the gradual increase in complexity, reminding us that learners need support as they climb toward independence. Rosenblatt's transactional theory [6] emphasized the dialogue between reader and text, placing personal response at the heart of meaning-making. Together, these frameworks shaped a design that was both theoretically grounded and adaptable to the realities of a seminar-style class. Analytical reading model finds its reflection in S.S. Kunanbayeva's [12] conception of foreign language education that focuses on formation of cognitive, cultural and axiological competences of future teacher.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

The study involved 11 second-year undergraduates in the foreign language education program at M. Utemisov West Kazakhstan University. They were 19–21 years old, with a balanced gender distribution (6 female, 5 male), and had intermediate English proficiency (B1–B2 CEFR). This level was sufficient for engaging with literary texts in the original language. The group was chosen purposively: they were enrolled in the “Home Reading” course and willing to participate in reflective activities. This small, focused sample aligns with Akhmetova [7], who recommends that pilot studies of innovative pedagogical models are most effective in intimate, seminar-style settings.

3.4 Instructional Materials

The central text was Pete Hamill’s short story “*Going Home*” (1971) [1]. It was selected for its accessible language, emotional depth, and universal themes of hope, forgiveness, and return. Literature has long been recognized as a powerful tool for developing both linguistic and cultural competence (Brumfit & Carter [4]; Nuttall [3]; Wallace [5]), and Hamill’s story provided a balance of simplicity and symbolic richness. Supplementary materials included annotated excerpts, short lexical lists (3–5 words per stage), discussion prompts, and creative task sheets. These resources were designed to reduce cognitive load and encourage cultural reflection and imaginative engagement.

3.5 Procedure

Preparation began before the lesson: students read an excerpt at home, which allowed them to enter the classroom already familiar with the text. The teacher prepared lexical support, prompts, and creative tasks, and arranged the classroom in a seminar style to encourage dialogue. The teacher’s role was not to lecture but to facilitate discovery, modeling a constructivist pedagogy and guiding reflection through open-ended questions.

The lesson unfolded in four stages, each aligned with Bloom’s taxonomy:

- a. Perceptual-Accumulative. activating background knowledge, learning key words, skimming for basic facts.
- b. Conceptual-Representative. identifying themes such as hope and forgiveness, reconstructing the narrative arc, and connecting textual evidence with meaning.
- c. Pragmatic-Communicative. interpreting symbols and moral dilemmas in small groups, sharing diverse perspectives, and debating cultural contexts.
- d. Constructive-Developmental. producing creative responses—letters, diary entries, symbolic descriptions—that personalized engagement and fostered empathy.

The sequence of classroom activities was organized to guide learners from lexical noticing to creative pedagogical reflection, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Instructional Tasks and Levels of Textual Analysis

Stage	Instruction	Level of Analysis	Purpose of the Task
Stage 1: Perceptual-Accumulative	“Skim the text and highlight key words.” / “Underline repeated words and explain their effect.”	Lexical, Syntax	Activate background knowledge, reduce lexical barrier, notice rhythm and sentence structure
Stage 2: Conceptual-Representative	“Summarize the narrative and identify themes (hope, forgiveness).” / “Create a plot scheme: beginning, climax, resolution.”	Semantic fields, Narrative structure	Connect textual facts with meaning, build holistic comprehension
Stage 3: Pragmatic-Communicative	“Discuss symbols and moral dilemmas: What does the yellow handkerchief mean? How can silence be interpreted?” / “Compare oak tree with cultural symbols of hope.”	Stylistic devices, Dialogue, Intertextuality	Develop interpretive reasoning, critical thinking, intercultural reflection
Stage 4: Constructive-Developmental		Imagery, Symbols, Creative pedagogy	Stimulate empathy, creativity, pedagogical reflection, teacher identity formation

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The evaluation of student progress was approached as a qualitative exploration of how learners gave voice to their understanding. Rather than reducing outcomes to numbers, the study sought to capture the richness of classroom life: the notes students made in the margins of their texts, the words they spoke in discussion, and the imaginative ways they chose to respond. Observation notes documented moments of hesitation and discovery, while audio excerpts preserved the tone of dialogue and the rhythm of group interaction. Written materials—annotations, double-entry journals, and creative assignments—revealed how students moved from noticing details to shaping personal interpretations. The journals, where quotations were paired with reflections, opened a window into the inner dialogue between reader and text. Creative outputs such as letters, diary entries, and drawings carried traces of empathy and imagination, showing how literature invited students to inhabit perspectives beyond their own.

All of these voices were brought together through thematic analysis. Student responses were read not only for what they said but for the kind of engagement they represented. Some focused on the language itself—lexical choices, syntactic structures, stylistic devices—demonstrating linguistic awareness. Others reached toward meaning, analyzing symbols or moral dilemmas, which reflected interpretive reasoning. Still others connected the story to cultural traditions or intertextual echoes,

showing cultural reflection. Finally, the most personal and creative responses—letters to characters, diary entries, symbolic drawings—were seen as creative-pedagogical expression, early signs of empathy and teacher identity formation.

Examples illustrate this progression: “Oak means strength, but here it feels fragile” was read as linguistic awareness; “*Forgiveness is the hidden theme behind silence*” as interpretive reasoning; “*In our culture, yellow means mourning, so the symbol changes*” as cultural reflection; and “*I waited in silence, but silence spoke louder than words*” as creative-pedagogical expression.

Reliability was strengthened by triangulating different sources—teacher notes, journals, and creative assignments—so that findings rested on student voices rather than teacher impressions alone. In this way, the study traced how learners advanced from noticing the surface of language to engaging with deeper layers of meaning, culture, and empathy.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent, recordings and written materials were anonymized, confidentiality was maintained, and students were assured that their participation would not affect grades. The evidence gathered from each instructional stage and the corresponding analytic category are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Data Collection and Analysis

Stage	Activity	Data Collected	Method of Analysis	Category
Perceptual	Vocabulary tasks	Lexical lists, annotations	Thematic coding	Linguistic awareness
Conceptual	Theme summaries	Journals, oral responses	Narrative analysis	Interpretive reasoning
Pragmatic	Group discussions	Audio excerpts, notes	Discourse analysis	Cultural reflection
Constructive	Letters, diaries, drawings	Creative outputs	Thematic coding	Pedagogical identity

4 Results and Discussion

The four-stage analytical reading model, tested in a single 50-minute session with 11 undergraduate students, showed clear improvements in several areas: linguistic competence, interpretive reasoning, cultural awareness, creative expression, and pedagogical reflection. Even within the short timeframe, the structured, student-centered approach proved effective, allowing learners to move from basic comprehension toward deeper reflection, creativity, and multi-level textual analysis.

Linguistic and syntactic growth was visible from the start. Students quickly moved beyond plot-level understanding to notice shifts in tone, sentence rhythm, and syntactic choices such as parcellation and inversion. Vingo, the main character, became the central figure of analysis. Learners highlighted his transformation from reserved silence to emotional vulnerability, and several pointed to the oak tree as a symbol of risk and hope. Their annotations and oral responses showed sensitivity to metaphor, stylistic nuance, and syntactic variation, confirming Nuttall’s view that

literature develops linguistic awareness not only through decoding but through attention to style and symbolism.

Interpretive and critical thinking also grew stronger. Group discussions revealed diverse perspectives on Vingo's return: some saw it as an act of courage, others as hesitation or avoidance. This willingness to sustain multiple interpretations without collapsing them into a single "correct" answer demonstrated higher-order thinking, consistent with Bloom's taxonomy [9]. As Wallace suggests [5], reading becomes dialogic when students negotiate meaning rather than passively receive it, and this was evident in their debates.

Intercultural and intertextual reflection emerged naturally. One group connected the yellow handkerchief to cultural traditions in their own communities, such as colors used in rituals of forgiveness or mourning. Others drew parallels with folk motifs of waiting and return, and noted echoes of similar symbols in other literary works, showing intertextual awareness. This demonstrated their ability to link textual symbols with personal and cultural knowledge, echoing Akhmetova's [7] claim that literature fosters intercultural literacy. Bruner's [10] idea of education as meaning-making was visible here: students actively constructed knowledge by connecting the story to their lived experience.

Moral and emotional engagement was perhaps the most striking. The theme of forgiveness resonated deeply. One student reflected: "*The wife didn't write to him for three and a half years. That silence — it could mean pain, loyalty, or both. It made me think how difficult it is to forgive and to wait.*" Such responses illustrate Rosenblatt's [6] transactional theory: meaning is co-created between reader and text, and literature becomes a mirror for personal values. The main categories of analysis, representative student responses, and their pedagogical value are synthesized in Table 3.

Table 3. Categories of Analysis, Examples, and Pedagogical Value

Category of Analysis	Example Student Response / Observation	Pedagogical Value
Linguistic Awareness	"Oak means strength, but here it feels fragile."	Awareness of word connotations, sensitivity to language
Interpretive Reasoning	"Forgiveness is the hidden theme behind silence."	Ability to connect narrative details with abstract ideas, development of analytical thinking
Cultural Reflection	"In our culture, yellow means mourning, so the symbol changes."	Comparison of cultural codes, growth of intercultural competence
Creative-Pedagogical Expression	"I waited in silence, but silence spoke louder than words." (from a diary entry)	Empathy, personal engagement, formation of pedagogical identity

Creative and pedagogical outcomes gave students ownership of the text. In the last stage, they wrote letters, diary entries, or drew the oak tree. One student wrote: "*You may not have written, but I saw you in the silence. I waited—not knowing what for. Maybe for this moment, maybe just for a sign.*" These outputs showed emotional improvisation and linguistic creativity, but also pedagogical reflection: several students noted they would use similar activities in their own future teaching,

recognizing the model's value for shaping their teacher identity. This confirms Ur's [2] view that effective language teaching must integrate both cognitive and affective dimensions.

Taken together, the results confirm that analytical reading, organized through a structured four-stage model, fosters multidimensional growth in pre-service teachers. It strengthens language skills, develops interpretive reasoning, encourages intercultural reflection, nurtures empathy and creativity, and supports the formation of pedagogical identity. While the small sample size and short duration limit generalization, the findings highlight the model's practical value in teacher education. Literature, when taught analytically, becomes a bridge between language and life, preparing future educators to guide their students through the complexities of meaning, culture, and human experience. Student participation across the four stages and the associated levels of text analysis are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary Table of Student Tasks

Stage	Description of Activity	Number of Students	Level of Text Analysis
Stage 1: Perceptual-Accumulative	Skimming and vocabulary tasks	11	Lexical (key words, basic comprehension)
Stage 2: Conceptual-Representative	Theme and narrative summaries (pairs)	11	Semantic fields, narrative structure
Stage 3: Pragmatic-Communicative	Group discussions on moral/symbolic questions	11	Symbolic motifs, dialogue, intercultural & intertextual reflection
Stage 4: Constructive-Developmental Letters	Letters from the wife to Vingo	5	Stylistic devices, character voice, emotional tone
Stage 4: Constructive-Developmental Diary Entries	Diary entries from Vingo's perspective	4	Syntax (short vs. long sentences), inner speech, perspective-taking
Stage 4: Constructive-Developmental Drawings	Drawings of the oak tree	2	Imagery and symbolism (visual representation of motifs)

5 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that analytical reading under a clear and pedagogically grounded methodology can do far more than train comprehension skills. Within a single 50-minute session, the four-stage model enabled students to move from basic understanding to genuine engagement: they interpreted symbols, debated moral questions, compared cultural traditions, and expressed themselves creatively.

The novelty of this research is in its integration of a structured four-stage model with a culturally resonant text Pete Hamill's "Going Home". The oak tree covered with yellow handkerchiefs became not only a symbol of forgiveness and second chances but also a pedagogical tool for fostering intercultural reflection and empathy. Students' interpretations of the oak tree, silence, and forgiveness aligned with broader

cultural readings of the story, confirming its universal relevance. For example, one student reflected: “That silence could mean pain, loyalty, or both. It made me think how difficult it is to forgive and to wait.” Such responses illustrate how literature becomes a mirror for personal values and cultural traditions.

The results showed growth across multiple categories of analysis:

- a. Linguistic awareness: sensitivity to syntax, rhythm, and stylistic devices.
- b. Interpretive reasoning: recognition of symbolic motifs and moral dilemmas.
- c. Cultural reflection: connections to local traditions and intertextual parallels.
- d. Creative-pedagogical expression: letters, diaries, and drawings that revealed empathy and teacher identity formation.

These steps validate that analytical reading can contribute to linguistic proficiency and pedagogical awareness. Students form skills of attentiveness to language, interpretation and empathy in dialogue. These skills help teachers to grow professionally.

At the same time, limitations must be acknowledged: the small sample size of 11 students, the short duration of a single session, and the reliance on qualitative observation restrict the generalizability of results. Yet these features position the research as a pilot study, designed to test feasibility under realistic classroom constraints.

Future research should expand the sample size, extend the duration to multiple sessions or semesters, and incorporate quantitative measures alongside qualitative insights. Larger-scale investigations would allow for testing the model’s adaptability across genres (poetry, drama, nonfiction), contexts (multilingual, digital), and long-term outcomes (teacher identity formation, classroom practice).

Literary texts in analytical study are a powerful tool for the formation of thoughtful, reflective and culturally aware teachers. The four-step learning model provides a practical and scalable framework for teacher training: She equips students not only with strategies for reading literature, but also with those intellectual and emotional attitudes that define their pedagogical identity. As a result, students develop critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and empathy in their teaching practice.

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