

# A Program Based on Critical Reading Strategies for Improving the Content-Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills of the Mass-Media Students at the Faculty of Specific Education



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المجلة العلمية المحكمة لدراسات وبحوث التربية النوعية

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### **Abstract**

The current research has been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of a program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content-area EFL reading comprehension skills of the mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University. A quasi- experimental research design was adopted in the research . Sixty-six students enrolled in the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University, Egypt, during the first semester of the academic year (2024-2025) were randomly selected to be the participants of the research. They were assigned equally to two groups: Treatment group of (33) students and a control group of (33) students. The experimental group was taught through a program based on critical reading strategies , whereas the non-treatment group received regular instruction. Data were collected through the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills pre-posttest. The results of the research revealed that: a) the students in the treatment group outperformed the non-treatment ones in the post- administration of the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills pre-posttest; b) the effect size of the program was found to be large. Findings of the research indicated that using a program based on critical reading strategies had a positive large effect on the content- area of third year mass-media students' EFL reading comprehensions skills.

**Key Words:** Critical Reading Strategies, The Content-Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills, Mass-Media Students

برنامج قائم على استراتيجيات القراءة الناقدة لتحسين مهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة لدى طلاب شعبة الإعلام بكلية التربية النوعية  
ملخص الدراسة

أجري هذا البحث لمعرفة مدى فاعلية برنامج قائم على استراتيجيات القراءة الناقدة لتحسين مهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة لدى طلاب شعبة الإعلام بكلية التربية النوعية - جامعة الزقازيق. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث استخدمت الباحثة

المنهج التجريبي ذا التصميم شبه التجريبي. وقد اشتملت عينة البحث علي ستة وستين طالباً وطالبة من طلاب الفرقة الثالثة شعبة الإعلام بكلية التربية النوعية - جامعة الزقازيق - مصر في العام الدراسي (٢٠٢٤-٢٠٢٥م) وقد تم اختيارهم عشوائياً ليكونوا مشاركين في البحث. وتم تقسيمهم بالتساوي إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة تجريبية مكونة من (٣٣) طالباً وطالبة ومجموعة ضابطة مكونة من (٣٣) طالباً وطالبة. درست المجموعة التجريبية من خلال البرنامج القائم على استراتيجيات القراءة الناقدة، في حين درست المجموعة الضابطة بالطريقة المعتادة. وتم الحصول علي النتائج من خلال الاختبار القبلي- البعدي لمهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة وأسفرت نتائج البحث عما يلي : أ) تفوق طلاب المجموعة التجريبية على طلاب المجموعة الضابطة في التطبيق البعدي لمهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة في التطبيق القبلي- البعدي ؛ ب) أن حجم التأثير للبرنامج كبير. كما أشارت نتائج البحث إلى أن استخدام البرنامج القائم على استراتيجيات القراءة الناقدة كان له تأثير إيجابي كبير علي مهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة لدى طلاب الفرقة الثالثة لشعبة الإعلام.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** استراتيجيات القراءة الناقدة- مهارات الفهم القرائي في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للموضوعات المتعددة- طلاب شعبة الإعلام

### Introduction

In learning English the students should master four basic skills. One basic skill that should be mastered by students is reading, this is because through reading the students can have further language practice based on what they have learned through listening and speaking. Reading also can support students in mastering knowledge.

Reading has been the focus of most research studies for the past decades. Reading as defined by Oxford Dictionary (2015), is to "look at and comprehend the meaning of (written or printed matter) by mentally interpreting the characters or symbols of which it is composed ". Reading , therefore, is an active activity that requires skill and cognitive ability used to understand messages.

According to Helardez (2015), reading is a complex process; it is not solely a process of recognizing written or printed texts but refers to putting meaning to what one reads and drawing a unified thought of what is read. Therefore, reading comprehension is the accurate measure of reading literacy. Comprehension is considered the essence of reading as it accounts for the process that supports the effective extraction of meaning from a written passage .

Meniado (2016) mentioned that reading comprehension is a complex process that involves components, processes, and factors with

the aim of finding better ways of improving it among learners. He continued that reading comprehension is an interactive process of finding meanings from a text . It is also a series of cognitive activities that include a lot of dimensions like the understanding of words and their meanings, mindful reaction, and integration.

Accordingly, Klingger et al. (2007) assured that there are some reasons for reading comprehension difficulties. The first is the difficulties to understand the words, it means that the students got problems in vocabulary. Bad habits represent another problem of finding difficulty in comprehending the texts. Another problem is inappropriate use of reading strategies; using inappropriate reading strategies will make the students unable to comprehend. The last problem is inappropriate assessment used to assess students' performance in reading comprehension.

On the other hand, Harida (2016) added that reading comprehension is a receptive skill in which the readers try to understand the written texts. In understanding the text, the readers try to take the information from the texts; they do communication and interpretation from what they have read. To interpret the texts, the readers need to comprehend the texts, and to comprehend the texts the readers or learners must know the suitable strategies or techniques that should be applied in their reading activities.

As a result, there are many ways to help students understand a passage. Critical reading is one of the strategies to help them understand a text. Rosidiana (2015) stated that critical reading is a strategy that provides students with instructional support before, during, and after the reading process. The students with critical reading skills have the ability to evaluate the credibility of a piece of writing. All writers have a purpose when they write, and usually a writer will choose or emphasize facts and details which support his or her purpose, and ignore facts which don't. As readers make sense of what they read, they use various relationships of ideas to aid recognition and fluency. Critical reading includes the ability to evaluate ideas and synthesize what one reads. Critical readers have the ability to see relationships of ideas and use them as an aid in reading.

Critical reading, therefore is the way of getting information and ideas within a text .In other words, it is a kind of reading strategies for comprehending a text. Critical reading strategies are those which lead the students to read critically and then they would develop their critical thinking. Many critical reading strategies which can be utilized by the reader have been recommended by experts. Hudson (2007) stated that critical reading requires the students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what has been read. It means that the critical reading

strategies can be employed by the reader when analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the information from the text.

### **Theoretical background**

#### **A. Critical Reading Strategies**

Reading is seen as a process of interaction between readers and texts. To read well means to get what the writer tries to introduce in his/her writing. This means that a reader needs prior knowledge and competence during reading. The word analytical is explained as the act of understanding fully while reading is elucidated as making meaning of writing. Therefore, when combining reading to criticism, the outcome will be critical reading which means the capability of reader to construct and criticize the meanings communicated by texts. Critical reading is an area which has been the center of attention of critical pedagogies for many years. Several scholars and researchers have made attempts to incorporate, or encourage the inclusion of critical reading indicators in reading programs (e.g., Freire, 1983; Patching, et al., 1983; Wolf et al., 1968; Walz, 2001).

#### **A.1. The Definition of Critical Reading**

Critical reading is an analytic activity involving readers' to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and comprehend reading materials. Therefore, readers need to analyze and evaluate their reading text before synthesizing their belief or thought in order to read critically. They also need to apply their critical thinking skills to monitor their understanding of the text, while connecting their background on what they read (Kurland, 2000; Wallace, 2003; Molden, 2007; Pardede, 2007; Hermida, 2009; Tomasek; 2009).

According to Huijie (2010), in the past, the definition of critical reading had to do with the readers' ability to discuss and question the written materials for analysis and evaluation. Later, the definition of critical reading turned to focus on viewing reading as an active and interactive process that requires a dialogue between the reader, text, and author at different levels using different higher order thinking skills.

Kirsznier and Mandell (2011) stated that you will want to consider the author's purpose, possible bias, the validity and reliability of their sources and arguments, how their argument stacks up against alternative views, and the broader context.

Wang and Gierl (2011) defined critical reading as a high-level understanding of readers that require logical analysis, questioning attitude, and deducing valuable information of what is read. Pointedly, in an effort to understand and know the writer's implied goals and meanings, students need critical reading ability.

Arici (2012:46) defined critical reading as "ideal reading". He supported that critical reading is being in a communicational interaction with the text and the ability to comment and evaluate the text. In critical

reading, the reader could reflect on the content and purpose. Besides, the learner's ability to keep what he has read in his mind for a long time can only be possible with critical reading.

Kadir et al. (2014, P.209) confirmed that "Critical reading skills are skills that will help the students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read". It means when a student reads critically, he or she will try to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what he or she reads for not only literally but also for deeper meaning. On the other hand, critical reading refers the way in which the students and teachers interact in the classroom to practice a higher form of comprehension (Nasrollahi et al., 2015).

Rosidiana (2015) added that critical reading is a technique for discovering information and ideas within a text. It is identifying the various ways in which each text is a unique product of a unique author. It is also recognizing not only what a text says, but also how the text portrays the subject matter.

According to Talebi and Talebi (2015), critical reading is away or technique in teaching in which students think while they are in a reading activity. It is illustrated in learning how to evaluate, drawing the inferences, and making a conclusion based on the texts which have read.

Browning (2018) defined critical reading as the process of analyzing and evaluating a text by carefully considering its content, structure, and context. It involves active and thoughtful engagement with the material, rather than simply accepting it at face value.

Brozo et al. (2018) added that critical reading skills can be broadly defined as the ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret written texts in a discerning and reflective manner. Furthermore, Gilroy (2018) regarded critical reading as an active engagement and interaction with texts. In addition, Mokhtari (2018) viewed that critical reading skills encompass a range of cognitive processes, including comprehension, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and inference.

On the other hand, Thamrin and Widodo (2019) affirmed that critical reading is not the same as the other kinds of reading like skimming or scanning the text, but rather using the higher thinking skills. This is the useful strategy to the information placement and it enhances a general feel of the subject. Accordingly, the students need to pay more attention and focus on what they are reading in order to get the meaning of the context of the reading passage by holding the information. It does not only rely on the students' reading capability, but also involves the analysis, reflection, evaluation and making judgments. This means that the students are expected to be able to analyze the text, reflect it to their life, evaluate and make a judgment based on their opinion and life experiences which need the higher order thinking skills.



In addition, critical reading is one of the reading skills that students need to master. Various and different reading materials require the students to be able to understand what the writer really conveys in the text. In critical reading activities, readers use their background knowledge to understand reading material (Rahmi, 2020).

Vacca et al. (2021) mentioned that critical reading involves actively engaging with the content, questioning the author's perspective, identifying biases and assumptions, and assessing the credibility and relevance of the information presented. Therefore, critical reading is a dynamic process with an inductive and deductive flow in which metacognitive reading strategies (MRS) are also employed , and the reader uses analysis, synthesis, evaluation and interpretation skills (Kökçü, 2023).

Thus, critical reading is moving beyond just understanding the author's meaning of a text to consider the choices the author makes to communicate their message.

### **A.2. The Purposes of Critical Reading**

The purposes of critical reading according to Wallace (2003, p.43), include three main purposes, they are : Linguistic, conceptual or critical, and cultural. Linguistic involves helping students to acquire an understanding the nature of ideological meanings which attach in the text and obtains the students' grammatical knowledge. Conceptual or critical is used to develop the student's epistemic literacy, which means the students are able to move beyond the text and develop a strong arguments towards the text and also helps the students discuss the implications of the events which describe in the text and make cognitive and critical link to their lives. Cultural is used to promote perception into cultural assumption and practices, similarities and differences across national boundaries. The second of the cultural purpose in critical reading is the students have an opportunity to observe new culture and share the different cultural perspective.

Furthermore, Kirsznar and Mandell (2011) explained the goals of critical reading which include the ability of the reader to:

- Recognize author's purpose and bias
- Evaluate sources and arguments
- Consider opposing viewpoints
- understand context of study and/or paper

For Manarin et al. (2015) critical reading has several meanings, but it can be split into two terms: Critical reading for academic purposes and critical reading for social engagement. Reading critically for academic success consists of the following key skills:

- (1) Identifying patterns of textual elements;
- (2) Distinguishing between the main idea and supporting ideas;

- (3) Evaluating credibility;
- (4) making judgments towards the text;
- (5) making relevant inferences about the text.

Reading critically for social engagement implies an understanding of how texts can be used to achieve social goals. To master critical reading, students also need to have an awareness of how literacy is used for social purposes, how an author may write to achieve their own ends, and how one should treat their own reflection on a text's meaning with a sense of social purpose. From this perspective, critical reading necessitates the following criteria:

1. Shifting through various forms of rhetoric.
2. Recognizing power relations.
3. Questioning assumption.
4. Engaging with the word.
5. Constructing new possibilities.

According to Yu (2015), critical reading is not simply careful and detailed reading. To read critically, one must actively recognize and analyze information he reads on the text. Textbooks on critical reading commonly ask students to accomplish certain goals in reading:

- ☐ to understand why the author writes this.
- ☐ to understand the important information in the text.
- ☐ To analyze and summarize.

### **A. 3. The Main Characteristics of Critical Reading and Critical Readers**

The most characteristic features of critical reading are that the student will examine the evidence or arguments presented; check out any influences on the evidence or arguments; check out the limitations of study design or focus; examine the interpretations made; and decide to what extent he is prepared to accept the author's arguments, opinions, or conclusions. To be able to read critically, the students need to distinguish facts from opinions, consider writer's background, assumptions and purposes, know their own beliefs and biases, identify evidence and conclusions, consider various perspectives and interpretations, identify details being emphasized and evidence being concluded (Abu-Alsoud, 2022).

As a result, nowadays readers are no longer just observers; they are participators and interpreters as they are involved in complex discussion of the meaning of social texts. It is the interpretive communities, not the text or the reader, that form the meanings. Learners need to explore the materials and procedures which promote critical reading, embrace not only an approach to specific texts but eventually ways of relating those readings to wider social practices (Habermas & Nielsen, 1990).



Pardede (2007) presented four important features of critical reading. First, critical reader has to comprehend the author's message, so the reader must approach the reading with an open mind and a willingness to accept new ideas or other points of view. In other words, the reader should not let his personal biases interpose the clear thinking and objectivity. Second, critical reading is classified as a high level of comprehension skills; consequently, the reader has to go beyond the literal interpretation of the text's lines. The reader here should realize the implied meanings in the text read to get the author's perspective. Third, unlike basic literal comprehension, critical reading requires the reader to interact with the writer. The writer's message should be understood, questioned, and reacted to in terms of the reader's own knowledge and experience. Fourth, critical reading requires wide knowledge. The more experiences and information the critical reader has concerning a subject, the more highly qualified he/she is to read critically.

Furthermore, critical reading can be recognized based on the following characteristics as stated by Huijie (2010) where "examine" is the key word. Once a reader critically reads a text, he/she starts with examining the evidence, or arguments presented. Not only stop at that level, he/she also examines whether the evidence or arguments affect author's ideas, examines the strengths and weaknesses of the text, examine positive or negative interpretations of the author, and examines which author's point of view should be accepted or rejected. These characteristics have been mapped into three cognitive "hierarchical stages" of the surface code (literal reading), the text base (basic inference by interconnecting the text), and the situational model (making inferences through connecting the text and background knowledge).

To critical readers, what a text says, does, and means all leads to a deeper interpretation of the text. On the contrary, non-critical readers are usually satisfied with recognizing what a text says and restating the key remarks. Critical reading and non-critical reading are doing very differently in this sense (Yu,2015).

Larking (2017) asserted that critical readers must recognize the assumptions made in a text and assess their argumentative validity. They must also evaluate the credibility of their own assumptions when reading a text. The ability to make inferences requires students to connect the ideas in a text with other texts and other forms of knowledge, particularly within the same genre or discipline.

Critical readers tend to react towards what is being read due to their ability to comprehend beyond the content of the book critically. Therefore, students' critical reading and thinking are indispensable in comprehending the content of a text (Din, 2020).

Kosimov (2022) insisted that a critical reader reads in order to understand. A critical reader analyzes whether he or she gets experience, assumptions and knowledge from the text. A critical reader examines the text and context; he or she will skim the text in order to know what the topic is and what the main ideas of the text are. A critical reader recognizes an author's purpose and bias from the text, and understands tone and persuasive elements. As can be seen, critical reading has a considerable impact on improving students' reading comprehension and their academic capacity.

Niculescu and Dragomir (2023) added that critical readers ask questions, make connections, and evaluate the evidence presented in a text. To engage in critical reading, students need to be taught to adopt a skeptical mindset that allows them to challenge assumptions, question evidence, and consider alternative perspectives. This requires a combination of analytical skills and intellectual curiosity.

Accordingly, Nasrollahi et al. (2015) stated that EFL students need to engage with series of strategies to make meaning; hence, background knowledge comes first, because without it critical readers have no place to begin.

Thus, critical reading strategies imply knowledge of critical linguistics, critical discourse analysis, media and political discourse, etc. Therefore, teaching critical reading strategies is a complex task; it remains the matter of thorough international research of leading psychologists, pedagogues, methodologists, etc (Vozgova & Afanasyeva, 2019).

#### **A. 4. Critical Reading Strategies**

In recent years, a number of studies have demonstrated the importance of language learning strategies (LLS) in foreign language (FL) acquisition. Effective strategy use aids students in becoming self-directed and self-regulated learners and in taking responsibility for their own learning (Habók & Babarczy, 2018) . Adequate strategy use assists students in accomplishing certain language tasks more successfully, and learners with a large repertoire of FL or second language (L2) learning strategies perform better (Anderson, 2005). In line with this, critical reading strategies are one of the most important areas of FL/L2 strategy research .

Accordingly, reading critically is really needed to make the students understand and criticize the text they read. Tovani (2000) and Axelrod and Cooper (2002) stated that critical reading strategies refer to strategy that encourages learners to use each of the cognitive processes in the three upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which are commonly associated with critical thinking skills. Critical reading strategies help

students to read their textbooks and various reading passages systematically and critically.

Furthermore, Nasrollahi et al. (2015) referred to critical reading strategies as a strategy that encourages learners to use each of the cognitive processes in the three upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which commonly associated with critical thinking skills.

Critical reading strategies is the one used for activating students' critical thinking. Meanwhile it can assess some information needed in reading texts. Critical reading refers to the way or the process in which the students and teachers interact in the classroom to practice a comprehension (Harida, 2016; Faridah & Nawafilah, 2019).

Fita Faridah, (2019) reported that critical reading strategy is a method that helps students analyze the information that they need to know from texts they are reading and to think critically. It entails teacher-student interaction in the classroom with the objective of practicing comprehension and identifying relevant information. This approach helps students understand and apply the information presented in the text.

Kurt-Taspinar (2020) added that critical reading involves an active cognitive process that encompasses uncovering and discerning the author's intended meaning, evaluating the author's propositions through established criteria, and integrating that meaning into pre-existing knowledge.

In order to develop critical reading, it is essential to teach critical reading strategies. Salisbury University's (2009) presented seven strategies namely previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting on challenges to your beliefs and values, outlining and summarizing, evaluating, and comparing and contrasting.

**Previewing** is focused on learning about the text before reading it thoroughly, but previewing critically does not only include looking at the style, the title and subtitle of the text, but it also includes getting an overview of its content and organization as well as identifying its rhetorical situation (skimming). Previewing helps learners improve comprehension by tapping on prior knowledge.

Another critical reading strategy is **contextualizing**. Contextualizing is —placing a text in its historical, biographical, and cultural context. In this strategy, the reader understands that the writing was written in the past so the reader contextualizes and recognizes the differences of the contemporary values and attitudes and those represented in the text (. In contextualizing a reading material, the reader must consider whether its historical, cultural, material, or intellectual circumstances change, complicate, explain, deepen or otherwise influence his/her view of the writing. Contextualizing a text requires the

reader to identify the text's context and interpret how its context differs from that of his/her own. This can be achieved by identifying the language or ideas that appear foreign or out of date; involving one's knowledge of the time and place in which the work was written; and finally, evaluating the effect these differences have on one's understanding and judgment of the text .

**Questioning** as a critical reading strategy, on the other hand, encourages readers to write down questions anytime during reading . In difficult academic readings, you will understand the material better and remember it longer if you write a question for every paragraph or brief section. Each question should be focused on the main idea and should be answered with the readers' own words and not taken from the paragraphs. Research shows that posing questions and discussing stories before and after reading stories to children enhance comprehension .Question generation is essential in the cognitive process that operates at deep conceptual levels like reading comprehension.

**Reflecting on challenges to one's beliefs and values**, as a critical strategy, is applied in reading a text as the reader marks the paragraphs that somehow challenge his attitude, belief, and status. In addition, readers can also note down the reason why a certain text was created and then look at the pattern of concepts that somehow challenges his/her beliefs .A critical reader's reflection on his beliefs and values crucially involves examining the basis for his/her own personal responses to the material read. Accordingly, sometimes the readers' beliefs about an issue are difficult to express because they are so ingrained. In order to discover these beliefs, it is important to explore how a text challenges the reader, as to whether the texts disturbed, threatened, ashamed, or inspired him/her. Many readers may have a strong reaction to some of the essays read .

**Outlining and summarizing** is identifying the main ideas and restating them in one's own words. The key to both outlining and summarizing is being able to distinguish between the main ideas and the supporting ideas and examples. The main ideas form the backbone, the strand that holds the various parts and pieces of the text together. Outlining the main ideas helps you to discover this structure. When you make an outline, don't use the text's exact words . Anderson-Medius (1990) argued that outlining, as a graphic organizer, is a high level skill since outlining requires readers to analyze and see the relationship between information in order to connect them appropriately. Outlining has five functions: (1) allows learners to focus on important ideas; (2) improves familiarity with the structure of the text; (3) promotes better retention; (4) produces alternative materials to supplemental material; (5) encourages participation in learning. Furthermore, Corder-Ponce (2000)

added that summarization is possibly the most significant and encompassing of all reading strategies for effective studying and better comprehension.

**Evaluating.** Evaluation of the text read means that the reader analyzes how the text evidence portrays the subject matter (Bisset, 2014). A critical reader is required to make a careful evaluation of the degree of importance and acceptance he is to confer on the text read, taking into account the author's topic presentation and the validity of his arguments. As opposed to ordinary reading where the reader only accepts the information presented in the text, critical reading serves a different purpose, where the reader does not just accept the information, but judges and evaluates the author's argument of the text. Furthermore, evaluation assumes the readers' careful examination of the decisions or choices the author made in framing the presentation of content, language, and structure of the text. Readers examine each of the three areas of choice, and consider their effect on text meaning. Another area of evaluation is the logic of the author's argument. The two parts of an argument are claim and support. Claim is what the writer wants the reader to accept. Thus, the claim refers to the writer's idea, opinion, or point of view. Support refers to the reasons and evidence that serve as the basis for the claim.

In testing the logic of the author's argument, the reader must evaluate the arguments in terms of appropriateness, believability, and consistency throughout the entire course of the reading. Testing for appropriateness requires analyzing the text according to logical fallacies, such as false analogy, non sequitur, post hoc ergo propter hoc. Next, testing for believability requires applying other fallacies that relate to reasoning, such as begging the question, generalizations and failing to accept the burden of proof. Finally, testing for consistency requires checking to make sure there are no contradictory statements.

**Comparing and contrasting** is described as exploring likenesses and differences between texts to understand them better. The reader differentiates and connects various texts to the previously read text in order to analyze their similarities and differences. Silver (2010) posited that comparing and contrasting consists of five distinct goals namely: (1) strengthen memories by focusing on analyzing pairs of ideas, thus strengthens the reader's ability to remember key contents; (2) develop higher-order thinking skills; (3) increase comprehension by highlighting the significant details, making abstract ideas concrete, and reduction of confusion between related concepts; (4) enhance writing in content areas through a simple structure that organizes information and develop ideas with greater clarity and accuracy; (5) develop habits of mind.



Enhancing the habits of mind such as thinking about thinking (metacognition), thinking flexibly, applying prior knowledge to new situations, striving for accuracy, and thinking and communicating with clarity and precision will provide students with tools that can help orchestrate their academic success. Furthermore, Allen (2004) described the process of comparing and contrasting as helpful in clarifying concepts and making information memorable by asking the readers to think deeply about the text in order to determine the similarities and differences.

According to Peters (1991) , critical reading strategies have four stages. They are (1) reading for comprehension (2) interpreting the text (3) judging the text and (4) writing. McWhorter (1992: 377) also provided critical reading strategies, they are: Make inferences, distinguish fact and opinion, recognize generalizations, identify tone, identify the author's purpose, and recognize bias.

Axelrod et al. (1999) illustrated that the basic critical reading strategies include annotating which means circling key words and writing comments or questions about the material. In addition, Tovani (2000) mentioned that critical reader needs to analyze and then interrogate a text. The critical reading strategies suggested by Tovani (2000) are: (1) Before reading, the students should determine the aim of reading, then preview the text, and pay attention to the generic structures and the language features of the text; (2) While they are reading, they write some notes and connect the information from the text they read to their prior knowledge or experience, then they monitor their comprehension; and (3) After reading, they should make a summary of the key points.

Axelrod and Cooper (2002) suggested the steps of critical reading strategies are annotating, previewing, contextualizing, outlining, analyzing opposition, summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, questioning, and reflecting.

Wallace (2003) listed six steps of critical reading strategies; they are annotating, previewing, questioning, reflecting, outlining and summarizing, and evaluation.

On the other hand, Khabiri and Pakzad (2012) listed eight steps of critical reading strategies; they are previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting, outlining and summarizing, evaluating an argument, and comparing and contrasting some related texts.

Barnet and Bedau (2014, pp. 34-45) defined four stages in critical reading; they are previewing; skimming to find the thesis; reading with careful eye: Underlying, highlighting, annotating, summarizing and paraphrasing.



Furthermore, Nasrollahi et al. (2015) suggested that there are ten critical reading strategies : Annotating, previewing, scanning and skimming, fact versus opinion, drawing conclusions, monitoring, summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, and making conclusion.

**Previewing:** In this strategy, the teacher tries to build or activate the students' prior knowledge or experience related to the topic going to be discussed. Readers will have a better comprehension if they are able to relate the information they get from the text to their prior knowledge. Therefore, schema is very necessary to get a better reading comprehension. The reader will have a better reading comprehension, if he or she has more background knowledge linked to the information from the text.

**Annotating:** Students circle key words and write a comment or question about the information they read. It means that students are asked to give circle on the key words and write comments or questions about the text they read while they are reading.

**Questioning:** The students are asked to make a question for each paragraph while they are reading. A critical reader will automatically ask some questions about the text he or she is reading.

**Scanning and skimming:** The teacher makes some questions which lead the students to do scanning and skimming about the information from the text.

**Fact Vs. opinion:** The students are divided into some discussion groups and then they give their opinion about some facts from the text they read. In this step, the students should identify, analyze, and evaluate the author's arguments before they deliver their opinion in order that they are able to give a good and right opinion.

**Summarizing:** The students make a summary by analyzing the information they got from each paragraph; mention the main idea of each paragraph. A critical reader needs to analyze and then interrogate a text. The reader should identify the main ideas and restate them.

**Paraphrasing:** The students make a paraphrase of a few sentences from the text in their own words. Paraphrasing is not simply changing a few words, but it should provide the same information as the original and be written in their own word choice and sentence structure.

**Synthesizing:** The students combine the ideas and information from the text they read and another text from other resources. Students should be able to connect information from some resources, and then write a new or original sentence.

**Drawing conclusion:** The students write a conclusion of the whole content of the text by evaluating the author's arguments and evidences found in the text and combining it with the information from

other resources. An effective reader should be able to evaluate his or her own practices, working to develop his or her critical reading skills.

Talebi and Marzban (2015) mentioned three critical reading strategies. The first strategy is annotating, where the learners can mark, circle, write the key words or the meaning of the unknown words while reading. By applying this strategy, the learners pay attention to the unknown words realizing the synonyms and the antonyms. Language learners can also write key words and short summaries in the margins or even questions that may help them identify the audiences' challenging ideas, knowledge, and beliefs. The second strategy is inferencing that takes place after guessing. It has been claimed that a learner who has been taught guessing strategies would not automatically produce correct guesses while reading. Guessing could be influenced by some factors as availability of clues, familiarity with the clue words, and presence of misleading clues. This strategy is common in critical reading because reading is a process that is not regarded as separate units. The reader is frequently engaged in guessing meaning through encountering with the text. The third strategy is summarizing that helps the learners to self-correct by the means of reading the text several times, checking the topic sentences, identifying the main ideas, and relating passages to each other.

Suacillo et al. (2016) added seven critical reading strategies: Previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting on beliefs and values challenges, outlining and summarizing, evaluating, and comparing and contrasting.

Femilia (2018) listed nine critical reading strategies which consist of strategies for constructing the meaning of the text; they are previewing, questioning to understand and remember, monitoring comprehension, solving vocabulary problems and interpreting the text; and strategies for evaluating the arguments presented by the writers which consist of contextualizing, reflecting on challenges to belief and values, evaluating the writers' arguments and; comparing and constructing related reading.

Faridah (2019) suggested ten critical reading strategies to help the reading process; they are annotating, previewing, skimming and scanning, facts Vs. opinions, drawing conclusions, monitoring, summarizing, paraphrasing, synthesizing, questioning, and contextualizing.

#### **A.5. The importance of Critical Reading & Critical Reading Strategies in the EFL/ESL Classroom**

Teachers usually do not emphasize critical reading skills when teaching reading in schools. They would focus more on word attack skills, comprehension skills, and fluency skills. Critical reading skills are

important for students to learn so that we can prepare them to be better critical readers in life. When students leave school either they choose to further their study or work, they would face the same challenge that is how to succeed in their life. However, this is not something easy for them to achieve if they do not have the essential critical skills and one of them is the critical reading skills. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to teach these critical reading skills to students because these skills could help them to survive when they leave schools, especially when they embark in any program at the tertiary level. In order for teachers to produce critical readers, they must expose the students to reading skills (one of the skills is critical reading skills), reading strategies, and metacognitive skills and strategies when they teach reading in schools (Kadir, et al., 2014).

According to Hudson (2007), one of the categories in reading skills is critical reading skills. Critical reading skills are skills that will help students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read. When teachers expose students to critical reading skills, they will also make students see the cause – and – effect or comparing relationships in the text, or adopting critical stance toward the text. In other words, when we teach critical reading skills to students we will develop them to be critical thinkers as well because when they do critical reading it will lead to critical thinking (critical reading will come first before critical thinking). What is meant here is that students need to have fully understood a text where they would analyze, synthesize, and evaluate it, then only they would think critically about the text – choose or reject the ideas put forward, agree or disagree with the issues, and most important of all they know the reason(s) why they do it.

Thus, McWhorter (1992) discussed that critical reading strategies will help students to read the textbooks and various reading passages in the systematical and critical ways. Before students can think critically and use higher order thinking elements to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate a text, they need to understand it, which can become difficult when they are reading complicated material. The process in critical reading can evaluate the idea and give the judgment about the students' value. So, giving critical reading strategies hopefully can give the complete information for getting ideas in the texts of the students.

Duke and Pearson (2002) posited that the readers' application of critical strategies enhances reading comprehension. Jasim (2007) also asserted that critical reading strategies should be an integral part of advanced reading courses for they have a positive impact on students' capability to differentiate facts from opinions, make inferences, recognize bias and prejudice, and identify various types of propaganda.

In addition, McNamara (2007) reported that critical reading strategies are used in the classroom as tools to improve and sustain reading comprehension and knowledge, reading comprehension goes beyond the printed page.

Zhang (2009) demonstrated that the CR elements in EFL reading lessons enhanced the dynamics of the reading class as well as students' active participation in the reading process. It was also suggested that teaching CR pedagogy to EFL teachers should be an important part of teacher professional development programs. In many educational contexts, teachers may lack sufficient training on CR skills.

According to Adali (2010), the readers are expected to study the sources, identity of author's purpose, distinguish the truths and construct their own judgments. Critical reading is an active and participatory process of discovering of information and thoughts in a text. In the critical reading, the readers are expected to obtain high level comprehension through their interpretation and evaluation skills. Critical reading is one of the steps of creative reading. In creative reading, the readers analyze and interpret the text using their faculty of wonder.

Wallace and Wray (2011) stated that the combination between reading and writing has some advantages if the students did it; those advantages are the first is that the combination between critical reading and writing could improve the students' understanding about the topic of the written text and the students are able to make a plan of their writing which is inspired by the writer. The second, the students are able to identify the research's gaps and the last is having reading for many written sources will give good effect to the quality of the students' writing. It is in line with the students' condition in the academic writing course. Through the first and second stages of critical reading, those of reading for comprehension and interpreting, the students are able to have more understanding towards the topics of their writing.

Harvey (2012) argued that teaching reading strategies will help students understand and gain meaningful information from the text. In condition, critical reading is the text process of reading that goes beyond understanding text. Critical reading involves: (1) carefully considering and evaluating the reading, (2) identifying reading weaknesses and flaws and (3) Looking at the big picture and decided how the reading.

Khabiri and Pakzad (2012) found that the application of critical reading strategies help students improve their vocabulary and make its retention easier, thus helping them become more independent and successful readers. They also added that critical reading demands the reader to make judgments about what they read; this kind of reading requires posing and answering questions about the text and the author .It

means that when the readers do critical reading, they make a judgment not only for the texts they read, but also the author.

Furthermore, Kadir et al. (2014) argued that when we teach critical reading skills to students we will develop them to be critical thinkers as well because when they do critical reading it will lead to critical thinking (critical reading will come first before critical thinking). Thus, this will not only prepare them to be better critical readers in schools but we also hope we could produce better school leavers who could survive in the real world.

Nasrollahi et al. (2015) stated that the use of critical reading strategies orchestrates the development of critical reading, critical thinking, and higher order thinking ability respectively.

Yu (2015) added that critical reading strategies lead to better comprehension in college English reading, and the most frequently used reading strategies in university classroom teaching are: (1) pre-reading, (2) reading in context, (3) questioning and answering, (4) reflecting after reading, and (5) outlining and summarizing.

Gonzales and Torres (2016) mentioned that critical reading requires students to think more actively and deeply to understand a text and analyze it, i.e., to read between the lines and beyond the lines rather than focusing on just reading the lines.

On the other hand, Harida (2016) reported that using critical reading strategies, the teacher can evaluate whether the students can understand the texts they read or not. Training to use critical reading strategies will make the students more understandable about the texts they read. The students can find the information in the text specifically. They can do what the purpose of the writers is in writing the texts?, by knowing the writer's or author's purpose it is really needed to understand kinds of ideas given. Also, the students' comprehension about the text has been known. They are better in comprehending the text after they used critical reading strategies in their reading activities.

Suacillo et al. (2016) argued that critical reading strategies improved students' reading comprehension and gave a positive effect on students' reading comprehension. Wilson (2016) explored teachers' conceptualization of CR in an academic reading context. In-class reading class observations, interviews with both teachers and students along with analyses of student writings and class materials indicated that critical thinking and reading skills were fundamental to academic reading pedagogy. He also discussed the importance of effective integration of CR into academic reading contexts and underlined teachers' responsibility in developing students' skills and dispositions for critical thinking.



Jonathan et al. (2017) pointed out that the following strategies should be incorporated into the advanced courses of reading because of their positive influence on the learners' ability to distinguish between facts and opinions, make inferences, and detect the author's bias. Critical reading strategies also play an important role to make the EFL learners as successful readers through enhancing their FL vocabulary knowledge. Critical reading strategies can also enable EFL learners to become able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the reading texts. The benefits of critical reading strategies are not only restricted to developing the EFL learners' reading skills but also writing skills as both reading and writing apply similar strategies. Thus, it was necessary to investigate the effectiveness of critical reading strategies on developing the First year students' achievement in FL reading comprehension.

McAlpine (2019) pointed out that using a variety of critical reading strategies in the classroom, students are exposed to multiple forms of learning how to read, the creation of higher-level questions, understanding specific essential vocabulary words, exploring the purpose of each text put in front of them, and the opportunities to practice these skills.

Moreover, Vozgova and Afanasyeva (2019) demonstrated that critical reading (as well as critical thinking) presented an integral part of the notion of classroom as critical community. It contributes to a learner's 'critical language awareness' to be able to analyze texts through the lens of discourse and requires careful pre-planning as well as a wide range of efficient methodologies integrated into curriculum. It is important to note that all spoken or written texts are by-products of social interaction, thus from the discursive perspective it is crucial to teach language learners to interpret texts as social acts. Students should be able to explore and interpret the real-world settings and socially relevant issues behind the texts they encounter in their everyday lives (via the Internet, print media, radio or TV programmes, podcasts, mail, social networking sites, etc).

In addition, critical reading is necessary to find out the hidden meaning in between lines. Critical reading is the main medium to access the right knowledge in which high cognitive processes are involved (Baki, 2020).

Pantito (2020) stressed that critical reading is important to help readers to catch up information from educators, families and English friends in classroom, especially, when students read the text very quickly and to read smoothly.

Surdyanto and Kurniawan (2020) stated that reading must be critical, which means that reading should aim to absorb information and reflect, analyze, evaluate, and interpret the content. Critical reading



involves concurrently using multiple layers of thinking in an interactive process. The thinking process includes an analysis where the reader clarifies information by examining the components of the reading, by integrating and combining the relevant parts into a coherent whole, evaluating the content by setting standards, and then assessing ideas compared to previously established standards to verify their accuracy.

According to Cho et al. (2021), the EFL learners should be taught the critical reading strategies in order to achieve high levels of understanding English reading texts. They should be able to preview the text, contextualize the reading text (i.e. to relate it to its cultural context), make questions about the reading texts, reflect on the text, outline and summarize, evaluate the text, compare and contrast the text with other texts. These seven elements constitute the main components of critical reading strategies. The ability of EFL learners to apply these strategies can enhance their comprehension of FL reading texts.

Khojah and Thomas (2021) indicated that using different strategies has a positive effect on students' reading motivation. Nevertheless, not all English teachers abide by these standards and still implement traditional teaching methods where there is no room for students to have more capacity and become active participants.

Sudarwati and Manipuspika (2021) mentioned that students' critical reading ability needs to be enhanced because by reading critically, they will find the deep truth about what is being said and the reasons for saying so. Reading critically is done by seeing the writer's motives or purposes and then evaluating it. The readers do not merely read but also think about what is being read or discussed. In this case, the readers should analyze and evaluate what they are reading. In such a way, reading is called to be an interactive process which affects both the writer and the readers. So, reading is not only meant to understand the content of a passage but it also involves reader's emotion so the reader can give an analysis and evaluation .

Furthermore, Achmad Chrisbianto Sachran (2022) insisted that critical reading strategies encourage students to read critically and enhance their critical thinking. To summarize, reading is crucial for students as it provides new words, improves writing, speaking, and listening skills, and helps them pronounce sentence words. Reading also helps students understand existing conditions and situations. Students engage in reading activities, gaining information, knowledge, and ideas through words, sentences, and passages.

Hettige et al. (2022) confirmed that students must use their critical reading skills to efficiently comprehend the texts they read during and beyond their academic studies .The ability to search for information and then filter the information obtained to distinguish between important and

unimportant information is a critical skill in the learning process. Making decisions about good and valid information is the cornerstone of a learning process strongly influenced by critical reading skills.

Kadel (2022) reported that Students can make prediction, summarizing, and making inferences, if they are familiar with the relevant vocabulary and background knowledge of the text. Moreover, the more the students read, the better they become so they should be provided with adequate and ample reading materials which are to be pertinent to their curricula.

Kosimov (2022) pointed out that critical reading has several benefits, including a deeper understanding of content, the lengthening of contents maintenance term in the memory and learning how to submit feedback critical of the reasonable ideas. Critical reader recognizes an author's purpose and bias from the text, and understands tone and persuasive elements. It is clear that critical reading has a considerable impact on improving students reading comprehension and their academic capacity. Critical reading requires three areas: Comprehension, vocabulary and speed of reading. Students can provide strong and accurate supporting reasons in their academic writing tasks by using their critical reading skills.

Van et al. (2022) stressed that there is a high need for research related to critical reading because of its importance in many fields, including education, business, and research. Critical reading is essential for understanding complex texts and developing critical thinking skills

Niculescu and Dragomir (2023) demonstrated that teaching reading strategies involves equipping the learners with the necessary tools that help them read any type of text and improve their decoding and reading comprehension skills. Consequently, critical reading skills and strategies refer to the ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret written material in a thoughtful and deliberate way. These skills are essential for comprehending complex texts, identifying key information, and developing a nuanced understanding of the author's intent.

Accordingly, many studies were conducted to demonstrate the importance of critical reading & critical reading strategies in EFL/ESL classroom. Macknish (2009) conducted a study with the participation of Chinese students in a pre-university second language reading course in Singapore to see CR discourse in peer group discussions. Qualitative data gathered through interviews, observations, questionnaires, and focus group discussions showed that CR understandings of students changed throughout the course in favour of adopting a broader range of CR processes.

Muhamad (2010) examined whether the students were able to respond critically to reading texts given and if so, what the critical

reading strategies employed were. The critical thinking skills of interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, explaining, inferring, and self-regulating have been adopted as the analysis framework. The analysis should help shed some light on the relevance and the importance of the acquisition of the critical skills in academic reading.

Sohn (2010) aimed at presenting the ways of making students critical readers in a Korean middle school reading class. Preparing a lesson plan which focuses on a recent young adult novel, the researcher highlighted reader-response, feminism, and cultural criticism through open group discussions. In this way, students were able to shape both their own identity and their society.

Khabiri and Pakzad (2012) investigated the effect of teaching critical reading strategies on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary retention. According to the results, teaching critical reading strategies proved to have a significant effect on intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary retention. As the researchers of this study studied almost the same topic with different methodology on participants of different ages and levels of proficiency, they could enjoy the purpose and the results of that study so much.

In Albeckay's (2014) study, EFL teachers in Libya suffered from inadequate knowledge on CR skills and how to foster them in their classes. Improvement in students' CR skills was closely related to teachers' capacity in teaching and applying CR practices. It was asserted that albeit their positive attitude towards CR, teachers did not teach CR in higher education contexts due to lack of training. Teachers may also have difficulty in developing appropriate pedagogy in CR due to various factors.

Rajabi and Tabatabaee (2015) carried out an experimental study to investigate the development of EFL students' critical reading using critical reading strategies. While the control group was taught comprehension-based approach, the experimental group was taught such strategies to promote criticality as previewing, annotating, questioning, outlining, summarizing, inferencing, analyzing, and responding. They informed that students in the group receiving critical reading strategies could develop their critical reading ability.

Talebi and Marzban (2015) investigated whether teaching critical reading strategies had any significant effect on advanced EFL learners' vocabulary retention. After the pretest had been administered, advanced EFL learners had 8 sessions of explicit teaching and practicing the critical reading strategies, such as annotating, questioning, summarizing, and inferencing. Therefore, teaching critical reading strategies proved to have a significant effect on advanced EFL learners' vocabulary retention.

In Indonesia, studies investigating critical reading strategies specifically in the EFL context in the past decade were very few. One of them was conducted by Fadhillah (2017) who showed positive effects of using critical reading in EFL. Even though the study did not attempt to especially increase EFL students' critical reading, the teaching of critical reading strategies could increase EFL students' level of critical thinking. The critical reading strategies implemented in the study took the following points: previewing, outlining and summarizing, questioning, reflecting, and evaluating.

Femilia (2018) found out how good critical readers employed their critical reading strategies and what model of reading shown by these strategies. The study revealed that three good critical readers employed nine critical reading strategies which consisted of strategies for constructing the meaning of the text; they were previewing, questioning to understand and remember, monitoring comprehension, solving vocabulary problems and interpreting the text; and strategies for evaluating the arguments presented by the writers which consist of contextualizing, reflecting on challenges to belief and values, evaluating the writers' arguments and; comparing and contrasting related reading. It was also found that the pattern of how these strategies utilized formed interactive model of reading. It was suggested to further researches to focus more on discussion about critical reading strategies which are related to reasoning evaluation.

Khalil (2019) explored the first year university students' critical reading skills at Arab Open University. A reading test, assessing students' critical reading skills, was conducted by the researcher. The data obtained was entered and processed by using (SPSS) program. Results of the analysis showed that participants didn't not have critical reading skills and cannot be considered as active readers due to their unfamiliarity with using reading strategies to deal with unfamiliar texts.

Hromova et al. (2022) examined the possibility of providing critical reading instruction to low-intermediate FL students in Kyiv University. As for findings, the participants primarily viewed themselves as roughly competent in critical reading even though they could not understand the practical use of applying critical reading. Due to the critical reading instruction, the participants became able to make justified judgments while reading the selected ten paragraphs. They also managed to support claims, find out various viewpoints on the problems included in the reading text, and express disagreement with some given opinions.

Manuputty (2022) investigated the effectiveness of enhancing students' critical reading in writing argumentative essays. The results of the study indicated some moderate changes in writing argumentative

skills which were analyzed and assessed through content analysis over two complete writing products submitted after two complete learning cycles. Some students of (N=18) were at developing learning stage of becoming critical in writing but not yet fluently in making strong arguments for their opinions. Some had already shown capability to organize their thoughts better in thesis writing but not successfully developed them with facts from their own factual experiences in supporting and defending their stands and arguments in development writing stage. The instructional learning system was found to be effective though obviously much time is needed for comprehending texts, and more writing practice is required before students can eventually perform better argumentative essays.

Nurjanah and Setiyaningsih (2022) investigated argumentation writing skills in terms of critical reading and student academic vocabulary mastery. The results of this study revealed that:(1) critical reading had a positive effect on students' argumentation writing skills; (2) academic vocabulary mastery had a positive influence on students' argumentative writing skills; and (3) critical reading and mastery of academic vocabulary had a positive influence on students' argumentative writing skills. Therefore, it could be concluded that the improvement of critical reading skills, mastery of academic vocabulary supports the improvement of students' argumentation writing.

Safian and Jiar (2022) investigated reading self-efficacy and critical reading strategies employed by 231 ESL pre-university students in University Technology Malaysia. They found that the psychological component of critical reading was highly interrelated to the EFL Malaysian learners' reading strategies. That is, lower critical reading strategies were associated with low achievement students. They also reported that Malaysian ESL learners had moderate self-efficacy in L2 reading. Thus, the findings were useful to curriculum planners who could integrate reading strategies and critical thinking into the design of reading comprehension syllabi in the Malaysian context.

Ilyas (2023) investigated EFL teachers' reading instructions to find out to what extent the instructions contained the elements of critical reading. Findings showed that teachers' reading instructions only belonged to such categories as identifying, analyzing, summarizing, and guessing. Aside from that, the instructions for the four categories were the same. It appeared that EFL teachers lacked creativity and innovative ideas. There were still elements or categories of critical reading that had not yet been utilized or explored. These findings prompted the inclusion of critical reading instruction design skills in teacher education. After all, critical thinking has long been emphasized in national education as a



means of developing responsible citizens and avoiding becoming a victim of false information.

Kökçü (2023) investigated the relationship between pre-service teachers' critical reading skills and their use of metacognitive reading strategies. The findings showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between the participants' critical reading perceptions and their use of metacognitive reading strategies. It was determined that the critical reading skills of pre-service teachers should be improved for which educational content should be developed. In addition, the preservice teachers should be offered training metacognitive reading. In order to obtain more in depth information, qualitative or mixed method studies should be carried out in the future.

Mostafa (2023) investigated the engineering students' critical thinking skills while reading English texts by applying six critical reading strategies. The participants of the study included 30 engineering students who were randomly chosen and divided into two groups: treatment (N=15) and non- treatment (N=15). The treatment group received instruction using the critical reading strategies in three stages. The first stage included summarizing and paraphrasing strategies , the second one facts vs. opinion, comparing and contrasting, while the third one comprised drawing conclusions, and text evaluations. On the other hand, the non- treatment group received their regular instruction. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment and non- treatment groups in the critical thinking achievement test favoring the treatment group. It was concluded that the present research provided evidence for the effect of the critical reading strategies on improving the engineering students' critical thinking skills when reading the English texts.

Maulid and Desvitasari (2024) determined whether there was a significant relationship between students' critical thinking and their critical reading achievement and (2) whether students' critical thinking influenced their critical reading achievement. As a result, the improvement in students' critical thinking skills was accompanied by an improvement in their critical reading comprehension achievement.

#### **A.6. The importance of Critical Reading & Critical Reading Strategies in Developing EFL Reading Comprehension**

Many studies were conducted to investigate the importance of critical reading & critical reading strategies in developing EFL reading comprehension .For example, İçmez (2005) explored the effect of a CR course on high school Turkish students' reading skills. In a context in which reading was highly comprehension based, participants were offered a reading course which focused on hidden meanings, in-text references, and exploring beneath the lines for seventeen weeks.



Findings of questionnaires and semi-instructed interviews revealed that students adopted a more critical approach to written texts and their motivation increased for reading lessons.

Suacillo et al. (2016) established the correlation among critical reading strategies, reading comprehension, and writing performance. This quantitative research study was conducted among the third-year college students from a reputable university in the country. Results showed that most respondents utilized two critical reading strategies such as reflecting on the challenges to beliefs and values and contextualizing. There was a moderate positive correlation between critical reading strategies and reading comprehension, between critical reading strategies and analytical writing performance, and between reading comprehension and writing performance.

Larking (2017) investigated the most important critical reading strategies for advanced EFL tertiary courses, synthesized from the current findings from the literature on critical reading. By adopting critical reading strategies, learners could navigate authentic texts to identify the author's purpose, persuasive elements, and bias to read and respond with an informed perspective. The study also reported on survey findings about the frequency of use of both critical and comprehension-based reading strategies by advanced EFL college students. The survey found that comprehension-based reading strategies were used more often than critical reading strategies but some critical reading strategies such as distinguishing between main and supporting ideas and making relevant inferences were used autonomously by the participants. Based on the survey results, a number of critical reading strategies were identified and they need greater attention in the classroom.

Rohmah (2018) examined the critical reading ability of EFL students in light of problems and strategies. Participants were asked to respond to an open-ended questionnaire which describes problems and strategies which they faced in and applied to reading comprehension. The results indicated that participants faced linguistic and non-linguistic problems when practicing critical reading. Participants applied strategies related to reading skill and non-reading skill. Participants revealed that the reading course enhanced their ability of critical reading. They had better ability to analyze the reading texts, write summaries, and do question-based activities. Rohmah recommended that EFL students should be involved in more activities to develop their ability to evaluate and develop questions on the one hand and to different strategies to sustain the EFL learners' critical reading ability.

Banditvilai (2020) investigated the impact of critical reading strategies on the achievement of 59 Thai EFL participants in reading comprehension. Participants were second year students at English

Department, Kasetsart University who studied an English Reading academic course. The questionnaire measured the participants' attitudes towards the four critical reading strategies: skimming, scanning, predicting, and questioning at the pre and while reading stages. Banditvilai found that critical reading strategies positively affected the participants' achievement in reading comprehension. The participants' improved strategies to skim, scan, predict and question the reading texts enhanced their ability to have better understanding of the reading texts. Banditvilai recommended that participants should be trained on practicing pre-reading activities in order to acquire prior knowledge about the particular reading texts they are studying.

Al Roomy (2022) investigated how critical reading skills could enhance students reading' comprehension while working in groups. The results of the study revealed significant effects of critical reading skills on students' reading comprehension at different levels. Students viewed reading as an active dynamic process that motivated the activation of higher order thinking skills and helped students tap into their prior experiences to approach the reading materials. It also showed how implementing a rich repertoire of critical reading skills enabled students to overcome reading problems as they could read not just what is directly stated but what is being communicated between and beyond the lines.

El-Maghraby (2023) discussed the effectiveness of utilizing critical reading strategies on developing FL freshmen reading comprehension skills. Sixty participants took part in the study. They were enrolled at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Translation Language, Misr University for Science and Technology. The findings showed the effectiveness of utilizing critical reading strategies on the enhancement of the participants' performance in FL reading comprehension. The study introduced implications on the necessity of incorporating critical thinking strategies in the teaching of EFL reading skill.

Safrudin et al. (2023) investigated the extent to which using critical reading tasks significantly develop students' reading comprehension at SMA Negeri 6 Kota Tidore Kepulauan. The procedure of implementing critical reading tasks were: previewing, annotating, summarizing, analyzing, re-reading, and responding. It concluded that using critical reading tasks could significantly improve students' reading comprehension, since there was a significant difference between students' reading comprehension score before and after using critical reading tasks to teach reading comprehension.

Tan (2023) analyzed the critical reading skills of Grade 9 students and assessed the difficulties they encountered to shed light and provide valuable solutions in the successful development and improvement of the

students critical reading skills. The findings revealed that students' perception of their reading ability is below average. The majority of the respondents had poor reading skills. In addition to these, students had limited vocabulary and often disassociate themselves to reading. The different strategies used in motivating students to read were presented. The majority of the teacher respondents stated that critical reading skills were part of higher-order thinking skills. Moreover, a shortage in teaching facilities and resources in the classroom were the major factors why students had poor reading ability. Findings revealed that the majority of the teacher respondents claimed that improving critical reading skills of the students could also enhance their reading comprehension skills.

Rahmasari (2024) investigated the role of employing critical reading strategies in the reading comprehension development of high school students. The findings revealed that critical reading strategies significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension. Specifically, the mean scores increased from 24.83 on the pre-test to 66.67 on the post-test, reflecting a marked improvement in comprehension abilities. The study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of critical reading strategies in enhancing high school students' reading comprehension skills in the classroom.

In summary, critical reading is important because it empowers learners to think more critically and make informed decisions based on the information they encounter. It is an essential skill for success in academia, professional life, and everyday life. It is also important in improving EFL reading comprehension skill as Kurland (2000) demonstrated that critical reading is a kind of reading strategies for comprehending a text because it is the way of getting information and ideas within a text.

### **B. The EFL Reading Comprehension**

English is an important language and is considered the most commonly used language all over the world so it has an impact on every field of work. Reading is an important skill in understanding English. Reading plays a crucial role in our lives. It is a significant part of everyday living that one cannot imagine life without it (Chawwang, 2008).

According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), reading is a significant skill that learners should know. Learners read texts for various goals from gaining information to enjoyment. It helps learners to be familiar with the subjects of their majors and improve their language knowledge.

Yang (2017) pointed out that reading is a mental complex process that creates an interaction between reader and author. Since the purpose

of reading is comprehension, the major goal of reading comprehension instruction is to help learners develop knowledge, skills, and strategies so that they become strategic readers who read for comprehension (Olifant et al., 2020).

### **B.1. The Definition of EFL Reading Comprehension**

Most researchers agree that reading comprehension is not simply recognizing individual words, or even understanding each individual word as our eyes pass over it. All models of comprehension recognize the need for readers to build up a mental representation of text, a process that requires integration across a range of sources of information, from lexical features to knowledge concerning events in the world. (Garnham, 2001).

According to Richard and Schmidt (2002), comprehension is the identification of the intended meaning of written or spoken communication. They also added that contemporary theories of comprehension emphasize that it is an active process drawing both on information contained in the message (bottom-up processing) as well as background knowledge, information from the context and from the listener's and speaker's purposes or intentions (top-down processing).

Cain et al. (2004) and Paris (2005) added that reading comprehension can be broadly defined as the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include language, word reading, word knowledge and fluency. In addition, Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004) illustrated that comprehension is making sense of what someone reads and connecting the ideas in the text to what he already knows.

Griffith and Ruan (2005) argued that reading comprehension is a complex process, because English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language, learners need effective reading skills to master their reading. Despite all attention investment and efforts in the field of English teaching, students seem to suffer from many considerable weaknesses in the area of reading comprehension.

Furthermore, Schumm (2006) pointed out that comprehension is the complex cognitive process involving the intentional interaction between reader and text to extract meaning. Comprehension process involves readers' understanding about the words and how they use the word to create meaning of the text. In line with the concept about reading comprehension, in teaching learning process the students do not only have to understand the meaning of the text but also to construct and to comprehend the meaning of the text.

Bursuck and Damer (2007) defined reading comprehension as a complex deciphering meaning process which is very much influenced by the readers and their ability to accomplish the reading tasks. Moreover,

Klingner et al. (2007) indicated that reading comprehension is a multicomponent, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in text, understanding of text types).

Hence, reading comprehension for EFL readers is not only the process of understanding the meaning of vocabulary and grammatical structures presented in a text. EFL reading comprises the interpretation of sign, the realization of complex cognitive operation, the understanding of inherent conventions belonging to different discourse communities (Luchini & Gracia, 2007).

Birsch (2011) defined reading comprehension as the ability to get meaning from what is read. Furthermore, Rahmani and Sadeghi (2011) assured that reading comprehension is an interactive mental process between the reader's linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the topic.

Tompkins (2011) described reading comprehension as the level of comprehending a text. He argued that comprehension is a creative process that hinges on four skills called phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Woolley (2011) indicated that reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. In addition, Vaseghi et al. (2012) argued that reading comprehension is about thinking, that is, cogitating whilst reading. Therefore, reading comprehension involves engaging in the act of reading with a questioning mind, which will result in comprehension, evaluation and the decision to accept or reject what was read.

Grabe and Stoller (2013) discussed that reading comprehension requires the ability to properly understand and interpret the material's information. It involves many aspects such as vocabulary mastery, the relationships between words and concepts, managing ideas, identifying the writers' purposes, evaluating the context, and achieving decisions.

On the other hand, the process of reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. The aim is to obtain an overall understanding of what is explained in the text rather than to obtain the meaning of information content in the discourse so that an understanding of the discourse is read (Duff et al., 2015).

Rosidiana (2015) referred to comprehension as a process in which the reader constructs meaning using the building materials, the information on the text and the knowledge stored in the reader's head. The students who have a good comprehension not only make sense of the text, but also they are able to use the information within the text. They are able to think thoughtfully or deeply and to make personal



connections as they analyze and question what they are reading, hearing, and seeing.

Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) illustrated that reading comprehension needs different reading skills such as a word recognition, fluency, lexical knowledge, and pre-existing knowledge to be undertaken quickly so that the reader gets knowledge from text. Reading comprehension is also defined as one type of reading that aims to understand the contents of the reading (MS & Rachmadtullah, 2018).

Nurdianti et al. (2019) stated that reading comprehension refers to the process by which people who read comprehend the knowledge affirmed in the paragraph by relating this to their existing understanding.

Mustafa and Bakri (2020) maintained that reading comprehension refers to the capacity to read, analyze, and comprehend literature. Making conclusions is one of the attributes and abilities that affect a person's capacity to read literature. When word recognition is challenging, students read words with too much processing power, which hinders their comprehension of what is being read.

Thus, reading comprehension can be described as a process of making reasonable interpretation in apprehending a text which has four characteristics; purpose, selection, anticipation, and comprehension. Talking about comprehension is one of the characteristics of reading (Ali, 2022).

## **B.2. The Elements of EFL Reading Comprehension**

Comprehension according to Snow(2003) entails three elements; the reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, the activity in which comprehension is a part. In considering the reader, it includes all the capabilities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences that a person brings to the act of reading. To comprehend, a reader must have cognitive capabilities, motivation, , and various types of knowledge ( e.g. vocabulary, domain and topic knowledge, linguistic and discourse knowledge, knowledge of specific comprehension strategies).

The second element of comprehension is the features of text. Comprehension does not occur by simply extracting meaning from text. During reading, the reader constructs different representations of the text that are important for comprehension.

The last element of comprehension is activity which refers to the purpose of reading a text. A reading activity involves one or more purposes that is influenced by a cluster of motivational variables, including interest and prior knowledge. A reader has a purpose, which can be either externally imposed or internally generated.



### B.3. The Different levels of EFL Reading Comprehension

Comprehension of language does not only involve the understanding of individual words but also active engagement with the content to create a mental representation (Rashid, 2012).

Westby (2012) mentioned that successful comprehension requires coordination of skills at many levels to extract and construct meaning. The level of difficulty associated with comprehension of certain content depends on the complexity of the language used. There are important differences between the language that we use in everyday conversations and the language used in school, where everyday conversations are originally used to achieve daily tasks and share personal information. Academic language includes a different set of words, more complex grammatical structures and different text organization to express content which describes complex relationships.

Therefore, Romadhoni (2010) claimed that there are several levels of comprehension:

(1) **Literal comprehension** read and understand exactly what is on the page. The teacher can ask students to find information and ideas that are explicitly stated in the text. According to El-Kahlout (2010) the literal level as reading the lines, which occurs when the reader interacts with the written form of language in some direct straightforward manner such as, recognizing the main idea, identifying supporting details, and determining the meaning of vocabularies according to the text.

(2) **Inferential comprehension**, as an understanding of reorganization and inferential. Readers in this level are able to understand a definition between sentences implicitly and draw a conclusion from the texts. They also can find main ideas of the texts, causal relationship, pronoun and omitted words or expression in the texts.

(3) **Critical comprehension**, the ability to evaluate the material of the texts. This skill is commonly applied in critical reading activities.

(4) **Creative comprehension**. As the highest level of reading comprehension. In the process of this creative comprehension, the readers develop their own thought to create and improve new ideas, to make new approach and point of view. To achieve this reading level, students may use variety of strategies which are related to understanding factors by reading text and its contexts. Besides, students should emphasize the process of coding mechanically in order to get understanding on other written language to improve knowledge.

### B.4. The Factors that Affect EFL Reading Comprehension

Several aspects are assumed to be factors which affect the students' reading comprehension, such as lack of knowledge about English, low motivation in reading, and less awareness of reading strategies. There are some common factors that influence a reader ability

to comprehend text. Trehearne and Doctorow (2005) expressed that there are factors that affect learners' reading comprehension skills. These factors are learners' reading attitudes, useful teaching on comprehension methods, versatility, text form, and being aware of various reading comprehension strategies. The other factors that affect learners' reading comprehension skills are susceptibility to the text structure, making of conclusion, and comprehension checking.

Koda (2007) argued that there are various variables that impact learners' reading comprehension. Some of these variables involve vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge, metacognitive information, and reading strategies.

According to Dennis (2008), reading comprehension is a complex process between identifying printed symbols and interpreting the meaning behind the symbols. Some factors affect reading comprehension skills. They are complexity of the reading text, environmental influences, anxiety during reading comprehension, interest and motivation, decoding or word recognition speed, and medical problems.

Hollowell (2013) found that medical problems are a factor that affects the learners' reading comprehension. Poor reading comprehension skills may be related to the medical difficulty that does not get addressed until the child is older. This involves attention deficit disorder (ADD), speech problems, and hearing impairments. Nergis (2013) added that deepness of vocabulary knowledge, syntactic consciousness, and metacognitive recognition are some of the important factors that can affect reading comprehension skill

Nandihally (2015) mentioned that the ability to comprehend text is influenced by readers' skills and their ability to process information. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. There are many reading strategies to improve reading comprehension and inferences, including improving one's vocabulary, critical text analysis actual events vs. narration of events, etc. as well as practicing deep reading. People learn comprehension skills through education or instruction and some learn by direct experiences. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual's cognitive development, which is "the construction of thought processes".

Rosidiana (2015) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) mentioned some factors that affect the learners' reading comprehension which include: Students' motivation, vocabulary/background knowledge, automaticity of decoding, fluent reading, and the nature or the genre of the text itself. Motivation has been a central aspect that impacts reading comprehension tasks, and in particular, student performance on reading

comprehension assessments. It plays an important role in comprehending the text. The student will be motivated to read when they feel that they need something from the text. Motivation factor includes students' interest and their curiosity in processing a text.

In addition, vocabulary/background knowledge strongly influences or affects students' achievement in reading. People who have large vocabularies affect their reading comprehension; the more one already knows, the more one comprehends, and the more one comprehends, the more one learns new knowledge to enable comprehension of an even broader array of topics and texts. In other words, the more students' exposure to have a new word, the more their vocabulary knowledge increases.

Likewise, another important aspect of reading comprehension is word knowledge, particularly background knowledge that is relevant to the topic of the text. Reading comprehension can be enhanced by a developing reader's prior knowledge. One way to do this is to provide readers with high-quality, information- rich texts, and then to help them relate what they already know to the texts.

Automaticity of decoding of the text is the next aspect that is required by the reader. It has been well established that skilled reading comprehension requires the reader to be able to process the written symbols of text at an appropriate level. This is reinforced by the fact that poor decoders, both in and out of school, read considerably less than average readers.

Subsequently, one more factor that affects students' reading comprehension is fluent reading. Reading with fluency allows students to obtain information with accuracy, expression and increased speed.

The last component that affects students' reading achievement is the feature of the text itself. Texts are structured in different ways depending on their purpose and audience and the way texts are structured plays an important role in student comprehension. By teaching students to understand and draw on what they know about the organizational structure of texts, they learn how to comprehend text, how to learn important information and remember what they have read and how to monitor their own reading.

Arguedo et al. (2023) confirmed that reading comprehension is influenced by a number of factors, including prior knowledge, vocabulary and fluency, active reading abilities, and critical thinking.

#### **B.5. The Teacher's role during EFL Reading Comprehension Instruction**

The role of the teacher during reading comprehension instruction is to encourage and support learners to become active participants in their own reading process. Findings from various studies on reading

comprehension pedagogies such as Snow et al. (2005), Naiditch (2009), and Kadir et al. (2014) have resulted in great emphasis on the teacher's role in the reading comprehension instruction process in the classroom.

#### **B.6.The Characteristics of Good Readers**

The characteristics of "a good reader" according to Pressley (2002), can be summarized as follows: Readers a) are active while reading and they have explicit aims related to the text. b) Look through the text before reading and while reading they always make guesses about what is going to happen in the next session. c) Look through the passages and they try to guess the meaning and structure of words from the context. d) Use their background knowledge and check their understanding. e) Think about the characters and events when reading fictional texts. They tend to summarize informative texts. f) Assume reading as a productive process.

#### **B. 7. The Importance of EFL Reading Comprehension**

The ability to comprehend and understand information in the texts plays an essential role in student learning. Students should be able to develop mental representation of the text being read. Reading involves the process of word identification, syntactic parsing, and discourse comprehension (Grabe, 2009).

Somadayo et al. (2013) mentioned that if students' reading comprehension is lacking, there is the possibility of failing in learning or at least students will experience difficulties in making progress.

Moreover, Tobing (2013) affirmed that reading comprehension skills are important for students to become effective readers. These skills allow us to read proficiently and learn effectively. Most EFL learners may face comprehension problems while reading a text but proficient readers would face the problems by applying effective reading strategies to solve the comprehension challenges.

Reading comprehension skill is essential in English as a foreign language learning. Through reading, students can improve vocabulary, fluency, speaking and writing skills, and ultimately help them master the target language (Ghanbaria & Marzban, 2014; Hung & Ngan, 2015).

Oakhill (2014) explained that reading comprehension is vital, not merely for informational textual content but also for broader learning, success in education, and employment. It is even crucial for our social lives because of email, textual content, and social networking sites.

Besides, reading comprehension is a significant skill that furthers the development of learners' various academic tasks. It helps them decoding a text, analyzing, explaining, and expressing their own ideas about written materials. Learners should develop a strong ability to understand written materials to struggle with the academic tasks that their teachers deal with them. A primary objective of reading

comprehension is to aid learners improve skills and comprehension of texts if they want to be skilled readers (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Sabouri (2016) reported that reading comprehension is crucial in teaching and learning; it correlates with the learner's academic performance. Predicting achievement in comprehension calls for understanding approximately the reader, the textual content being read, the challenge being undertaken, and the sociocultural context in which the studying occurs.

Habók and Magyar (2018) added that reading comprehension can help learners improve their English language proficiency and improve their knowledge from the information that they get from the reading text. Therefore, students who have a high reading comprehension strategy will possess a higher-level language proficiency.

Furthermore, reading comprehension is considered a key competence in the modern information society, and there is a high demand for the comprehension of complex texts throughout learners' schooling (Magnusson, et al., 2018).

Khataee (2019) pointed out that reading comprehension is one of the most essential skills for EFL learners that have less opportunities to communicate and improve in English. It is one of the necessary language skills for those who read to gain knowledge. Given the importance of reading comprehension skill, an important issue is the lack of using effective activating strategies based on students' needs to develop their reading comprehension skills.

Rutzler (2020) stated that students can only comprehend what they read if they possess adequate comprehension skills. It should be done to learn key lessons, stories, and debates rather than to generate noise in their heads or aloud. She also added that comprehension is essential for fundamental survival. Every student's life, from math class to history, is filled with passages and word problems that demand that you understand what you read. Reading comprehension may also be attributed to our communication skills.

Sumaira (2022) argued that reading comprehension is an essential skill for learners of English that enables the learners to grasp, interpret and understand any text. It is the most important skill to master in order to ensure success in their career. Learners of English can make greater progress in other areas of language learning if the teachers improve the reading comprehension of the students inside the classroom other than just asking them to speak the text loudly.

On the other hand, reading comprehension is a crucial talent that supports the development of students' different academic responsibilities and serves as the cornerstone of all other academic abilities. It aids



individuals with text interpretation, analysis, justification, and expression of thoughts regarding textual materials ( Arguedo, et al., 2023).

Therefore, the ability to extract information from a text is known as reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is crucial for broadening one's scope of thought, finding new experiences, coming up with original ideas, overcoming challenges, and finding solutions. Identifying the message intended to be communicated through writing, among other things, is the most crucial aspect of reading comprehension ( Nur et al., 2024).

Besides, many studies were conducted to investigate the importance of EFL reading comprehension skills. Kaya (2015) found out whether or not reading skills have a role in the reading comprehension ability of Turkish EFL students. The obtained data revealed that the students enhanced their comprehension ability provided that they were taught to use reading skills.

Abdelhalim (2017) investigated the effectiveness of a proposed instructional strategy based on habits of mind and shared inquiry in developing reading comprehension and reading engagement among EFL learners at a KSA university. The results indicated that after the intervention, although some reading comprehension gains were achieved by the CG, the EG achieved higher levels in reading comprehension skills and engagement. Thus, findings revealed support for the proposed strategy. The findings had significant implications for EFL pedagogy, highlighting the effective impact of strategy based instruction on development of reading comprehension.

Fauziah and Munir (2017) found out how often the students use of global strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies employment in comprehending English texts. It also investigated whether the students with different levels of reading proficiency applied similar or different reading strategies, and the extent of the use of reading strategies in helping the students in comprehending English texts. The findings indicated that the senior high school students used problem-solving strategies more frequently than global strategies and support strategies. The findings also revealed that there was a difference in reading strategies applied by the students with different levels of reading proficiency. Moreover, the use of reading strategies was moderately correlated with the students' reading comprehension.

Endris (2018) studied the effects of extensive reading on 92 students' reading comprehension and their attitudes about extensive reading programs. Findings showed that non-threatening learning atmosphere, the longtime allocated and the motivating activities used in the extensive reading program had a positive effect on learners' comprehension skills and their attitudes towards it.

Khataee (2019) used a mixed method design to investigate the effect of THIEVES as an activating (schema activation) strategy on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Participants were 63 advanced students from an English language institute in Iran. Results showed that there was a significant statistical difference between the scores of the control group and experimental groups. Besides, in the questionnaire learners of the experimental group indicated that THIEVES could help them to overcome their comprehension problems. Thus, it could be concluded that using THIEVES was beneficial in comprehension of expository texts.

Thamrin and Widodo (2019) discussed the phenomenon of reading comprehension enhancement through Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) strategy in Kuningan University and described how the HOTS strategy develop the students' skills in comprehending the academic reading text. As a result, the authors obtained the strategy Higher Order Thinking Skills on reading comprehension seen from the C1-C6 phase of HOTS strategy. This indicated that most of the students had higher order thinking skills in comprehending the text. The findings were expected to be references for English teachers in the implementation of teaching strategy.

Abdelhameed (2020) developed EFL reading comprehension skills among Faculty of Specific Education students through a suggested program based on the communicative language teaching approach. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of both groups in the reading comprehension skills, in favor of the experimental group. It was concluded that the program based on the communicative language teaching approach had a positive effect on developing reading comprehension skills for the second year Faculty of Specific Education students.

Alghonaim (2020) investigated the problem of lack of comprehension level of 51 EFL learners in the Saudi Arabia, and improved their reading comprehensions skills using related reading activities. Findings proved the effectiveness of pre-reading activities in engaging students in the learning process and promoting their critical reflection and comprehension of the text.

Ardhian et al. (2020) determined the effect of reading and critical thinking techniques on students' reading comprehension skills. The results showed that: (1) reading comprehension skills of students who learn to use reading techniques Directed Reading Thinking Activity is higher than students who learn to use reading techniques Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, and Review, (2) there was no interaction effect between reading and critical thinking techniques to students' reading comprehension skills, (3) for groups of students who think

highly critically and use the technique of reading Directed Reading Thinking Activity higher than students who use reading techniques Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, and Review, (4) for groups of students who think critically low and use the technique of reading Preview, Question, Read, Reflect, Recite, and Review were not higher than students who use the technique of reading Directed Reading Thinking Activity. Subsequent experiments were expected to find the right reading technique for students who think critically low on comprehension reading skills.

Mohseni (2020) investigated the effect of three meta-cognitive reading strategies (global reading strategy, problem-solving strategy, and support reading strategy) on 54 learners' awareness of critical thinking skills. Findings proved the positive effect of meta-cognitive strategies and critical thinking awareness on students' reading comprehension.

Ali (2021) investigated the effectiveness of using Electronic Previews (E-previews) program in developing reading comprehension skills (RCS) and reading motivation of prep stage pupils. Findings of the study showed that the participants in the treatment group surpassed the non-treatment group participants in developing reading comprehension skills and reading motivation. Finally, the researcher presented a number of recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Zare et al. (2021) explored the possible effect of critical thinking-oriented dynamic assessment (CT-DA) on learners' reading comprehension performances. 21 Iranian language learners, who were homogenized in terms of their language proficiency, reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities, participated in this study. The results signified the efficacy of the type of mediation, which was presented through dynamic assessment procedure on enhancing the learners' reading achievement.

Ali (2022) investigated the impact of the Glogster technology on improving EFL secondary stage students' reading comprehension skills. Research results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group in the EFL reading comprehension skills test in favor of the experimental group. Moreover, the effect size of the Glogster technology was found to be high. Thus, this research recommended using Glogster technology as a useful strategy in teaching the reading comprehension skills of the English language at different educational stages.

Anaktototy and Lesnussa (2022) conducted a study to improve EFL students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills by implementing Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA). The study results showed that the implementation of DRTA could improve

students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. DRTA could improve students reading skills and critical thinking because the DRTA strategy focuses on student engagement with the text. Hence, students had to predict and prove when the students read, and it made the learning process more interactive and the students more active.

Bijani et al. (2022) investigated the cultural perception of Iranian EFL learners on reading comprehension ability. The results of the study specified that Iranian EFL learners held a positive attitude towards the integration of cultural materials into reading passages to better comprehend the target language. Moreover, it was seen that gender and social class did not impact significantly learners' cultural perceptions of English reading comprehension. The findings imply that ESL students with various reading levels or capabilities can learn from materials that are culturally diverse, specifically the ones at higher reading proficiency levels.

Binas (2022) determined the correlation between the reading strategies and comprehension of first-year college students at NIPSC Batad Campus for the S.Y. 2019-2020. The findings revealed that the students had an outstanding comprehension in understanding vocabulary in context, and they excelled in noting details, determining the story structure and details of events. The most frequently used strategy in pre-reading was previewing the text, during-reading was integrating prior knowledge with what they are reading, and for the after-reading strategies, were summarizing and synthesizing what has been read, using what they have read in some applications, and applying the values and skills they have learned from the story. Lastly, the study revealed that students' reading comprehension significantly correlated with their reading strategies.

Deluao et al. (2022) improved the reading comprehension of Grade 8 learners using the 4R strategy (Read, Retell, React, Reflect), and a reading comprehension test was used to collect the required data. This study was an action research designed to determine if there is an improvement in students' reading comprehension after implementing the 4R strategy. The findings revealed significant differences between students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension levels using the 4Rs strategy. The study concluded that adopting the 4Rs strategy improved the Grade 8 learners' reading comprehension.

Kadel (2022) explored the perceptions of pre-service teachers in developing reading comprehension through critical reading skills. The findings of this study showed that critical reading skills help to develop creative writing and critical thinking skills; readers could come up with multiple meaning through critical reading skills; there was the importance of reading strategies for critical reading skills; and academic

writing could be promoted through critical reading skills. Critical reading skills were essential to make readers very dynamic and smart academically.

Arguedo et al. (2023) found out the reading comprehension of the Grade 12 EFL students of Rittiyawannalai School under the international program of Bangkok Thailand and to quantify its relationship to different factors such as availability of reading materials, reading habits, family economic status, parent's educational attainment, after school tutoring, teacher's experience and qualification, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, classroom management and motivation. Generally, it was concluded that family economic status ( $p$ -value=0.007), after-school tutoring ( $p$ -value=0.028), qualification of teachers ( $p$ -value=.000), vocabulary knowledge ( $p$ -value=0.003), and grammar ( $p$ -value=.000) were the dominant factors to the improvement of reading comprehension of the students. On the contrary, other factors obtained more than the level of significance at .05 which made them not significant to student respondents' reading comprehension performance.

Min Ying and Aziz (2023) conducted action research to explore how the twelve-week explicit strategy instruction via scaffolding approach helps improve eleven Year Three ESL learners' reading comprehension in a rural primary school in Sarawak, Malaysia as well as their perspectives towards the use of six research-based reading strategies. The findings of this study revealed that all the six strategies played their own role in helping the participants to become active agents in creating meaning from the texts given, and thus enhancing their reading comprehension. Besides, the learners believed that the use of the strategies learnt improves their reading comprehension, promotes their higher order thinking skills, as well as motivated them to read. It is recommended that the explicit strategy instruction could be incorporated in teaching comprehension to primary ESL learners to aid their reading comprehension, and eventually achieve desirable level in Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) reading proficiency test.

Ramadhani et al. (2023) determined the level of students' critical thinking skills, the level of students' reading comprehension, the classification of the students' critical thinking skills toward the students' reading comprehension, and whether there was a significant correlation between students' critical thinking skills and their reading comprehension. The study's findings revealed that critical thinking skills were significantly correlated with reading comprehension using Pearson Product Moment analysis. This study clearly revealed that most students had a high proclivity for critical thinking while reading English texts, which included interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Thus, the results showed that students



who think critically were more creative and critical in their understanding of ideas.

### **B.8. The EFL Reading Comprehension Skills**

Reading Comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate with what the reader already knows. Schiavone (2000) demonstrated that reading comprehension skills include the ability to decipher written symbols, respond to the sensory images that words evoke, interpret the appropriate meanings and implications of words, identify supporting details, recognize relationships, identify the order and structure of a passage, interpret figurative language, draw inferences and conclusions, read critically, determine the author's intent, purpose, mood and tone, recognize facts and opinions, or judgments, and respond to what is read.

Besides, Harmer (2001) mentioned the following reading comprehension skills, identifying the topic this skill depends on the reader's schemata about the topic. It allows the reader to understand the text quickly. Predicting and guessing when the reader identifies the topic, he/she tries to predict what is going to happen and guess the meaning of new words efficiently depending on his/her schemata.

Moreover, Bojovic (2014) added that comprehension of written language includes determining word meaning, inferring meaning, recognizing writer's style, locating answers to questions, comprehending both explicit and implicit meaning, and identifying cues and major points of information in discourse. Furthermore, he mentioned that skimming, scanning, making judgments, and selectively extracting pertinent information from the text.

Kaya (2015) provided the following reading comprehension skills such as recognizing definitions, enumerations, signal words and contextual clues for vocabulary; identifying main ideas; and evaluating the text.

According to Nandihally (2015), Fundamental skills required in efficient reading comprehension are knowing meaning of words, ability to understand meaning of a word from discourse context, ability to follow organization of passage and to identify antecedents and references in it, ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents, ability to identify the main thought of a passage, ability to answer questions answered in a passage, ability to recognize the literary devices or propositional structures used in a passage and determine its tone, to understand the situational mood (agents, objects, temporal and spatial reference points, casual and intentional inflections, conveyed for assertions, questioning, commanding, refraining etc. and finally ability to determine writer's purpose, intent and point of view, and draw inferences about the writer.

Thus, Shea and Roberts (2016) stated that learners must do more than merely read the words to comprehend a text fully. They must further their comprehension by asking about the facts, events, or concepts they encounter. They must have high language, literacy, and reading skills and can communicate, read, watch, and visually depict difficult ideas concerning real-world problems and authentic materials. To understand the reading comprehension of adolescent pupils, theoretically motivated and empirically driven questions on cognitive models of reading comprehension can be a good place to start.

### **B.9. The EFL Reading Comprehension Models**

Reading comprehension is a dynamic and interactive process. Thus, Johnson (2008) contradicted the opinion saying that reading is a receptive (passive) skill. He believed that it was a “self-evident” one. He clarified that reading is a “highly active” process, and tried to understand what procedures readers follow while trying to understand a written text.

Liu et al. (2010) divided the reading comprehension models into bottom-up model, top-down model and interactive model. In the bottom-up processing, the text is a group of words and sentences. The reader builds his/her interpretation of the whole text gradually from the words and the sentences in the text. Psychologists sometimes call this process as “data driven processing. Top-down processing is known as concept-driven model. During the reading process, the reader integrates his/her previous knowledge and the language knowledge with the text information. In this Interactive model depending on the bottom-up alone or the top-down alone does not explain completely the process of comprehension. Thus, there should be a sort of interaction between the two models. In this interactive model, all types of knowledge; orthographic, lexical, syntactic and semantic work simultaneously to improve word identification.

### **B. 10. The Difficulties of EFL Reading Comprehension**

Reading has a key role in completing all university courses. Although EFL learners are proficient in their language, they usually have a lot of problems in comprehending texts (Kim & Anderson, 2011) ; (Salehi, et al., 2014).

EFL university students' reading comprehension issues are attributable to a variety of circumstances, according to one hypothesis. Teachers may assist students in overcoming reading comprehension issues by improving their knowledge of the importance of reading skills for learning in general and giving them with reading comprehension tools to use. (Ali & Razali, 2019).

Yu (2015) mentioned several factors that result in the possible difficulties in college English reading.

1. Lack of cultural and background knowledge..

2. Difficulties in grammar and words.
3. Reading habits and skills.

Based on these factors, Field (1997) argued that reading comprehension problems can be caused by a lack of background, sociocultural, and contextual information, as all these factors play a part in understanding the text and their absence can have a detrimental impact on EFL students' reading comprehension.

According to Gunning (2002), limited vocabulary knowledge is another problem because students with poor vocabulary knowledge have difficulty understanding technical words such as synonyms, antonyms, and words with different connotations, vocabulary knowledge is critical for understanding complex reading materials .

Koda (2005) affirmed that EFL students need grammar expertise to understand the meaning of terms in passages. Chawwang (2008) also stated that in reading a text, students face many problems obstructing their reading comprehension, such as the problems related to background knowledge, cultural knowledge, and knowledge of text type. Researches on reading comprehension show that EFL learners face some difficulties when they read. In fact, students suffer mainly from understanding vocabulary. This problem may fall into multiple categories among them; learners may have difficulties, for example, with words that have similar lexical forms; some words seem to be phonetically the same (in terms of sounds) as in "boss" and "bus", also in "cut" and "cat", other words seem to be similar at the level of morphology like the words "receptive" and "deceptive".

Torres and Constrain (2009) referred to comprehension as a much more complex psychological process which includes phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic elements, as well as cognitive and emotional factors. In addition, May (2010) and Lai (2011) added that reading is not merely reading word after word in a sentence. The difficulty lies in understanding and organizing the main idea and comprehending the per- and illocutionary meanings.

Nergis (2013) stated that depth of vocabulary knowledge was not a strong predictor of academic reading comprehension. It was found that syntactic awareness was a significant predictor of academic reading comprehension.

Buckingham, et al. (2014) illustrated that when a kid has poor-quality early home literacy experiences, their genetic potential is inhibited, which raises the risk that they will struggle to learn to read.

Perfetti and Stafura (2014) mentioned that one of the most complicated human abilities is reading comprehension. For instance, to comprehend the sentence's underlying meaning, one must visually

process the words, recognize their phonological, orthographic, and semantic representations, and connect the words using the syntax rules.

Sen and Kuleli (2015) reported that students' linguistic problems (vocabulary size and grammar) hinder their comprehension. Vocabulary mastery plays an important role in reading, vocabulary size and vocabulary depth were significantly correlated to reading performance. However, vocabulary depth is not the only predictor to better reading performance.

Reading comprehension is a complex process that involves components, processes, and factors with the aim of finding better ways of improving it among learners (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

However, Shea and Ceprano (2017) confirmed that poor reading comprehension among learners is one of the challenges that reading teachers are most likely to encounter in the classroom. These less skilled readers are deemed to have difficulties in using comprehension strategies and activating their background knowledge to approach the text given as well as recognizing the text structure. Consequently, learning to read seems to be the most frustrating activity for ESL learners, and thus results in their lower reading proficiency particularly in comprehension.

Several authors have agreed that reading comprehension is a complex process during which readers use a number of mental processes, such as reading words, creating meanings, organizing the text, and applying strategies (Rastegar, et al., 2017; Habók & Magyar, 2018; Käsper et al., 2018).

Chandran and Shah (2019) mentioned that the problems in reading and comprehension emanate from environmental, instructional, and biological sources. When reading education begins, those with low comprehension have problems with the fundamental preschool preparatory abilities for understanding before formal teaching .

Furthermore, Elleman and Oslund (2019) assured that reading comprehension is multifaceted and difficult. Children, teenagers, and even adults continue to face difficult challenges with reading comprehension. This idea is strengthened and found challenging to increase reading comprehension because it is intricate and multidimensional.

Ali (2021) reported that reading comprehension is a complex process, involving a variety of cognitive and linguistic skills. As a result, deficits in any cognitive ability is important to the comprehension process that can potentially lead to deficits in reading comprehension performance. Deficits in comprehension could result from a variety of sources beyond decoding , including differences in sensitivity to story structure , inference making , comprehension monitoring , syntactic processing , verbal working memory and oral language skills.

Ali (2022) added that there are several problems, challenges and difficulties that encounter students in reading comprehension such as; lack of familiarity with their vocabulary items, lack of speed reading, lack of cooperative learning in reading instruction, the learner's memorization of reading passages and their related questions due to the difficulty of these passages, many students skip the reading comprehension passage while other students write the questions without answering them or answer most of the questions incorrectly, lack of the necessary reading comprehension skills that can help them answer the questions appropriately and the ineffectiveness of some teacher's teaching methods.

In addition, the teacher-centric approach, characterized by reading from textbooks and answering subsequent questions, contributes to boredom and lacks motivation (Moon & Kwan, 2022). The lack of motivation among students to read is a widespread problem, worsened by the traditional teaching methods used in reading classes (Rahman et al., 2022).

Bakti and Ali (2023) reported that students struggle to comprehend the material they read. A significant number of students struggle with comprehending texts, lacking the ability to identify implicit and explicit information.

As a result, many studies were conducted to investigate the reading comprehension problems encountered by EFL students. Rahimi and Talepasan (2012) explored the EFL learners' reading comprehension problems in reading ESP texts in ESP classes. The study sample consisted of 185 students who were learning English as a foreign language. Chi-square analysis showed that 15 major syntactic categories were serious hurdles to reading comprehension of ESP texts. The study assumed that if teachers get aware about their learners' problems, they can better help learners tackle their problems.

Wahab (2012) focused on the difficulties in reading comprehension faced by first-grade students in senior high school. The study's goals were to discover the challenges faced by first-grade pupils at SMAN 1 Darussalam in Aceh Besar and the causes that contributed to these issues. The data was analyzed using the index difficulty and percentage. According to the test results, the majority of the first-grade pupils at SMAN 1 Darussalam, Aceh Besar, had difficulty answering primary ideas, making inferences, and locating reference questions. Finding main concept questions was the most challenging element for the students of SMAN 1 Darussalam, Aceh Besar because the main idea was tough to find. Furthermore, the students' replies in the questionnaire revealed that they had issues understanding vocabulary, poor command of grammar, difficulty understanding long sentences, a lack of media



learning, little family support, and a lack of knowledge of reading comprehension skills.

Elmadwi and Shepherd (2014) explored the reading strategy most often used among Libyan university students, to show how male and females use learning strategies when they face a text in English, and also to show the relationship between the learners' strategies use and their EFL proficiency. The results of the study showed that the most frequently reading strategies used was meta-cognitive strategies; there was a statistically difference between male and female learners in their use of language learning strategies. Furthermore, the results also showed differences between students' level of proficiency and their use of language learning strategies.

Al-Jahwari and Al-Humaidi (2015) investigated three main aspects related to prior knowledge in EFL reading comprehension in Oman: Teachers' view of the role of prior knowledge, the instructional strategies they used for activating students' prior knowledge, and the difficulties they face when activating students' prior knowledge. The findings of the study showed a strong agreement of the role of prior knowledge in text comprehension, a heavy reliance on limited number of techniques and a clear attribution of the difficulties to sources such as students' limited linguistic competence and lack of adequate teacher training on schema theory and its instructional techniques.

Medjahdi (2015) investigated the reading difficulties that third-year secondary school learners face, and identified their reading problems and the reasons behind their weaknesses in performing the reading task. The study revealed that the most of the learners had difficulties in reading comprehension at the level of pronunciation and ambiguous words which prevent them from understanding the passage, as well as the nature of the selected text had an impact on the learners' reading achievement.

Qrquez and Abo Rashid (2017) discussed English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension difficulties faced by students at a university in Jordan. The findings revealed that the respondents were motivated to learn as they were in dire need of acquiring English. However, they faced several problems in the reading process, such as ambiguous words, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited available time to cognitively process the text. The findings of this study might be useful to policy makers in Jordan to improve the learners' reading experience.

Mashry (2019) identified reading difficulties encountered by students, and investigated the role of reading comprehension in developing students. The analysis had led to these results: Learners can comprehensibly write about the topic after being taught in reading comprehension class. Reading comprehension requires much attention

and following up, so it's difficult to be taught in overcrowded classes. The study recommended teachers should be trained to teach English language, encourage their students to be involved in reading not only in classes but also outside the classroom, divide the pupils into groups and pair works in order to develop their reading comprehension.

Alenezi and Alomar (2020) investigated the factors responsible for poor reading and comprehension skills to find out the teaching methodology best suitable for developing English reading skills. The findings of the study were; poor vocabulary, lack of creativity and lack of teachers and students interest with a habit of rote learning and cramming strategy were the contributing factors for lack of developing interest for reading.

Al-Ghazo and Al-Sobh. (2021) investigated the reading comprehension problems encountered by students of Ajloun National University. The study provided more insight into the factors affecting the students' reading comprehension. The study results indicated that students had high estimation to certain problems they encountered in reading comprehension as a result of the complexity of the texts, anxiety, and word recognition (decoding). The findings of the study also revealed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female students in their reading comprehension challenges in favor of female students.

Safitri (2023) attempted to portray the level of EFL reading comprehension in a public university in Jambi, Indonesia. The major findings of this study revealed that: 1) there were 77 or (99%) participants could complete most of the literal test items and they just achieved literal level of comprehension of reading skill; 2) there were 24 or (31%) participants who were able to answer all inferential test items successfully and they just reached inferential level of reading comprehension; and 3) there were 19 or (24%) participants who could give their answer critically and they just obtained a critical level of reading comprehension. It was interpreted that numerous students were still in the position of the literal level which was regarded as a very low or basic level of reading comprehension. So, it was strongly recommended that EFL learners at University Jambi require an intensive practice of reading to achieve a highest level of reading comprehension.

Suliman(2023) measured the perceptions of Saudi EFL students (N= 30) at a university on the impact of teachers' competence to teach linguistic laws to manage students' reading comprehension problems. In addition, the study measured the importance of some psychological and procedural techniques which had a role in developing students' reading comprehension. Results showed that students moderately believed that owning limited knowledge of linguistic laws led to weakness in reading

comprehension (M=3). Results also indicated that teachers' lack of experience led to poverty of student comprehension (M=2.9). Finally, students moderately agreed to the efficacy of input of psychological and procedural techniques in developing their reading comprehension (M=3.2). This study was significant because it proposed practical pedagogical approaches for enhancing students' reading proficiency.

Based on the previous studies results which supported some EFL reading comprehension skills difficulties, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher on a group of (30) students selected randomly from the third year mass- media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University, where she designed a test related to content-area EFL reading comprehension skills . The results of the content -area EFL reading comprehension skills test showed that most students scored below 50% on all content-area EFL reading comprehension skills including: Identify the main idea in a text, Determine the sequence of events, Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details, Identify the author's purpose, Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, Underline main points, Differentiate facts from opinions, Identify cause and effect, Compare and contrast, Make personal opinions about the value of the text. It was concluded that the third year mass-media students lacked the content-area EFL reading comprehension skills.

### **Context of the Problem**

The problem of the present research could be stated in the poor performance of content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the third year mass- media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University. This problem was proved by reviewing literature and related studies in addition to the results of the pilot study conducted by the researcher.

The reasons beyond the third year mass- media students' inability in content- area EFL reading comprehensions skills included: The students' low motivation in learning English generally and reading specifically, the students' low motivation in reading English text, lack of vocabulary mastery, in addition, the lecturers use of the traditional methods in teaching in which students are passive learners, and students' insufficient exposure to experience critical reading. Rarely do they have the intention to read without instruction from their lecturer. In addition, according to Fahim and Ahmadian (2012), rarely is critical reading systematically and clearly taught in an educational setting. As a result, students were unable to master some of the fundamental learning skills, such as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

Moreover, the students were not analytical or critical when they read and tend to use surface level processing of text. They did not cope

with academic literacy. They tended to translate words they didn't understand by looking at the dictionary, They tended to resort to using the dictionary if they could not understand the text instead of trying to make an effort to use contextual clues or read between the lines for deeper meaning. Their ability to guess and relate the meaning of unknown words to words that they knew based on context did not develop. Their inability to understand the meaning of the text they read makes them unable to answer questions in their language. Furthermore, the students couldn't complete the reading comprehension test well because they were not able to use existing information to generate new information or thoughts, control word meaning, phrases, and sentences, and extract the appropriate meaning from texts. This showed that students still have problems understanding the information in the text.

In order to help learners better in enhancing their content-area EFL reading comprehension and tackle their reading comprehension problems, students need to identify their problems first and then think of appropriate strategies in order to improve their content- area EFL reading comprehension skills.

Considering the students' problems in the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills and the English teacher's inappropriate teaching strategy, the researcher proposed using a program based on critical reading strategies to solve that problem. This is mentioned later on under the statement of the problem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Based on the literature review and the results of the pilot study, it became obvious to the researcher that the majority of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education were inefficient in the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills; therefore the current research attempted to develop the level of these students in the content -area EFL reading comprehension skills through using a program based on critical reading strategies.

### **The Research Questions**

To face this problem, the research attempted to answer the following question:

What is the effectiveness of a program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

The following sub-questions are derived from the above main question:

1- What are the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills required for the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

2- How far do the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education have adequate content- area EFL reading comprehension skills?

3. What are the features of a suitable program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

3-What is the effectiveness of using a program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education?

### **The Research Hypotheses**

The present research has the following hypotheses:

1- There would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group in their performance on the post administration of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions in favor of the experimental group.

2- There would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance of the pre and post administrations of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions, favoring the post administration.

3- A Program based on critical reading strategies is effective in improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions of mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education.

### **The Research Purpose**

This research aimed at improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education by using a program based on critical reading strategies.

### **The Research Significance**

This research would hopefully be expected to be beneficial to:

- **Mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education**

This research is expected to help mass- media students at the faculty of Specific Education through:

- Developing some content- area EFL reading comprehension skills.
- Providing students with a program based on critical reading strategies which helps them develop content- area EFL reading comprehension skills.

- **EFL Teachers and tutors**

- This research might provide them with a list of some EFL reading comprehension skills necessary for students.



- This research might provide them with a new instructional model to develop their methods in teaching EFL reading comprehension skills.
- It would provide them with systematic and practical procedures for a program based on critical reading strategies. This program might be effective in teaching EFL reading comprehension skills.
- **EFL Curriculum Designers and Developers**
- Directing the attention of curriculum designers and developers to the importance of critical reading strategies to develop teaching EFL reading comprehension in the EFL curriculum.
- **Other researchers**
- Providing them with some critical reading strategies for improving EFL reading comprehension skills that can be used to investigate the relationship between EFL reading comprehension and other variables.

### **The Research Delimitations**

This research was delimited to the following:

- 1- A group of (66) third year mass-media students at the Faculty of specific Education, Zagazig University.
- 2- Some content- area EFL reading comprehension skills required for the third year mass- media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig university.
- 3- Some critical reading strategies included in the program, such as previewing, annotating, questioning, paraphrasing, outlining and summarizing.
- 4- The first semester of the academic year 2024/2025.

### **Terms of the Research**

#### **EFL Reading Comprehension Skills**

For the purpose of this research, EFL reading comprehension can be defined operationally as a mental process in which the readers try to comprehend the meaning in the text by interpreting what has been read in order to find the idea given by the writer. Comprehension is represented in the ability to identify the main idea in a text, determine the sequence of events, distinguish between the main idea and supporting details, identify the author's purpose, guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, underline main points, differentiate facts from opinions, identify cause and effect, compare and contrast, and make personal opinions about the value of the text.

#### **Critical Reading Strategies**

Critical reading strategies can be operationally defined in this research as the way or process in which teachers and students interact in the classroom to practice the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills; accordingly, students will be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate a text in order to fully understand it, and only then they think

critically about the text, selecting or rejecting the ideas presented, agreeing or disagreeing with the issues, and most importantly, they know why they are doing them all using different critical reading strategies, such as previewing, annotating, questioning, paraphrasing, outlining and summarizing.

## Method

### The Research Design

The researcher used the quasi-experimental with a pre-posttest two group design. Two classes were allocated to represent an experimental group and a control one. The experimental group studied using a program based on critical reading strategies to improve the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills. The control group students received regular instruction.

### Participants

The research participants were (66) third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University, during the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025. They were assigned into two groups: An experimental group (N=33) (taught via a program based on critical reading strategies), and a control group (N=33) (received regular instruction).

In order to make sure that both groups were homogeneous before the experimentation, the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test was pre- administered to both groups in the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025. t. test values of the paired sample was used. The following table shows this.

Pre-testing statistics was made before experimentation to ensure that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous in their entry level. ( See table 1)

*Table (1) Means, Standard Deviations, t.values, of the means scores of the control group and those of the experimental one on the content -area EFL reading comprehension skills pretest*

| The Content -Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills           | Groups | N  | Mean | St.Dev. | T.value | Df. | Sig  |
|--|--------|----|------|---------|---------|-----|------|
| 1- Identify the main idea in a text.                         | Cont.  | 33 | 2.09 | 0.72    | 0.17    | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Expr.  | 33 | 2.06 | 0.75    |         |     |      |
| 2-Determine the sequence of events.                          | Cont.  | 33 | 2.00 | 0.61    | 0.89    | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Expr.  | 33 | 2.15 | 0.76    |         |     |      |
| 3- Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details. | Cont.  | 33 | 1.91 | 0.88    | 0.55    | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Expr.  | 33 | 2.03 | 0.92    |         |     |      |
| 4. Identify the author's purpose.                            | Cont.  | 33 | 1.94 | 0.89    | 0.57    | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Expr.  | 33 | 2.06 | 0.83    |         |     |      |
| 5.Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.                     | Cont.  | 33 | 1.64 | 0.82    | 0.42    | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Expr.  | 33 | 1.73 | 0.94    |         |     |      |

|   |       |    |       |      |      |    |      |
|---|-------|----|-------|------|------|----|------|
| <b>6.Underline main points.</b>                               | Cont. | 33 | 1.79  | 0.89 | 0.29 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 1.85  | 0.83 |      |    |      |
| <b>7.Differentiate facts from opinions.</b>                   | Cont. | 33 | 1.91  | 0.77 | 0.17 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 1.88  | 0.69 |      |    |      |
| <b>8.Identify cause and effect.</b>                           | Cont. | 33 | 1.73  | 1.04 | 0.62 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 1.88  | 0.96 |      |    |      |
| <b>9.Compare and contrast.</b>                                | Cont. | 33 | 1.79  | 0.89 | 0.30 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 1.73  | 0.72 |      |    |      |
| <b>10.Make personal opinions about the value of the text.</b> | Cont. | 33 | 1.85  | 0.79 | .063 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 1.97  | 2.91 |      |    |      |
| <b>Total</b>  | Cont. | 33 | 18.64 | 3.30 | 0.94 | 64 | 0.05 |
|   | Expr. | 33 | 19.33 | 0.77 |      |    |      |

Table (1) indicates that t.value (0.94) is not significant at the level of (0.05); this means there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group on the pre-administration of the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test. This shows that both groups are homogeneous and almost at the same level of performance before implementing a program based on the critical reading strategies.

### The Research Instruments

To fulfill the research purpose, the researcher prepared the following instruments:

- 1- The Content- Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Checklist.
- 2- The Content- Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Pre-Post Test.

#### (1) The Content- Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Checklist. (Appendix. A)

The present research aimed at investigating the effectiveness of a program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content-area EFL reading comprehension skills of the mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education. Accordingly, the checklist of content-area EFL reading comprehension skills was prepared by the researcher.

##### 1.a. Purpose

The content- area EFL reading comprehension skills checklist was designed to determine the most important EFL reading comprehension skills necessary for the third year mass- media students at the Faculty of Specific Education and for developing the research pre/post content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test.

##### 1.b. Source

To develop the content -area EFL reading comprehension skills checklist, items of the checklist were derived from the following sources:

- Reviewing literature and related studies related to EFL reading comprehension skills .
- Consulting specialists and experts in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

### **1.c. Description**

The final version of the checklist consisted of (10) content- area EFL reading comprehension skills. Three degrees of importance on each item were: Very important, important and important to some extent.

### **1.d. Validity**

To validate the checklist in its final form, it was submitted to jury of EFL curricula and instruction. The jurors were asked to assess the importance of each content-area EFL reading comprehension skill and its suitability for the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education.

### **(2) The Content- Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills Pre-Post Test. (Appendix. B)**

#### **2.a. Purpose of the test**

The content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test, was used as a pre-posttest to identify how far third year mass-media students at the faculty of specific education, Zagazig University master the content-area EFL reading comprehension skills and determine if the content-area EFL reading comprehension skills were developed as a result of using a program based on critical reading strategies.

#### **2.b. Test Construction**

The test was constructed by the researcher using the following procedures:

- (1) Reviewing literature and related studies to EFL reading comprehension skills nature, teaching, and assessment.
- (2) Identifying the most important EFL reading comprehension skills for the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, through the final form of content- area EFL reading comprehension skills checklist. (Appendix. A)

#### **2.c. Test Description**

The test final version consisted of ten parts:

- Part one (Identify the main idea in a text): Students were asked to read the text, and answer the questions.
- Part two (Determine the sequence of events): Students were asked to write numbers 1 through 4 in the boxes beside the events to show the sequence of what happened? from the beginning to the end.
- Part three (Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details): Students were asked to read the text, then, write the main idea and supporting details in each paragraph in the text.
- Part four (Identify the author's purpose): Students were asked about the author's purpose.
- Part five (Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words): Students were asked to read the text again, and then guess the meaning of some unfamiliar words in the text.

- Part six ( Underline main points): Students were asked to underline the main points in the text.
- Part seven (Differentiate facts from opinions): Students were provided with sentences which express facts and opinions, and they were asked to read the sentences to tell whether each sentence is a fact or opinion.
- Part eight (Identify cause and effect): Students were asked to read each sentence, determine the cause and underline one line , then determine the effect and underline two lines.
- Part 9 (Compare and Contrast): Students were asked to read the stories, and then think about how the stories are like, how they are different.
- Part ten (Make personal opinion about the value of the text): Students were asked to make personal opinion about the value of the texts from their own perspectives.

## 2. d. Test Validity

Validity is the extent to which a test accurately measures what is supposed to measure. Face validity and self-validity were used by the researcher. To test the face validity, the test was given to a TEFL panel of jury members to evaluate each question in terms of content and the measured EFL reading comprehension skills of the content- area. Moreover, they were requested to evaluate the test as a whole in terms of correctness, number of questions, test scoring, test suitability for students' level and its time limit. The test as a whole proved to be valid as the TEFL jury members approved the questions. The following table shows this:

*Table (2) The validity of each content -area EFL reading comprehension skills.*

| No. | The Content- Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills        | Validity |
|-----|---|----------|
| 1   | Identify the main idea in a text.                         | 0.695    |
| 2   | Determine the sequence of events.                         | 0.915    |
| 3   | Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details. | 0.839    |
| 4   | Identify the author's purpose.                            | 0.844    |
| 5   | Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.                    | 0.809    |
| 6   | Underline main points.                                    | 0.855    |
| 7   | Differentiate facts from opinions.                        | 0.782    |
| 8   | Identify cause and effect.                                | 0.881    |
| 9   | Compare and contrast.                                     | 0.827    |
| 10  | Make personal opinions about the value of the text.       | 0.881    |

Table (2) proves the validity of each content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test using Pearson Correlation, Thus, the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills as a whole was statistically valid. The jury members generally approved the test but some modifications were suggested like phrasing some items to be simpler and clearer and providing some phrases that are more suitable to the category (type of response) of which the content area EFL reading comprehension skills are related to.



In the light of the jury members modifications and the results of piloting the test, the final version was designed .(See Appendix, B)

## 2.e. Test Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which the test measurement remains consistent over repeated test on the same participants identical conditions.

In order to verify the test reliability, the internal consistency method was used. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha and split-half techniques were calculated by (SPSS version 27) program. Accordingly, the test was administered to a group of (30) third year mass- media students at the beginning of the academic year 2024-2025 at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University. Those students were not included in the research groups. The following table shows this:

*Table (3) The Reliability of each content -area EFL reading comprehension skills as a whole.*

| No.   | The Content - Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills       | Reliability |        |                  |
|-------|---|-------------|--------|------------------|
|       |   | Spearman    | Gutman | Cronbach's Alpha |
| 1     | Identify the main idea in a text.                         | 0.783       | 0.782  | 0.782            |
| 2     | Determine the sequence of events.                         | 0.632       | 0.626  | 0.626            |
| 3     | Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details. | 0.643       | 0.653  | 0.935            |
| 4     | Identify the author's purpose.                            | 0.653       | 0.648  | 0.648            |
| 5     | Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.                    | 0.752       | 0.727  | 0.727            |
| 6     | Underline main points.                                    | 0.865       | 0.865  | 0.865            |
| 7     | Differentiate facts from opinions.                        | 0.523       | 0.523  | 0.523            |
| 8     | Identify cause and effect.                                | 0.734       | 0.726  | 0.726            |
| 9     | Compare and contrast.                                     | 0.754       | 0.726  | 0.726            |
| 10    | Make personal opinions about the value of the text.       | 0.618       | 0.609  | 0.609            |
| Total |   | 0.930       | 0.930  | 0.950            |

Table (3) proves the reliability of each skill of the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the whole test using Cronbach's coefficient Alpha and Split-half technique. The reliability coefficient of the test using Cronbach's Alpha is (0.950), using split half technique reliability coefficient is (0.930) which is higher reliable value. So, these results prove that the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test was statistically reliable.

## 2.f. Test Piloting and Timing

The test was administered to a pilot group of (30) third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University . Piloting the test aimed at setting the appropriate time needed to answer

the test, checking the suitability of the test questions (simplicity, difficulty) for the third year mass -media students and determining the clarity of the test items and instructions.

Based on piloting the test, it was estimated that a period of (90) minutes would provide suitable time for participants to answer the test questions. The group used to calculate the test reliability was the same group used to estimate the test time. The test time was estimated according to the time taken by all students divided by their number. The researcher used the following formula:

Duration of the test= Time taken by all participants ÷ Number of all participants

Time duration=  $2700 \div 30 = 90$  minutes

### **2.g. Test Scoring**

The final test consisted of ten parts: Part one ( Identify the main idea in a text), the total score was 10 marks, Part two( Determine the sequence of events),the total score was 10 marks, Part three (Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details), the total score was 10 marks, Part four (Identify the author's purpose), the total score was 10 marks, Part five (Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words), the total score was 10 marks, Part six (Underline main points), the total score was 10 marks, Part seven (Differentiate facts from opinions), the total score was 10 marks, Part eight (Identify cause and effect), the total score was 10 marks, Part nine (Compare and contrast), the total score was 10 marks, Part ten ( Make personal opinions about the value of the text), the total score was 10 marks. The total score of the test was (100) marks. The researcher scored the test.

### **2.h. Test Instructions**

To avoid participants misunderstanding of the test, the researcher explained the content and instructions clearly and orally before administrating it. The researcher sometimes had to illustrate some instructions for the participants in order to make sure that they understand what is required in each question. Moreover, the researcher had to read the instructions of the test in front of the participants before administrating it.

In order to facilitate interacting with the test questions without any anxiety or misunderstanding, the researcher told the participants that the test was designed not to be the final year exam but it is a part of improving their performance in reading mass-media texts and it has nothing to do with college scores.

### **2.i. Test Administration**

The test was administered to both research groups as a pre-posttest in the first semester of the academic year (2024-2025), condition of pre-post administrations was relatively the same in time and place.

## Procedures

In order to achieve the aims of the research, the following procedures were adopted:

- 1- Reviewing relevant literature and previous studies related to critical reading strategies and EFL reading comprehension skills.
- 2- Preparing a list of content- area EFL reading comprehension skills in the form of checklist and administering it to the jury members to determine the required EFL reading comprehension skills needed for the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University .
- 3- Designing the research instruments and verifying their validity and reliability (The content- area EFL reading comprehension skills checklist &The content -area EFL reading comprehension skills pre-posttest )
- 4- Selecting the research participants randomly of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education, Zagazig University.
- 5- Dividing the participants into two groups: Experimental group and control one.
- 6- Pre- administering the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test to both groups of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education before teaching with a program based on critical reading strategies.
- 7- Designing a program based on critical reading strategies to the experimental group participants.
- 8- Administering the program based on critical reading strategies to the experimental group participants while the control group will be taught through the regular instruction.
- 9- Post-administering the content -area EFL reading comprehension skills to both groups after applying the program based on critical reading strategies.
- 10- Comparing the results of both administrations.
- 11- Using the appropriate statistical treatment for analyzing the results and discussing them.
- 12- Drawing conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## The Research Results

To determine whether students' content- area EFL reading comprehension skills improved after implementing the experimental treatment using a program based on critical reading strategies , the hypotheses of the research were tested by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program.

### Hypothesis (1):

The first hypothesis states that "There would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental

group and those of the control group in their performance on the post administration of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions in favor of the experimental group".

To verify this hypothesis, Independent sample t-test was used to test whether there were any significant differences. The following table shows this.

**Table (4): Results of the control group & the experimental group on post administration of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions.**

| The Content -Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills                  | Groups | N  | Mean  | St.Dev | T.value | Df. | Sig  |
|---|--------|----|-------|--------|---------|-----|------|
| <b>1- Identify the main idea in a text.</b>                         | Cont.  | 33 | 2.64  | 0.69   | 7.02    | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.21  | 1.08   |         |     |      |
| <b>2-Determine the sequence of events.</b>                          | Cont.  | 33 | 2.58  | 0.66   | 9.78    | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.58  | 0.97   |         |     |      |
| <b>3- Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details.</b> | Cont.  | 33 | 2.67  | 0.59   | 13.16   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.73  | 0.67   |         |     |      |
| <b>4. Identify the author's purpose.</b>                            | Cont.  | 33 | 2.61  | 0.61   | 13.11   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.91  | 0.80   |         |     |      |
| <b>5.Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.</b>                     | Cont.  | 33 | 2.61  | 0.61   | 11.85   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.82  | 0.88   |         |     |      |
| <b>6.Underline main points.</b>                                     | Cont.  | 33 | 2.64  | 0.60   | 11.38   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.85  | 0.94   |         |     |      |
| <b>7.Differentiate facts from opinions.</b>                         | Cont.  | 33 | 2.48  | 0.57   | 12.88   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 5.00  | 0.97   |         |     |      |
| <b>8.Identify cause and effect.</b>                                 | Cont.  | 33 | 2.69  | 0.64   | 12.13   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.85  | 0.79   |         |     |      |
| <b>9.Compare and contrast.</b>                                      | Cont.  | 33 | 2.58  | 0.66   | 11.61   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 4.88  | 0.93   |         |     |      |
| <b>10.Make personal opinions about the value of the text.</b>       | Cont.  | 33 | 2.61  | 0.66   | 13.02   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 5.12  | 0.89   |         |     |      |
| <b>Total</b>  | Cont.  | 33 | 26.09 | 3.64   | 20.32   | 64  | 0.05 |
|   | Expr.  | 33 | 47.94 | 4.99   |         |     |      |

Table (4) indicates that the mean scores of the treatment group (47.94) is higher than (26.09) of the non-treatment group on the post administration of the overall content- area EFL reading comprehension skills.

The calculated t.value (20.32) is higher than the tabulated value (2.04) associated with (64) degree of freedom. This proves that there are statistically significant differences at (0.05) between the mean scores of the experimental group and the mean scores of the control group of the overall content- area EFL reading comprehension test and its dimensions

in favor of the experimental group. These differences can be attributed to the program based on critical reading strategies.

### Hypothesis (2):

The second hypothesis states that "There would be statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance of the pre and post administrations of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions, favoring the post administration".

To verify this hypothesis, the paired sample t-test was used to estimate the hypothesis, the following table shows this.

*Table (5 ): Results of the experimental group pre-post administrations of the content -area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions.*

| The Content -Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills           | Test  | N  | Mean  | Std  | T.value | Df. | Sig  |
|--|-------|----|-------|------|---------|-----|------|
| 1- Identify the main idea in a text.                         | Pre   | 33 | 2.06  | 0.75 | 10.07   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post  | 33 | 4.21  | 1.08 |         |     |      |
| 2-Determine the sequence of events.                          | Pre   | 33 | 2.15  | 0.76 | 11.36   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post  | 33 | 4.58  | 0.97 |         |     |      |
| 3- Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details. | Pre   | 33 | 2.03  | 0.92 | 11.41   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post  | 33 | 4.73  | 0.67 |         |     |      |
| 4. Identify the author's purpose.                            | Pre.  | 33 | 2.06  | 0.83 | 14.59   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 4.91  | 0.80 |         |     |      |
| 5.Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.                     | Pre.  | 33 | 1.73  | 0.94 | 14.39   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 4.82  | 0.88 |         |     |      |
| 6.Underline main points.                                     | Pre.  | 33 | 1.85  | 0.83 | 14.37   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 4.85  | 0.94 |         |     |      |
| 7.Differentiate facts from opinions.                         | Pre.  | 33 | 1.88  | 0.69 | 15.74   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 5.00  | 0.97 |         |     |      |
| 8.Identify cause and effect.                                 | Pre.  | 33 | 1.88  | 0.96 | 15.46   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 4.85  | 0.79 |         |     |      |
| 9.Compare and contrast.                                      | Pre.  | 33 | 1.73  | 0.72 | 16.56   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 4.88  | 0.93 |         |     |      |
| 10.Make personal opinions about the value of the text.       | Pre.  | 33 | 1.97  | 0.77 | 15.06   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 5.12  | 0.89 |         |     |      |
| Total  | Pre.  | 33 | 19.33 | 2.91 | 40.93   | 64  | 0.05 |
|  | Post. | 33 | 47.94 | 4.99 |         |     |      |

Table (5) indicates that the mean scores of the experimental group on the post administration of the overall content- area EFL reading comprehension skills test (47.94) is higher than (19.33) of the pre-administration.

The calculated t.value (40.93) is higher than the tabulated value (2.04) associated with (64) degree of freedom. This proves that there are statistically significant differences at (0.05) between the mean scores of the pre-post administrations of the experimental group of the overall



content- area of EFL reading comprehension test and its dimensions in favor of the post administration. These differences can be attributed to the program based on critical reading strategies used in the present research.

### Hypothesis (3):

The third hypothesis states that "A Program based on critical reading strategies is effective in improving the content -area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions of mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education".

To test the third hypothesis, the effect size of the program on the treatment group was calculated using Cohen formula.

*Table (6) Identifies the Referential Framework for the Effect Size as follows: The Referential Framework for the Effect Size*

| Effect Size                 | Interrelation |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| From 0.2 till less than 0.5 | Small         |
| From 0.5 till less than 0.8 | Medium        |
| From 0.8 or more            | Large         |

The following table (6) shows the effect size of the program on the experimental group overall content-area EFL reading comprehension skills.

*Table (7): The effect size of a program based on critical reading strategies on the experimental group overall content- area EFL reading comprehension skills*

| The Content-Area EFL Reading Comprehension Skills            | t.value | Df. | Eta square | D     | Effect Size |
|--|---------|-----|------------|-------|-------------|
| 1- Identify the main idea in a text.                         | 10.07*  | 32  | 0.76       | 3.65  | Large       |
| 2-Determine the sequence of events.                          | 11.36*  | 32  | 0.80       | 4.02  | Large       |
| 3- Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details. | 11.41*  | 32  | 0.80       | 4.03  | Large       |
| 4. Identify the author's purpose.                            | 14.59*  | 32  | 0.87       | 5.16  | Large       |
| 5.Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.                     | 14.39*  | 32  | 0.87       | 5.09  | Large       |
| 6.Underline main points.                                     | 14.37*  | 32  | 0.87       | 5.08  | Large       |
| 7.Differentiate facts from opinions.                         | 15.74*  | 32  | 0.89       | 5.56  | Large       |
| 8.Identify cause and effect.                                 | 15.46*  | 32  | 0.88       | 5.47  | Large       |
| 9.Compare and contrast.                                      | 16.56*  | 32  | 0.89       | 5.87  | Large       |
| 10.Make personal opinions about the value of the text.       | 15.06*  | 32  | 0.88       | 5.32  | Large       |
| <b>Total</b>   | 40.93   | 32  | 1.01       | 14.47 | Large       |

The table (7) shows that the effect size value (14.47) of the program on the treatment group students overall content- area EFL reading comprehension skills is large. This proves that the program had a positive effect on developing mass-media students content- area EFL reading comprehension skills. Consequently, the third hypothesis was accepted.

## Discussion

The primary aim of the research was to investigate how a program based on critical reading strategies impacted the development of content-area EFL reading comprehension skills among the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education. The guiding research question was: "What is the effectiveness of a program based on critical reading strategies for improving the content- area EFL reading comprehension skills of the mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education?". Through a detailed analysis of the collected data, the researcher provided a comprehensive discussion of the findings.

The findings of the research revealed that critical reading strategies significantly enhanced the third year mass-media students' content- area EFL reading comprehension skills. It was found that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the post-test compared to the pre-test after the treatment, demonstrating that using critical reading strategies was quite successful in helping students improve their content-area EFL reading comprehension skills. In addition, the experimental group which was taught through a program based on critical reading strategies in comparison with the control group, outperformed the traditional method of EFL reading comprehension.

The main problems with the students were that they had issues understanding unfamiliar or ambiguous vocabulary which prevent them from understanding the passage, poor command of grammar, poor prior knowledge, difficulty understanding long sentences, lack of motivation and students' anxiety to read correctly; they also had difficulties in identifying the main idea in the text, the sequence of events, distinguish between main idea and supporting details, identify the author's purpose, differentiate facts from opinions, identify cause and effect, compare and contrast, and make personal opinions about the value of the text. In addition, students need to work in groups.

Accordingly, using critical reading enabled students to:

- ✚ Analyze, synthesize, solve problem and thinks meta-cognitively in order to negotiate meaning with the author and to construct new meaning from the text. (Hermida, 2009; Kadir et al., 2014)
- ✚ Reflect on the content and purpose . Besides, they were able to keep what they had read in their mind for a long time. They were able to see the relationships of ideas and use them as an aid in reading. (Rosidiana, 2015)
- ✚ Be able to evaluate, draw inferences, and make a conclusion based on the texts which they have read. (Talebi & Talebi, 2015)
- ✚ understand what the writer really conveys in the text. They used their prior background knowledge through group work to understand the reading material. (Rahmi, 2020).

✚ Examine the text, they were able to skim the text in order to know what the topic is?, what the main ideas of the text are?. Furthermore, they were able to recognize the authors' perspective and biases and assumptions from the text. Thus critical reading has a considerable impact on improving the students' reading comprehension. (Vacca et al., 2021)

Hence, all the following improvement in the students' performance is due to critical reading strategies in the program which included:

**(a) Previewing:** ➡ In this strategy, the lecturer tried to build or activate the students' prior knowledge or experience related to the topic to be discussed. Relating the information students get from the text to their prior knowledge enabled them to comprehend the text better. Accordingly, previewing helped students improve reading comprehension by tapping on prior knowledge.

Previewing enabled students to get some idea of what the text is about and how it is organized before reading it more carefully. This simple strategy included scanning the text to try to find specific information to help understand the text, and skimming to get general idea of the content and organization of the text, and identifying the purpose of the writing.

**(b) Annotating** ➡ This strategy was taught during reading which is actively reading the text while reading and marking, circling, or writing some keywords, and the meaning of unknown words (synonym and antonym) and the definitions in the margin. By applying this strategy, the students paid attention to the unknown words and they were not ignoring the unknown words in the text. The students had a pencil in hand so they can "annotate" their text. Keywords or symbols in the margin referred to the significant information. Also, at the end of sub-sections, the students could write short summaries in the margins, and followed the steps of the process by writing numbers in the margin. They could write questions in the margin beside the answer in the text, and identified the audience's challenging ideas, knowledge, sentiment, and beliefs.

**(c) Questioning** ➡ In this strategy, the students were asked to make a question for each paragraph while they are reading. when the students finished reading, the instructor asked them to design questions themselves to help achieve further comprehension. Each group designed their own questions and they asked each other to try to understand the text deeper. Students could use questioning before, during, and after reading. Asking questions while involved in the reading process provided students with an opportunity to think about what they were reading, they were active and independent readers, and they were able to appropriately reflect on their reading. Each question focused on a main idea, not on illustrations or details, and each expressed in their own words, not just copied from parts of the paragraph.

**(D)Paraphrasing** → In this strategy, the students made a paraphrase of a few sentences from the text in their own words. They were not only changing few words, but they provided the same information as the original and be written in their own word choice and sentence structure.

**(E) Outlining and Summarizing** → In these strategies, students were able to distinguish between the main ideas and supporting ideas and also the examples the author uses, because the main ideas form the backbone of the text . Through outlining a text , students listed all the important facts and examples together. Through summarizing, students read the text again and again, checked the topic sentences, identified the main ideas, and related the ideas of the passage to each other.

Outlining was a map of the text. Outlining enabled students to determine the basic structure of a text, identify important ideas and supporting evidence. It presented a snapshot of the information contained in each paragraph or section of the text and the order in which it occurred. It Promoted better retention, and encouraged the participation in learning. An outline used bullet points and/or numbers to arrange the information. Summarizing also helped students to self-correct by means of reading the text several times, checking the topic sentences, identifying the main ideas, and relating passages to each other.

As a result, using these critical reading strategies:

- ✚ Helped students to be able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what is read, they could think critically about the text- choose or reject the ideas put forward, agree or disagree with the issues, and most important of all they know the reason(s) why they do it.
- ✚ Encouraged students to read the textbooks and various reading passages in the systematical and critical ways.
- ✚ Students could evaluate the ideas and gave the judgment about the text's value.
- ✚ Enhanced the students' EFL reading comprehension skills (including identifying the main idea in the text, the sequence of events, distinguish between main idea and supporting details, identify the author's purpose, differentiate facts from opinions, identify cause and effect, compare and contrast, and make personal opinions about the value of the text).
- ✚ Students obtained high level comprehension through their interpretation and evaluation skills.
- ✚ Helped students to deeply understand and gain meaningful information from the text because they read between the lines and beyond the lines rather than focusing on just reading the lines.
- ✚ Helped students improve their vocabulary and made its retention easier.

- + Supported students to be somehow critical thinkers because critical reading leads to critical thinking.
- + Students had the ability to search for information and then filter the information obtained to distinguish between important and unimportant information, making decision about good and valid information.
- + Applying critical reading strategies through group work helped students to be motivated to work together through reading. Motivation had been a central aspect that impacted the reading comprehension tasks. Motivation factor included students' interest and curiosity in processing a text.

All previous results confirmed the idea of (Kadir, et al., 2014; Hudson, 2007; McWhorter, 1992; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Jasim, 2007; McNamara, 2007; Zhang, 2009; Aadali, 2010; Wallace & Wray, 2011; Harvey, 2012; Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012; Nasrollahi, et al., 2015; Yu, 2015; Gonzales & Torres, 2016; Harida, 2016; Suacillo et al., 2017; McAlpine, 2019; Vozgova & Afanasyeva, 2019; Baki, 2020; Surdyanto & Kurniawan, 2020; Cho et al., 2021; Khojah & Thomas, 2021; Sudarwati & Manipuspika, 2021; Achmad Chrisbianto Sachran, 2022; Hettige et al., 2022; Kadel, 2022; Kosimov, 2022; Van et al., 2022; Niculescu & Dragomir, 2023) who asserted the importance of critical reading and critical reading strategies in EFL/ESL classroom and improving EFL reading comprehension.

The results also confirmed the results of (Macknish, 2009; Muhamad, 2010; Sohn, 2010; Khabiri & Pakzad, 2012; Albeckay's, 2014; Rajabi & Tabatabaee, 2015; Talebi & Marzban, 2015; Fadhillah, 2017; Fimilia, 2018; Khalil, 2019; Hromova et al., 2022; Manuputty, 2022; Nurjanah & Setiyaningsih, 2022; Safian & Jiar, 2022; Ilyas, 2023; Kokcu, 2023; Mostafa, 2023; Tan, 2023; Maulid & Desvitasari, 2024) who explored the importance of critical reading/critical reading strategies in EFL/ESL classroom and also supported the results of (Icmez, 2005; Suacillo et al., 2016; Larking, 2017; Rohmah, 2018; Banditvilai, 2020; Al Roomy, 2022; El-Maghraby, 2023; Safrudin et al., 2023; Rahmasari, 2024; Kurland, 2000) who demonstrated the importance of critical reading/critical reading strategies in developing EFL reading comprehension.

Thus, critical reading strategies had an impact on the third year mass-media students' content- area EFL reading comprehension skills.

### **Conclusion**

This research aimed to determine the impact of a program based on critical reading strategies on improving the content -area EFL



reading comprehension skills of the mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education.

Five critical reading strategies were adopted in this research namely: Previewing, Annotating , Questioning, Paraphrasing, Outlining and Summarizing.

The findings clearly revealed that these strategies significantly enhanced the third year mass- media students' content- area EFL reading comprehension skills, as evidenced by substantial improvements in pre-test to post-test scores to the experimental group. The results showed that there were significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group (taught via a program based on critical reading strategies ) on the pre-post administrations of the content- area EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions in favor of post-administration. In addition, there were significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group (taught via program based on critical reading strategies ) and the control group (taught via regular instruction) on the post- administration of the content-area of EFL reading comprehension test as a whole and its dimensions, in favor of the experimental group.

The research effectively addressed the question of how a program based on critical reading strategies affects the development of content-area EFL reading comprehension skills of the third year mass-media students at the Faculty of Specific Education. Incorporating critical reading strategies into the curriculum was thus highly beneficial.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in the light of the results and conclusions of the research.

- 1- In order for students to become critical readers, teachers need to be aware of the features of CR and how to foster the ideas of CR in their classrooms.
- 2- Students need to be trained or guide on the use of different critical reading strategies so that they would know how to apply these strategies for successful comprehension of academic materials.
- 3- Training EFL teachers to use critical reading strategies can also be conducted.
- 4- EFL Teachers need to be made aware of the importance of critical reading generally to promote students' critical thinking.
- 5- Critical reading strategies can be included in educational curriculum in order to create a way of teaching.
- 6- EFL teachers should incorporate critical reading strategies through teaching the curriculum and teach them explicitly to students.
- 7- EFL Teachers should be sensitive to their students' reading comprehension difficulties, and assist them in changing their attitudes

towards reading and developing positive attitudes towards their reading comprehension activities so that they can better understand various texts.

8- EFL teachers should encourage their students to be involved in reading not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

9- EFL teachers should cooperate with the students inside the class in clarifying the necessity of EFL reading comprehension skills through offering examples of reading texts.

10- Reading comprehension skills are very important and should be practiced from the early stages.

11- In English courses, reading comprehension needs to receive greater time and attention.

12- EFL teachers must adapt critical reading strategies to their students' needs.

13- Teaching critical reading pedagogy in general and critical reading strategies to EFL teachers should be an important part of teacher professional development programs

### **Suggestions**

The following points can be suggested as topics for further research:

1- It would be worthwhile for further research to be conducted to explore the impact of introducing critical reading strategies with different sexes, ages, and fields of study.

2- Looking for the effectiveness of other critical reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension skills with different stages.

3- Investigating the effect of critical reading strategies on improving writing skills for prospective teachers.

4- Investigating the effect of critical reading strategies on improving communicative skills for prospective teachers.

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